

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS

April 3, 2023 at 6:00 PM

Chairman T. Sapienza called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: T. Sapienza, Stewart, Fajardo, Burkush, E. Sapienza

Messrs.: A. Thomas, Mayor Craig, K. Drohan, Alderman Long, P. Chiesa, A. Beloin,
R. Cashin

Chairman T. Sapienza asked to address Item 1 first.

2. Discussion regarding moving the Senior Services Department under a newly created Healthy Aging Branch of the Health Department as proposed in Mayor Craig's FY24 budget.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated we have just been given quite a bit of information for the first time. Anna, could you please come forward and tell us briefly what your feelings are on this and how it helps the seniors and the city in general?

Anna Thomas, Public Health Director, stated this is a potential opportunity to do a lot of work that we are starting to step into anyway as a Health Department regardless of this partnership. I will tell you that we started doing more work around seniors in particular around home visiting prior to the pandemic. Where that was coming from was anytime one of the first responders would answer a call because maybe somebody fell or something, they would get into the home and see that there were seniors out there living without resources who had particular needs. They would call the Health Department because we had relationships with landlords and property owners and we had additional support services that we could offer seniors as a follow-up. So we have been doing this home visiting with seniors for a while. Where it really erupted was during the pandemic. Over and over again we were seeing seniors who were not connected to services. We went to all of the senior high rises in the city to do testing and vaccination with amazing staff from the Fire Department and others and we kept seeing over and over again this sort of disconnect between our aging population. For the first time, in the last couple of years, we proportionately have more seniors in the community now than we do younger people. With this aging of a community, and nationally this is also the trend, people are going to live longer and they want to live as independently as they can for as long as they can. This is something that we have been talking about in our own strategic planning in the Health Department. We wanted to do more in the aging space and it was really Mayor Craig who kind of brought this forward as a concept. Could we take the two departments and make a partnership there and just so we are clear, I think in the proposal you have the full packet on the HRIC agenda that describes the organizational charts and the movement we are proposing but essentially what we are trying to do is create a Healthy Aging Branch of the department. This would include the Senior Center and their activities. Nothing changes in the day-to-day for the Senior Center. It is a well-oiled machine. They have

a decent following and we don't want to do anything to interrupt that. If anything, we feel we can probably bring additional services if they are interested. Again, we are not going to bring anything that they don't want to see. One example of that is we have a dental van that has two operatories on it; state-of-the-art dental facility where we can actually do x-ray off the van and diagnose and treat. We bring that van to all 21 public schools and we do dental health care for children who do not have connections to a dentist. That van lays dormant during the summer months so one example is possibly we could bring the van to the Senior Center during the summer and maybe do oral health screenings for seniors as an add-on service. I think in the big picture of things we can see the synergy between our two departments. There is a lot of work that we want to do beyond what the Senior Center does and that includes looking at that those individuals who go to the Senior Center on a regular basis and maybe over time graduate out of the Senior Center or start having mobility limitations and can no longer access the services at the Senior Center. We want to catch them as that continuum of care and maybe we can offer follow-up with those individuals who no longer can enjoy the Senior Center. We want to create a little bit more service delivery that really gets to individuals who unfortunately may not be able to make it to the Senior Center but are certainly wanted to age in place and age as independently as they possibly can but might need a little bit of help and checking up on. We are already seeing that with the PHAS Team. We go out with the police often and we take all of their welfare check calls. Certainly all of the partnerships we have developed with the PHAS team, like Meals on Wheels, will follow-up with seniors and so some of those home visits as well just to check on people. We are seeing a whole layer of need that we feel we can provide more services for and connection to other programs that exist in the community and these are really catching people who otherwise would not be provided those services if that makes sense.

Alderman Stewart stated I just want to say that I think it's a great idea. You mentioned the demographic trends that we are seeing here in the city and the state and nationwide and I think as the population ages and more and more Boomers retire and are at home and wanting to age in place, which is a good thing, they are going to need more supportive services. I agree that this makes sense from a kind of holistic big picture standpoint to kind of see seniors graduating and being able to offer those holistic services. I will be supporting this.

Ms. Thomas stated alderman you have done a lot of work around accessibility and active living and healthy eating in the community. You know that the City of Manchester when you look at its history was never really designed around aging. It was designed around the mills and we want to be part of this movement to make Manchester as age-friendly as it possibly can be. That means really getting a good assessment on neighborhoods in the city and how accessible they are and how age-friendly they are. We have a lot of multi-dwelling housing units for example that have never really been fit up with the safety features and accessibility features that we need to support an aging population. There are lots of layers to that work that we feel we can bring some expertise to and some plans to that I think would inform the city for years to come.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked can you explain administratively what is going on here. We are not creating a new department correct? There is some consolidation going on here. Can you expand on that a bit for the sake of clarity?

Ms. Thomas answered essentially what we are proposing to do, and it is unfortunately in your HRIC packet and not on this agenda tonight, we are saying we will create a Healthy Aging Branch of the Health Department and in that branch we would have a supervisor who would be supervising already...this is all internal already and any of this movement we are doing is with dollars we already have. The only new dollars that we would be asking you for would be to fund a part-time Financial Analyst to help with the overall finances of our department and now bringing on another department so we have more eyes. Gabriel Walder is here tonight. She is our financial administrator and she is amazing. I can't say enough and you all know that 86% of our budget is grant funded with 30 outside projects. It is a lot to manage and to have a wingman that can help with some of the planning around the finances over multiple years is what we are looking for. Those are the only additional dollars we would be asking for. The rest would be managed internally. In that branch, we would also have the oral health program that is supervised by the existing supervisor there. We would add this Healthy Aging Specialist who would be doing home visiting. That again is an internal person we would bring into that position. The only other movement you would see is that we are looking to promote from within one of our supervisors to oversee those two branches. That is somebody that we are thinking of internally. We would also potentially bring in the expertise of having a building manager currently who manages our campus and we want to upgrade that person to also support the Senior Center campus as well. That way if there are any basic needs like changing a lightbulb and that kind of thing, our building manager can float between the two. That is something that we are asking. We would like to add a promotion for that individual for overseeing the two campuses. We also have an IT Support Specialist who potentially could help. We also have depth in staff who could float back and forth if they need to backfill. We feel that we have assets that we can bring to the infrastructure.

Alderman Burkush asked is Kim here from Senior Services.

Chairman T. Sapienza answered yes and we will get her up here. Are there any more questions for Anna? One thing I want to make sure I am clear on is right now the Senior Center reports to the HR Department and now they will be moving to the Health Department?

Ms. Thomas replied that is correct.

Mayor Craig stated that is just temporary because there is no department head. There should be a department head and there was for Senior Services.

Chairman T. Sapienza asked if we move it to the Health Department are we going to stop looking for a director.

Mayor Craig answered yes.

Chairman T. Sapienza called Kim Drohan forward to speak. Kim I think you know that the Senior Center enjoys a lot of support from this Board. We want to make sure you are comfortable with what is being presented and get your thoughts on it.

Kim Drohan, Senior Services Manager, replied we can absolutely collaborate just like many other departments do but I feel that you can do this and still remain separate departments. Right now, a lot of departments collaborate on things and I don't see why the Senior Center and the Health Department can't collaborate instead of having the Senior Services Department going under the Health Department. As far as the senior population, the new structure would take away a full-time position. Right now there are three full-time staff, myself and two others. There were four. For the last two years, we have been without a director. That has been since April 1, 2021. As part of the plan, that position would be permanently taken away. We all know that the senior population is growing. It is not getting smaller. It just makes sense to anticipate that growth and the continued growth in the population and stay ahead of it and to better serve the population by adding the director position and have four staff instead of combining it with the Health Department. Essentially, you are taking a full-time position away permanently and bringing us down to three even though the senior population is continuing to grow.

Alderman Fajardo stated I was wondering if you could speak directly to the advantages of not consolidating the departments. You did mention that a lot of departments partner and you highlighted the position being eliminated but what are some of the benefits to you operating individually?

Ms. Drohan replied first of all, keeping the Senior Center a Senior Center. I know there are no thoughts right now of it changing but down the road is it going to become a clinic for families? Is that landscape going to change? The seniors have mentioned to me that they don't want that. The Senior Center is their safe place. Because of Covid, a lot of them are taking care of grandkids and have children living with them. The Senior Center is their space to get away and feel safe and have their friends around and have socialization and the wellness programs and nutrition; all of it. You don't want to change that for the seniors.

Alderman Fajardo asked even if there is an opportunity to bring more to the offerings at the Senior Center.

Ms. Drohan answered I think you can still do that without combining.

Alderman Fajardo asked is it possible for us or is there an advantage to writing some language into this that would create some confidence around the future durability of the Senior Center.

Ms. Drohan answered I think that would help so the Senior Center would stay the Senior Center.

Alderman Fajardo stated I agree that that is a pretty important space and I would like to see it stay focused on seniors. I would also add that given the statistics that Director

Thomas and you have alluded to around the expanding population and increasing complexity of the systems that surround seniors, bringing the two departments together and having more horsepower if you will behind it from the entire Health Department, it feels like this a stronger position to take in order to prepare and plan for the expanding aging of our senior population. I intend to support this but I was trying to understand whether you could call out any particular advantages in keeping it separate. Thank you.

Chairman T. Sapienza asked is there an age limit or definition of seniors who can participate at the Senior Center.

Ms. Drohan answered it is 55 or older and for Manchester residents it is free. For non-residents it is \$25 for the year.

Chairman T. Sapienza asked this proposal doesn't affect that 55 age correct. That seems to be a cornerstone that we shouldn't be messing with.

Alderman Fajardo asked like making it younger.

Chairman T. Sapienza answered I don't think we want to make it younger.

Alderman Fajardo stated in reading all of this material on the HR packet, I didn't see anything that spoke about changing the arrangements at the Senior Center. Is that something that you are considering? I see you shaking your head but maybe you can voice that. I can understand wanting reassurance that it remain autonomous to the extent possible and not have too many fundamental changes other than the improvements.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated thanks Kim.

Mayor Craig stated you have heard a lot and I just wanted to talk a little bit about the process. We have been talking about this for a while. The department head in Senior Services has been vacant. We have put the job advertisement out and I guess one thing I do want to make a point of is it is the Senior Services Department but since I have been here we have always just focused that department on the Senior Center. As Anna mentioned, there are many more seniors in the city outside of those who go to the Senior Center. As was stated earlier, the Senior Center is doing a phenomenal job with what they are doing. This proposal does not affect what is happening at the Senior Center and I think before we put something forward to this Board it is important that you know that I met with Kim and I know that Anna and HR met with her and have talked with her about the concerns that she articulated to you. We agree that if we can put something in writing to alleviate her concern about the Senior Center becoming a clinic, we will do that. That is not the intention at all. What we want to do is expand services to senior citizens throughout the City of Manchester to provide services to those who are not going to the Senior Center and encourage people who are not going there or don't know about it to go there because there is phenomenal programming going on and to really optimize and gain efficiencies as well. I don't know that we need a director level position for just the senior services that are at the Senior Center when we could be doing so much more with the Health Department and also gaining all of their knowledge

and expertise in grant writing to really expand services not only at the Senior Center but again throughout the City of Manchester. I just wanted this Board to know that we did not do this in a vacuum. We did work with Kim on putting this together and feel that this is the strongest way moving forward to insure that our seniors in the city are getting the resources they need.

Alderman Fajardo stated you mentioned writing language to make sure it doesn't turn clinical. The only thing that stands out to me there is there could be some other unforeseen purpose that could shift its focus so if there is a way to keep whatever language we add more broad to keep the focus as is or not the focus but...

Mayor Craig interjected I guess whatever we need to do to insure that the seniors who go to the Senior Center and the staff at the Senior Center understand that this collaboration and change isn't changing things at the Senior Center. That is all and I guess with a vote that will happen. If we need to put something in writing, I would look to the Solicitor or Clerk to help us with that. There is no intention of doing anything negative at the Senior Center with this. In fact, we think there will be benefits to activities at the Senior Center.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated you mentioned that you met with the staff at the Senior Center; the three of you. Are all of you, the HR Director, Public Health Director and Mayor, able to assure this Board that you are haven't identified any cuts at the Senior Center?

Mayor Craig answered I absolutely can; yes.

Chairman T. Sapienza asked and you have looked at the programs and you believe the ones that are there are essential.

Mayor Craig replied yes absolutely. The Senior Center is doing phenomenal work. What we want to do is make sure that seniors who are not going to the center are getting services as well and we know that there are seniors who don't know about the Senior Center so if we can do outreach and get more seniors there, that would be extremely beneficial. What Kim mentioned in terms of seniors going there for their time, we want to make sure that seniors who are living in isolation are not. If we can help them get to the Senior Center, that is a benefit to them and a benefit to our Senior Center. That is what it is there for. We really want to lift up our seniors and lift up the Senior Center. There is no intention to cut any programming or any staff there.

Alderman Long asked if there were to be a shift in senior services, would that have to come back to the Board or can the Health Department or supervisor make the changes.

Ms. Thomas answered I want to reiterate that we don't want to touch anything there. Just like anything, if we were ever going to dramatically do anything, which I can't even imagine a scenario where that would be needed, that would not be something we would just do. What is most important here is it doesn't matter what I think or what Kim thinks or quite frankly what the Mayor thinks. It is really how we best serve the seniors. It is their Senior Center and we are going to honor that. The one thing I did not mention and

some of you may remember this but in 2015 under Mayor Gatsas we were without a Senior Services Director and he asked myself and Tim Soucy and Carrie Perry, his Chief of Staff, to go in and run the Senior Center for a period of time until decisions were made about what was going to happen. We all went into that facility and we were there for many weeks. I am very familiar with the set-up and the operation. We went into the data and into the books and into the finances. So it is not unfamiliar to us as a department. I think we need to revisit those things again. We did set some objectives that were six month objectives, one year objectives and 1-3 year objectives for any new director coming in and I would like to revisit those. Part of our exploration was I met with Bill Cashin. I sat with him because I wanted to insure that any recommendations we provided were true to what he had envisioned for that center. Also, we went to other senior centers to see what was happening across the state. There is actually accreditation for senior centers available as well. So whether you go for accreditation or not it is still healthy to look at the standards to see what are the practices around the country. Those are the kind of things that I would like to suggest we look at. Again, we are not going in there to change anything unless it makes sense or it is something they welcome and want and they need that support. We are not in there to change anything. We want to retain it and I am all for putting language together to say we are honoring that. We have no intentions to repurpose that building and again I can't even imagine a scenario in which that would happen. That is a Board decision. It is city property and you would be the ones who would dictate that. We will do whatever you want us to do obviously and what the seniors want us to do.

Matthew Normand, City Clerk, stated before you take a motion, Section 32.104 establishes the Senior Services Department in the Code of Ordinances and lays out objectives so at some point assuming the Board approves this that ordinance will have to come back to this committee to modify or amend and put it under the Health Department.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated we can vote to move this to the full Board for support of the concept and then we can take care of the technical issues.

*On motion of **Alderman Burkush**, duly seconded by **Alderman E. Sapienza**, it was voted to approve moving the Senior Services Department under a newly created Healthy Aging Branch of the Health Department. There being none opposed, the motion carried.*

1. Discussion regarding the creation of a new department of Homelessness Initiatives as proposed in Mayor Craig's FY24 budget.

Alderman Fajardo moved to approve.

Chairman T. Sapienza invited Mayor Craig and Adrienne Beloin to come forward. Can you please give us a brief description of what you are envisioning here?

Mayor Craig stated back in September 2022 when we were looking for a new Director of Homelessness Initiatives, you may recall I put a memo together to this Board talking about the job description and talking about the reporting structure and I put a few

options out mentioning that in the current situation the person reported to the Fire Department and in looking at other communities this type of position also reported to Planning & Community Development or had its own department. There was a brief discussion at the Board level and it seemed like the Board was really interested in having this as its own department. I actually agree with that which is why I am proposing it. This position is a critical person in terms of addressing homelessness in the City of Manchester and it needs a certain gravitas if you will to make sure that we are bringing other department heads together and non-profits together as well as the business community, community members and the state quite frankly to insure that we are doing all we can to address homelessness in Manchester. In addition to all of that coordination work, Adrienne is also the lead with the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the work that will be starting soon, the Continuum of Care in the city which is now undergoing a change in organization, as well as co-chairing one of the committees of the Governor's Council to address housing stability with Melissa Hatfield. So I feel like with the work she has done we have really raised the level of expectations of this position and it shows that the city is committed to focusing on preventing and addressing homelessness which is why I am proposing to make it its own department.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated so we have a Homeless Director now. The Fire Chief is obviously in charge of the Fire Department. What is Anna's official title?

Ms. Thomas answered Public Health Director.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated okay and we also have a Public Works Director. Is it semantics to create a department when you talk about gravitas and pulling people together?

Mayor Craig stated it requires an ordinance change to create a new department but yes. Right now, while Adrienne is a director, she is reporting to someone. I know from conversations that we have had at this Board that it is important that you have someone that you can speak to directly. As a department head, she would report directly to the Mayor and to this Board. I know that is important as well.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated I have a question for the Solicitor. Is there an ordinance that prevents a director from reporting directly to the Mayor without having a department?

Peter Chiesa, Deputy Solicitor, responded there is no ordinance that prevents it. The Board can call anybody up to answer questions they may have.

Mayor Craig stated that is not the question he had.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated my question is right now the Homeless Director reports to the Fire Chief. Couldn't we simply have the Homeless Director report to the Mayor without creating a department?

Alderman Fajardo asked what are the concerns around the creation of a department.

Chairman T. Sapienza responded my concerns are two-fold. One, to me a department is more than one person. Secondly, I am very concerned about the message going out to the greater community beyond Manchester that we have a Department of Homelessness Initiatives. We have a big branding effort going on in this city. I think the message that we have a Homeless Department here is going to attract homeless people. That is my concern.

Alderman Fajardo stated thank you for sharing that. May I comment?

Mayor Craig stated I would like to hear from the Solicitor. I didn't hear the answer to the question.

Deputy Solicitor Chiesa stated I am not quite sure I understand the question. This Board can ask for periodic reports from anybody like they do with the Airport, etc.

Mayor Craig asked can you be a director without being a department head and report directly to the Mayor. I have never heard of that.

Deputy Solicitor Chiesa replied to bypass it. I would have to look it up but I don't see why a director couldn't report to the Mayor as long as the department knew it. I would have to look at the structures.

Mayor Craig asked what department head would they...

City Clerk Normand interjected whoever the Board establishes. If this Board decides how that reporting structure was going to take place, that is how it would be. I don't think there is anything preventing it or requiring it. Today it is under Chief Cashin and the Board took an action on that. Tomorrow it could be Mayor Craig.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated the reason I am asking the question is because we are trying to create a department so the director can report to the Mayor. I am wondering if we can do that without creating a department.

Deputy Solicitor Chiesa replied there is no ordinance that prevents that.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated so we could do that.

Adrienne Beloin, Homelessness Initiatives Director, stated I think it is more than just having the director report to the Mayor. Having a department is actually getting to the heart of what you are concerned about. You are concerned that drawing attention to the homeless issue could draw more homeless folks to Manchester. I am keenly aware of that concern and having someone like me in this position or having anyone who is equipped to do this and is an expert in the field is going to be able to keep an eye on things like prevention of homelessness. Right now, with different departments overseeing pieces of homeless...it is not just a public safety issue or an issue that Fire can manage or that Health can manage. These are kind of picking at kind of mitigating the pieces of homelessness just to try to keep our operations running. Having homelessness appreciated as its own animal and how complex it is, we can actually

prevent the concerns that you have. We can get a hold of this and take a look at the 600 children that are reporting in our school system that they are homeless right now. We are not doing enough to pay attention to that because I am just one person without a department and without a platform to really kind of give it the justice that it needs. So having this be elevated to the level of a department and with someone like me who has the leadership experience that I do from an urban setting where a lot of these innovative programs I have already overseen, this is something that...I mean the ability to address this in Manchester is like right at our fingertips and I have the expertise to bring it here.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated that brings up the question how big do you see this department growing. In one year? In three years? In five years?

Ms. Beloin replied we already have a coordinator position that we asked for. My schedule is through the roof with the kinds of things I need to be a part of and that I have asked to be a part of. So having an administrative person is a key component just to keep us organized on what we need to respond to. In addition to that, I can imagine that there is a data quality element overseeing the CoC activities and taking a look at all of the work that is being done in the city and the work that is not being done in the city and kind of coordinating those areas and figuring out what funding we are missing and grant writing for opportunities that the city and CoC need. These are all things that are part of common homelessness developed systems that happen in other urban areas because that is what it takes to get a handle on what the numbers are and actually put the implementation in place to manage and contain it and actually develop the housing that we need. This is a massive undertaking for us to be able to do it right and without giving it that attention I am really fearful that we will be in a situation we can't manage. Having the Fire Chief or the department head of any other department...there is a limitation on what they can represent in homelessness because they are not an expert in that field. I think Ryan does an amazing job in representing homelessness and his understanding of it but he doesn't have the day-to-day insights and can't stay on top of the conversations that I am part of. So having the ability to work directly with the Board is going to completely mobilize the Board to appreciate the issues and for us to kind of vote in directions that the city needs.

Alderman Fajardo stated I want to add to that having the direct connection between you and the Board is something I really welcome. You have been here a short period and you obviously dove right into things and speaking for myself I have had this sense that it is a little opaque at times and not because that is the intention but simply because it is as you said a big, gnarly problem. I get calls all the time and it is a huge issue on the minds of constituents here. I don't always feel equipped to be able to have conversations at the level that I would like to. Not that we couldn't have individual meetings but I know that we authorized close to \$1 million on very short notice in January and I feel that the Board ought to be a lot closer to this. I think that the sort of logistics about reporting structure, all things being equal, if there is a way that that could work and make sense for that to work fine but what is on my mind is what I just articulated. I think it would be really positive for the whole Board to be in that position. Secondly, I would just add that around the branding piece that I see it from the flip side which is that our city has an opportunity to show leadership in this space. To the extent that we may have attracted more unhoused individuals, I think that is just going to

happen anyway. So the more that we are able to empower a director and potentially build up a support department underneath you, that to me is exactly where we need to be. Ideally, over time you will put yourself out of a job but I don't think that is happening any time soon. I fully support this.

Ms. Beloin stated there is a lot of influence with the state as well. With my ability to position where we truly are in Manchester...other communities who do not have a homeless title...there is no one else who has a homelessness title across the state but the other communities don't even know how many homeless people they have in their community. So when we get together in statewide groups and people represent from the other towns and cities, they are at a real disadvantage to even appreciate what the issue is. I think that my ability to articulate this and have the platform that I do is gaining the traction on what we need across the state to create equitable homelessness programming across the state so that we don't have the burden for the rest and they are appreciating what Manchester is going through. Being able to be at the table and in those conversations with other leaders across the state is super important to Manchester.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated I don't see the discussion getting to why we need a department. These things that I am hearing about, we have a director for.

Ms. Beloin responded it is beyond the scope of one person's 80-hour job.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated so know it is a question of growing a department with more and more individuals.

Ms. Beloin replied right now I am operating a shelter and trying to make relationships with the state and be a part of all of these collaborative activities and working with the CoC and getting deeper into the leadership there as well as this National Consultancy that we are doing. At the end of the day, when am I looking at prevention or building affordable housing? This cuts across every department in our city. It is not just a planning & development issue. It is not just a fire and safety issue. These are things where I have to be at the same level as folks so we can give this the attention it needs and I am able to operate at the level that I need to operate.

Mayor Craig stated just to note, the budget that I presented included a coordinator. I allocated ARPA funds for 50% of the coordinator position and assumed that the other 50% would come from the opioid settlement money.

Alderman Burkush asked so there is no pay change with this.

Mayor Craig answered correct.

Alderman Burkush stated one of the things I like is the fact that we have one person as aldermen that we can call when we have an issue rather than calling the Fire Chief. That is not his forte or Chief Aldenberg's. I do like responsibility and the fact that we can speak to somebody who knows exactly what they need rather than talking to somebody else or her supervisor. At first I was having trouble creating another

department. It is going to grow whether she is a department head or not. We are going to have to address all of those other issues. Who are we going to give it to? We noticed in Senior Services that we just folded into Health that we had to create a half-time position. We have a lot of homeless issues in Ward 9 and I have to get ahead of it somehow. I think that being able to speak directly with the individual as far as what her goals are and get it off the plate of the Fire Department because we need to get that organization back, those are my thoughts. At first I wasn't supportive of this, but I don't think there is any additional cost. This is just a better way to do it. That is what I think.

Alderman E. Sapienza stated in reference to lines of communication, I just want to say that I am certain the current Mayor and hopefully all future mayors and all of us encourage open lines of communication regardless of what one's title is. I just want to mention that about lines of communication regardless of the organizational structure. Beyond that, I want to say that I am hesitant about creating a new department. When you talk to the folks out there, that is now what I am hearing about. They are not overly interested in new departments being created. They are more interested in efficiencies. Thank you.

Alderman Stewart stated what I am hearing from people out there is that they want us to solve this issue and really get ahead of it. I think this proposal is a good step in doing that for a few reasons. One, to Director Beloin's most recent point, I think it is making us more proactive and less reactive. One of my concerns with her hire, which I was very supportive of and the creation of the position that came before that that I was supportive of, was that it is one person. I know in the Mayor's budget there is a coordinator position but we need more people to address this issue which is super complex. I don't think we need to tell anybody here how complex this issue is. It is beyond one person's capabilities as capable and as much of an expert as you are. In looking at this, especially in contrast to the discussion we just had with regard to the Senior Services Department being folded into Health, there to me it makes a lot of sense. The Health Department as we discussed has a lot of expertise on board and a lot of depth that can really expand those services. Again, no offense to Chief Cashin and the great men and women in the Fire Department but homelessness is not their line of business. This speaks to another concern of mine which is that we are asking departments, especially our first line folks, to do more that is outside of the scope of their job. We are asking the Fire Department to get into homelessness when they are already doing so much and doing it so well. That is not why a lot of these folks signed up to be firefighters. Likewise, our Police Department. They didn't sign-up to be social workers but they are. To me, this allows us to get a little bit ahead of this and address it more holistically and proactively so I will be supporting it.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated homelessness is a big problem and we have been working on it for a long time. When I think about a city department, those are diverse. Even without homelessness, the Fire Department has a long list of responsibilities and the Police Department has a long list of responsibilities as does Planning, Highway, and Health. We are talking about creating a department to tackle one problem. That is giving me pause. What is the next problem that pops up? Are we going to get a director and create a department? I am just telling you why I have pause.

Alderman Long stated I am not hearing what can't be done now that creating a department is going to do. Your qualifications I don't have an issue with. However, if it is more help you need, we don't have to set-up a department to get you more help. In setting up a department, salaries change because they have negotiations and I am not sure how the directors get a raise and whether it is automatic or they have to go to the Mayor. So directors don't get raises?

Mayor Craig replied she is a director right now and that is what she will continue to be.

Alderman Long stated but in the department scenario it is different.

Mayor Craig responded she stays at the same grade.

Alderman Long asked she stays at the same grade for 10 years.

Mayor Craig answered no like any other employee in the city...making this change isn't doing anything to our salary.

Alderman Long stated first of all, I don't have enough information to know what the deliverables will be. I am hearing that one person can't do it. I was there since June 2021 when we appropriated this money. I get that it is a lot of work to do and I would be more than happy to give you more help. My understanding with this department set up is once the grant ends for the Overdose Prevention position is done, that person would move into this department also. Again, I am not informed enough to know what the goal of that is. I don't enough about the current Homelessness Director's current initiatives. Also, as the Solicitor and Clerk said, the Board can have her report to us on a quarterly basis. We don't have to set-up a department.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated we could have a special committee.

Alderman Long stated I am not informed enough to be able to vote to set-up a new department.

Chairman T. Sapienza asked what does it take to eliminate a department.

City Clerk Normand answered it takes nine votes.

Deputy Solicitor Chiesa stated nine votes by ordinance.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated again we are setting up a department to tackle one problem.

Mayor Craig stated it is one problem but as Adrienne mentioned, there are a number of issues within that one problem. I am sorry that the packet that went to the HR Committee did not come to you in advance but I will read the five bullets that I have included here because it gets...

Chairman T. Sapienza interjected we will read them.

Mayor Craig stated let me talk to the second one which is homeless is complex and encompasses the issues of housing, employment, substance use, mental health, violence, crime, infectious disease, and social inequity. That is not within one department that exists in the City of Manchester right now but it would be in one department within the Homelessness Initiatives. There are a number of initiatives and demands that need to be addressed, which is why we are suggesting a department.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated some of those things are already part of other departments.

Mayor Craig replied but you need someone to own it.

Chairman T. Sapienza responded you need a director, not a department. You need a coordinator maybe.

Ryan Cashin, Fire Chief, stated if I could say one thing, I have had the privilege of working with Adrienne for the last four months. As has been well stated at this meeting, I am not an expert on homelessness. Typically, when someone calls me with a question my next call is typically to Adrienne. That is not the best way to do things. We have talked about forming a department in the past. I think that in order to tackle a problem really what it comes down to is leadership. What I have seen for four months is I have seen a natural leader that now understands the city enough to take that role and be a leader in the city and take the next few steps. We have done the best we can do with how we have been handling this. I think in order to take this next step this is the proper next step to move forward. I think it is important to put someone in that position that understands that. I can assure you that I would not recommend Adrienne for this job if she was not ready. She is 100% ready to lead and take this city to the next step forward. We are still going to work with her as much as we can. No single department is going to fix this but we do need someone that is going to lead and that person to lead is Adrienne.

Alderman Burkush asked Chief how many times do I call you a week about homelessness.

Chief Cashin answered four or five maybe.

Alderman Burkush asked how many times do I call you about Fire Department things.

Chief Cashin answered not that often.

Alderman Burkush stated I do the same thing with Chief Aldenberg and DPW. The calls are all about the same thing. We need somebody to pull this together if nothing else. This isn't costing any more money. I am going to support this.

Alderman Fajardo stated I would like to double-down on the point about our current approach. I would say very directly that it is not effective because the numbers are showing us that we are going in the wrong direction, not the correct direction. That is

not a reflection of the incredible amount of hard work by so many people across the city. Obviously everybody is working really, really hard but we are losing progress. I feel like this is a moment...I think we can collectively agree that this is one of the most, if not the most pressing issue in our city. This is the moment to try and get ahead of it or at least catch up to it and get it going in the right direction. That is the last thing I will say.

Chairman T. Sapienza stated I will say that we are already the leader in the state. We are already doing that. That is clear. The other thing is we are talking about creating a department and we are hearing about all the wonderful things this department is going to do but really we are going to be calling a department that has a director and a clerk and maybe a data person; that is three and those people are going to be calling the Fire Department and the Police Department and the Building Department. I don't see the deliverables like Alderman Long mentioned. I don't see that creating a department is doing that. I still haven't had that question answered to my satisfaction.

Alderman Stewart duly seconded the motion to create a new department of Homelessness Initiatives. **Chairman T. Sapienza** called for a vote. The motion carried with Aldermen T. Sapienza and E. Sapienza duly recorded in opposition.

There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman E. Sapienza**, duly seconded by **Alderman Fajardo**, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Clerk of Committee

Deputy Solicitor