

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC HEARING – SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION)
October 16, 2023 at 5:30 PM**

Mayor Craig called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Stewart, Long, Fajardo, T. Sapienza, Trisciani, Levasseur,
Heath, E. Sapienza, Burkush, Barry

Absent: Aldermen Cavanaugh, Kantor, Gamache, George-Kelly

*On motion of **Alderman Stewart**, duly seconded by **Alderman Fajardo**, it was voted to recess the meeting.*

Mayor Craig called the meeting back to order.

Mayor Craig advised that the purpose of this special meeting is a public hearing to receive comments on the resolution for a supplemental appropriation. The Clerk shall present the resolution, following which comments will be heard.

1. Resolution:

“Authorizing the utilization of excess revenues from the Manchester School District Fiscal Year 2024 budget revenue estimates for a supplemental appropriation of \$35,223,387 to the Manchester School District pursuant to Section 6.05 (a) of the City Charter in Fiscal Year 2024.”
(Note: Attached is a communication from the Finance Officer regarding the supplemental appropriation.)

Mayor Craig advised that the meeting shall be open to public comments. Each person when recognized shall come to the nearest microphone, state their name and address in a clear, loud voice for the record; that each person shall be given one opportunity to speak and comments shall be limited to three minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak.

Julie Turner, 285 Ray Street stated:

I am here tonight as a parent of three students in the district, as well as a member of the Board of School Committee, to speak in favor of the \$35 million in revenue available for appropriation in FY24 to the Manchester School District. As you know, these funds come before us as a part of an extraordinary needs grant offered by the Department of Education for school districts with high concentrations of student poverty and low property wealth. This appropriation will help increase student opportunity and achievement, enhance our sports, robotics, music and arts programs, and other extracurriculars, prepare a foundation for the long-term facilities plan and help attract and retain the highest quality educators and administrators. As I sit here tonight, I am pleased to acknowledge the bridge that I see strengthening between the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and the Board of School Committee. I here from the BMA and the greater community the desire to attract and retain more young people in NH. Strengthening our schools is one of the fundamental ways to get young Granite Staters to fall in love with and stay in Manchester and to work, play and learn. Your support for a robust district in Manchester ensures that our schools are not just competitive with surrounding towns but that we are a district people are focused on because of innovations like the first dual language immersion school, diverse course offerings like an AP African American Studies course, an inclusive welcome center, and new 21st Century Learning Environments. In closing, thank you for the consideration of this appropriation in the form of the extraordinary needs grant. We as the Board of School Committee will use it responsibly to do extraordinary things with it for the future of our students, their families, our teachers and our community. Thank you.

Debbie Howe, 390 Ray Street, stated:

I have two children in the district – a 17-year-old and a 12-year-old and they have been educated in Manchester schools. I am here today to speak out as the State Department of Education has recognized the need in Manchester schools for extra money in the amount of \$35 million in the form of an extraordinary needs grant. I am urging the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to accept this \$35 million from the state and allocate the money to the Manchester School District. Currently, Manchester spends \$15,043 per

student, the lowest of 77 districts statewide. The real cost per student is more like \$19,000 per the NH Department of Education and some NH towns spend \$25,000 per student or more. Similarly sized and/or diverse neighboring towns such as Nashua and Salem, spend \$16,772 and \$17,980 per student respectively. While other nearby towns have built new school buildings in recent years, Manchester is burdened with many buildings that are far beyond their useful life span and require additional spending over and above the norm just to keep them usable. Accepting this money from the state and allocating it to the Manchester School District will allow the district to fund part of the long term facilities plan that is much needed given the age and condition of Manchester's 21 schools. Accepting the money from the state will also add much needed money and programs in the district like music, ROTC, robotics, a welcome center and many clubs and extracurriculars that never get funded. This money will also be used to recruit and retain the highest quality educators by increasing wages and improving working conditions. It will also allow the district to shift some temporary positions that are currently being paid for with Covid relief money to permanent positions in the general fund. Lastly, this money will be used to enhance technology and to update, replace and replenish technology like our 1:1 Chromebooks and the Clear Touch panels in the classrooms. Manchester has extraordinary needs because we have some of the highest need students in the state, yet because of some of our high density living in the city, our property taxes do not stretch as far. Please vote to accept the \$35 million from the State Department of Education to help bridge the gap between what our tax dollars can help fund and what our district desperately needs. Thank you for your consideration.

Katie LaBranche, 443 N. Bay Street, stated:

I am a parent with two children in this district – 5th and 7th grade. I am the Reading Supervisor at Webster School and I also Chair Manchester Proud so I am here to speak on behalf of all of those things. I am in agreement with Debbie and Julie to accept these funds. The school district, in alignment with the community's strategic plan, is making purposeful investments in the future of our schools and the success of our students. This additional funding will allow us to continue the implementation of vertically aligned curriculum, professional development, and expanded student support

systems as we continue to recover learning loss during the pandemic. We have historically been among the lowest funded in the state on a per pupil basis. This change in funding, fueled by a change in the state's adequacy aid calculation, would improve that status. The additional funding would be critical in investments for district facilities and staff and will benefit our community now and into the future. I do just want to share some amazing things happening right now. Dozens of our staff members were nominated for teacher of the year with one named a finalist. We have many students who have been recognized both statewide and nationally for their efforts. We are about to launch a new dual immersion program which will be the first of its kind in the state of NH. We have the federal grant award to support school safety initiatives and a district-wide expansion of multi-tiered systems of support. We also have some innovative programs as industry recognized credentials, a free opportunity for students to earn certifications that can help them stand out to potential employers right here in Manchester. We also have a continued leverage with community partnerships to benefit our students, families and staff. Thank you for your time.

Matthew Normand, City Clerk, stated that concludes our speakers. I will note for the record that we have forwarded written communications from Bridget Krieger, Laurie Kempf, Kathy Brodsky and Denise Moore to the Board.

Carla Giorgi, 811 Maple Street, stated:

I have only been in NH for about 10 years. I have lived in six different states and this is the only place I am raising a child at this time. So far, I have been pretty impressed with the district but to find out that there is \$35 million that should go to the schools sounds, I was happy God smacked. So I am here to plead that you consider sharing the funds. In addition to being in the midst of a long-term facilities plan, I feel like at the least the money should be used to raise wages. For instance, you raised the rate for the daily subs from \$60 to \$115 and lo and behold it seems like we have a lot of substitutes now and we are doing much better on that. We need crossing-guards and we need bus driver so at the least we should be going to those. I would like to say that I volunteer at my son's school, which is Smyth Road Elementary. I have a master's in Library & Information Science and I know how to catalog books. I decided to reach out to the

Library and Bridget Krieger and I asked if I could help in any way and she said oh yes I have zero dollars to buy books. If we call ourselves an institution of education, I know books are just one medium but I found that...I wanted to cry and I found it infuriating. So she has stacks of books that have been donated by parents and I put my skills to use cataloging them for her and trying to recruit parents to help with that but that should not be the way it is. It should not. In addition to that, in trying to help her I realized that the system they use for the libraries in our schools is outdated and the company offers very little support so I would recommend updating the integrated library system, the ILS. That is a software expense that I think we should invest in. I am just here to appeal as one person that has been volunteering at a school and finding a teacher who is working so hard to foster a love of reading and learning and just being challenged at every turn in some ways. I just find that so infuriating so please if you can allocate this money it would certainly be greatly appreciated by many residents and the staff at the Manchester School District.

Mayor Craig asked do any Board members have any questions.

Alderman Levasseur asked can Ms. DeFrancis come forward.

Mayor Craig stated we can do this tomorrow night to if you would like.

Alderman Levasseur stated I guess I can wait but who knows. We may end \\\lup being here until 11 PM tomorrow. I don't have a lot of questions. I just want to know if there are any strings attached to this money from the state and what they are if there are any.

Karen DeFrancis, Finance Officer, answered it is the current formula that the state has changed so there are no strings attached.

Alderman Levasseur stated I read somewhere that \$20 million of that is supposed to go towards building construction and \$15 million was left over for other expenditures. Is that not accurate?

Ms. DeFrancis replied that is our recommendation, the Superintendent and Board of School Committee's recommendation to put \$20 million of it towards facilities but it is not a requirement of the state.

Alderman Levasseur asked so the money that you get that you put towards say salaries, if you do that in this fiscal year when you come back to the Board for your next budget will that money be part of the base or not included in the base that we have currently.

Ms. DeFrancis answered so it is the current formula and it will be included again based on the current formula that the state just changed.

Alderman Levasseur asked so you are not going to add \$15 million to the base and then the tax rate is going to go up 5% next year based on another \$15 million in this current budget. What is your number now?

Ms. DeFrancis responded \$191 million I believe.

Alderman Levasseur asked so would you add another \$15 million to that.

Ms. DeFrancis replied we would add \$35 million to that but that \$35 million is supported by the revenue that is coming from the state. So it is not going to impact the tax rate.

Alderman Levasseur asked what about in two or three years. Will there be a different tax rate or an increase in it?

Ms. DeFrancis answered no. Right now, that is the formula so we would expect...we may see a higher amount if we have additional students or a lower amount if we lose students because it is based on per student amounts. However, the formula also incorporates a 2% increase per year in the rates. So we would expect an increase in the rates and depending on what happens with our students, it could go down slightly

but again with that increase of 2%, it could go up. Based on the current formula, we are not expecting the dollar amount to change significantly.

Alderman Levasseur asked so when you say rates do you mean tax rates.

Ms. DeFrancis replied no the rates that the state pays us per student. There is a base rate and then different aid rates.

Alderman Levasseur asked so your recommendation is that...but the Board doesn't have to follow that recommendation. What would you use \$15 million in cash for on your budget? Do you already have that allocated?

Ms. DeFrancis responded yes.

Alderman Levasseur asked can you provide us a sheet.

Ms. DeFrancis stated of the \$35.2 million, \$13 million is for staffing and wage consideration, the long term facilities plan is \$20 million, other programs is \$1.5 million and that would be things like extracurricular activities, music programs, and the robotics program. That is going to be held aside and possibly there will be community partnerships. There are a variety of things program related and school district related that the \$1.5 million would be used for. Then we have technology with Chrome Book replacement at \$500,000 and Clear Touch Panels and other needs in our technology department of \$223,000. That comes out to the \$35.2 million.

Alderman Levasseur asked can you use any of the money for paying off debt.

Ms. DeFrancis answered well the debt is within our operating budget so we could use any of this portion towards debt service if we wanted to.

Mayor Craig stated to a certain extent you are with the \$20 million correct.

Ms. DeFrancis stated it is a matter of whether or not we will use the \$20 million to pay off debt or if we would use that towards the project to lower the amount of the debt that we would have to bond.

Alderman Levasseur stated you know that is where I was going.

Alderman Burkush asked can you email us a list of what you just said.

Mayor Craig stated it is on your agenda – Page 3. While you are here, Karen, can you just clarify the library books. It came up at the School Board meeting and I just want this Board and the public to know too.

Jenn Gillis, Superintendent, stated we actually have line items for books and consumables within our schools so I will follow-up with that principal to make sure that we have books in place within that school. I will take care of it.

Mayor Craig advised that there is no one else present wishing to speak, all comments shall be taken under consideration.

*This being a special meeting of the Board, on motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Stewart**, 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.

City Clerk