

COMMITTEE ON JOINT SCHOOL BUILDINGS

February 12, 2024 at 5:00 PM

Chairman O'Connell called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: School Committee Members O'Connell, Soule, Turner
Aldermen Terrio, O'Neil

Absent: Alderman Morgan

Messrs.: M. Rice, M. Fryer, R. Park, J. Gillis, School Committee Member Baines

1. Presentation from SMMA regarding the School District's Long-Term Facilities Plan.

Chairman O'Connell stated Alderman Morgan has asked me to express his apologies. He has to be elsewhere on another important matter tonight, so he sends his regrets. The item on the agenda tonight is we are having a presentation from SMMA. I'll leave the people from SMMA to tell us the full name of SMMA so I don't struggle with it. You are welcome here tonight. Before you begin your presentation, I'd like to say a couple of things. The presentation is on Phase I of the Long-Term Facilities Plan. This work has been going on since the spring of last year. Phase I of the plan, and the subject of this committee, includes issues around putting modulars in place, the construction around building extensions and additions, and remodeling the four middle schools, and the issues around the building of a new elementary school. There is one other item on Phase I which is what I want to draw people's attention to. As part of Phase I, the Board of School Committee had asked the long-term planning team to look at what feasible sites there might be for a high school in Manchester and to come up with a guideline price for what a school that size might be, and how much it might cost. Those are all what is important for us and I want people to understand that no decision has been taken. No money has been passed. The Board of School Committee has not made a decision about what is going to happen with regard to our high schools in the City of Manchester. Phase II of this process will be coming before the Board of School Committee and before the public at the end of March or beginning of April. At that point, there will be discussion about what we do next. It is an important divide to have, because while I am happy to entertain questions that people have about the Phase I plan and what's in it, I think it's important to remain constrained around the fact that this committee is concerned with the construction of these projects and those are the projects that have been passed that concern the \$290 million, which was bonded by the Aldermen for the purposes stated which have to do with the four middle schools, the modulars, and the building of a new elementary school. That also is what has been passed by the Board of School Committee as its Phase I plan. I hope that helps to set the stage so people understand where we are. Lastly, I would say the intention is to have SMMA go through their presentation and then at the end we can have a robust question and answer session to satisfy everybody. It is worth noting that there will be a meeting of the Boards of Mayor and Aldermen and School Committee at Memorial High School on the evening of March 4. This presentation will be made at that time. There will be an opportunity for aldermen and school board members to get another

opportunity to see this and to ask questions. With that, please introduce yourselves and take the floor.

Matt Rice, Architect Principal at SMMA, introduced himself.

Marisa Fryer, Civil Engineer at SMMA, introduced herself.

Rosemary Park, Educational Planner at SMMA, introduced herself.

Mr. Rice stated SMMA stands for Symmes, Maini, and McKee Associates. We are completely ok with the acronym we go by, SMMA. We know it is a tongue-twister at times. We are not offended if people garble it up a little bit on the first couple of passes. We are excited to be here to give an update. We know this committee will have oversight of the Phase I projects initially, these priority one projects that we will be reviewing. We want to make sure that everyone has a good understanding of what the scope of the projects is, what they entail, what the current intended timetable of them are going to be. While Mr. O'Connell just reviewed it, I am going to go through it one more time just to make sure we are clear in terms of what those projects specifically are. One is the new Beech Street Elementary School. We will explain the rationale for why that new school is part of the project. The middle schools we are planning for both additions as well as comprehensive renovations at all four middle schools. We will also this fall look at temporary modular classroom buildings at all four middle school sites as well as at the Beech and McDonough sites. That is the scope of what we are talking about this evening. In addition, we will be covering some of the funding and cost models associated with them. We are interested in having some discussion in terms of questions and answers towards the end of the presentation. I will pause here for a moment to stress the fact that these projects are really the outgrowth of the strategic plan; the plan that was laid out prior to us beginning a long-term facilities master plan. It is a natural outgrowth of that. In terms of moving towards four middle schools, that is what we are renovating and modifying. In terms of the twelve elementary schools, this scope of work does reflect the closure of Wilson, which will be happening this fall. The new Beech Elementary School is really going to combine the students eventually of both Beech and Wilson at the new Beech Street site. That will be how we are moving from thirteen to twelve elementary schools and fulfilling that part of the strategic plan. We are going to start off with explaining about the new Beech and what that entails, and where it is located.

Ms. Park stated our recommendation is to build a new elementary school for the Beech Street and Wilson Elementary school students. This would be a larger school to accommodate both populations, ultimately. When we were exploring where to build the new school for the Beech and Wilson students, we looked at several parcels of land. Several of which are owned by Parks and Recreation. You can see all of the Parks and Recreation owned sites in this green outline. That red outline is anything that is city-owned with school assigned. There is a small parcel where the existing Beech Street School sits. We had started and had discussions about this with Parks and Recreation. In proposing this new building for the Beech Street Elementary, we are looking at the site across the street from the existing school at the Sheridan-Emmett Park with the understanding that this green space must be created elsewhere at the current Beech Street Elementary School site. The early siting shows a three-story building for

approximately 734 students, and again this would be K-4 students, with the understanding that fifth grade would have already moved up by this point to the middle schools, and again for all the Wilson students as well. We want to explain why we chose the Beech Street site. Essentially, it is an investment in the city center. Having followed the closures of the Hallsville and Wilson Schools, it has the potential to become a great community school for this area and really investing in the city center instead of divesting. It is located in the same ward as the Wilson Elementary school so students are able to stay within the neighborhood. Also, the existing Beech Street School is not an optimal building as it is today as it has many interior and windowless classrooms, many classrooms in the basement with no windows or small windows; not optimal learning spaces. These are some early aspirational images that we use to try to generate ideas about what the school can be. We are not in the design phase yet, but here is some early thinking. We want to incorporate learning spaces that occurred not just within the assigned classroom walls, but really outside. Learning commons, pullover spaces, small group rooms, are some examples of this where you can have both collaborative spaces and more individual-focused areas. The image to the right of the screen, looking at providing outdoor learning areas for science observations or art class or bringing your book outside to enjoy out there. This is a small video that we are going to show. It is a short clip. Part of this plan does involve the implementation of temporary modular classrooms. These aren't the types of portables you see today at some of the schools. They look and feel like permanent classrooms. We have already started working with the administrations of each school to understand the types and kinds of programs that are going into these temporary modulators and to also understand where on the site they should go. The siting is important and also talking about any security issues that need to be addressed as well.

Mr. Rice stated in going around to the various communities that are going to be affected by these temporary modulators and where they are going to be located at the different schools we have been showing this video. One of the prefaces that we give before we show it is that this is depicting a two-story building. The modulators that are going to be showing up on site are all single story modulators. Also, the furniture that you are going to see in the video is for an elementary school. In some cases, it may be more analogous to what will be found at McDonough or Beech in terms of temporary modular buildings, but obviously not for middle school. This is intended to give a general idea of the level of quality of construction. We are now going to run through the recommendations for the middle schools and what the projects entail. In a general sense, all four middle schools will be receiving additions and interior renovations. In terms of the level of renovation, McLaughlin which is the newest building, will have less because it needs less because it was designed originally to support team teaching in the middle school model, which is what we are trying to achieve equity for with all four middle schools, so Hillside, Southside, Parkside will be receiving additional levels of renovations to be able to get to that team teaching model. McLaughlin is already a good way there in terms of its realization of that. It will still be getting a significant addition, though. We are going to walk through all four middle school sites so you can get a sense of both where the permanent additions are, so the blue boxes that you see surrounding the buildings will be the location that we are currently planning for permanent additions. The yellow areas are where the temporary modular classrooms will be located. In some cases, those two things will be located on site for some duration of time while construction is ongoing, but at the end of the day the yellow temporary modular box will go away and you'll be left

with where the blue boxes are located. To explain the graphic legend of each of these diagrams, the red boundary outlined is city-owned parcels that have been assigned to schools, and the green boundary – and you don't see any here – are city owned but assigned to Parks and Recreation. To start with Hillside, the permanent addition is currently planning to be located towards the northern end of the top of the building. It is currently where the basketball courts are located, off the edge of the exiting cafeteria. The temporary modulares are planned to be located where the existing staff parking lot is there. Hillside is the most challenging of the sites in terms of the compression that we have of the different site amenities that are there, between the parking and the drop-off. We had these initial discussions with the principal. We had community and staff meetings as well to start understanding all of the various moving pieces that are associated with getting all of that to work. It is still a work in progress. We are still putting together the construction documents to finalize that which we are targeting the end of this month. We have had some good discussions about where the priorities are and how the parts and pieces are going to be working in the interim logistical perspective. We will take a look at the similar types of diagrams for each of the middle school projects. What you see here is a simple overlay of the existing plan of Hillside which shows both the existing classroom spaces, the gymnasium that you can see in the center, the cafeteria towards the top in the yellow, as well as a general footprint in terms of what the addition may incorporate. The program and the layout of the addition is very much not finalized yet. One of our initial next steps that we will be moving into is the actual detailed programming associated with determining the contents of that addition. It is a two-story addition. We know there needs to be classroom spaces in there. We have heard a lot of the interest to it. We know that generally the size of it is correct at a master planning level. We have not gone into the detailed design programing or documentation of that yet. That is the next step in our process for realizing the additions and the renovations that will happen here. In terms of the renovations, we will be at all three of the middle school triplets doing substantial renovations to the interior of the building to achieve this middle school model. So, you can get a sense in your mind of what that might entail, right now each of the hallways that surrounds or runs through the middle of the middle schools is just an artery that moves back and forth with classrooms located on either side. What we plan to do is remove some of the walls to those classrooms so that we can create team environments and common spaces so that classrooms can pull out of their primary classroom environments and experience a differentiated learning environment and create a sense of place for each of the teams. Right now, each of these buildings was designed as a junior high school when they were originally built. We just have those hallways and classrooms. It is challenging to create a sense of identity in place for teachers and staff that are really leveraging that team teaching model that we find in McLaughlin. The way to do that that we are envisioning currently in the triplets is to open up some classroom spaces or some classrooms' walls that separate the hallway to the classroom and that will be a primary aspect of the renovations. They will also include other aspects, such as renovations of toilet rooms which are sorely needed. There will be dehumidification systems added that will be bringing everything up to the same level of equity from an HVAC system standpoint, similar to what has been done in some of the buildings in a sort of piece-meal fashion using ESSER funds over the course of the past few years. Now for the McLaughlin site, it is currently the one building that has been designed and is operating in a full team-teaching approach in terms of the space. All the middle schools have moved in that team teaching direction. They are just

working elsewhere in conditions where the building doesn't support the educational model as much. The temporary modular classroom building is to the bottom left or southwest of the building itself. This is located off of the existing cafeteria. It will be pinching a small amount into the soccer field on a temporary condition. We have measured that out and we still have the ability to create a competition soccer field that will be slightly shorter than the one that is there now for the age group that the middle school will use. It is a small impingement to the functionality there, but it won't be detrimental to the activities that would be going on in the field. The permanent addition for McLaughlin is intended to actually complete the circuit if you will, or the circle, that is currently defined by the existing courtyard. Currently the courtyard, when you approach the front entry of the school, is very deep. What we are looking to do is connect two items to the building with the gymnasium and the cafeteria, create a new main entrance, and also create an outdoor learning environment that is safe and protected in terms of that courtyard space in the center of the building. It will also help improve travel and circulation throughout the building. Rather than having a linear circulation path from one end to the other, we now have the ability to create a loop within and create a lot more flexibility in terms of how the school operates. Once again, in terms of the program of what is going to be going inside of the addition, we are targeting some expansion of the cafeteria to be able to give a little more space. McLaughlin is going to be one of the two middle schools that is receiving the fifth grades along with Hillside. Part of the intent behind creating the additions is to provide some additional capacity that reflects the addition of the fifth-grade students to the school population. Some of the other pieces that have been discussed with some of the initial visioning in discussions with the principal have been some expansion potentially to the gymnasium either with an alternate PE space or potentially a type of stage at the end of the gym to allow for some larger gatherings. We need to get into that detailed programming stage before we can have finite level of detail in terms of what the additions are going to encompass. In terms of Southside, the temporary modular classroom building will be located towards the front of the building. We are going to be going over the top of a small circulation loop, a vehicular circulation loop, that is located there. We will not obstruct the main bus circulation that works through, nor the parking area here. This is an ideal spot in terms of locating the temporary modular building where it is going to have very little impact in terms of the overall site circulation operation on the interim basis. The permanent addition here is also going to be located toward the north of the building. It will be located on staff parking area. Addressing staff parking both on a temporary basis in terms of when construction starts, and as well on a permanent basis is going to be one of the site topics that we need to address as we move forward with the design of this particular location. As you can see here, the permanent addition is potentially going to include an expansion of the cafeteria at the first floor because this cafeteria was not previously expanded. We have the potential for adding additional classrooms. There would also here be interior renovations of a similar scope to Hillside and Parkside in terms of creating team teaching spaces within renovations of toilet rooms, HVAC upgrades, I don't think I mentioned exterior windows previously but that would also be part of the common suite of renovations that are being considered for the triplets. Lastly, at Parkside, the temporary modular classroom building is going to be located behind the building in this particular location. It is really the only available spot where we can safely get students into and out of the building and not adversely impact the rest of the site operations, as well as preserving the footprint for the new addition which will be located again towards the north of the building. Here we are looking to create an outdoor

courtyard space that will be safe and protected, as well as provide cafeteria expansion and the circulation loop that doesn't currently exist right now to increase flexibility of how Parkside operates. To give you a slightly closer look in terms of the operations here, alternative PE may be an opportunity that is here. We also heard some discussions about some supplemental music spaces. These are all wonderful spaces that we are looking forward to meeting with the administration and getting into a little bit detail, as well as with the actual staff and the departments that are teaching at the school so that we can make sure that the final configuration of these additions reflects the educational goals that are present.

Chairman O'Connell stated I'm going to stop you right there, just for a minute. This is the moment I was addressing at the start of the meeting. Everything that has been dealt with up until this point is that which has been approved to move forward with and money has been bonded for it. I wanted to stop again to emphasize the point because there was some discussion in the background before this presentation about any confusion that might be created by having a conversation around the high school. My feeling was that since it is part of Phase I, this explanation needed to be part of the presentation. I want to emphasize the point that we are not at the point of decision with the project you are going to talk about here. These are for discussion and more is coming.

School Committee Member Soule stated I think it is really important for the community to know the role of the Joint School Building Committee. Our role is to oversee, be the eyes and the ears, of the construction and renovations of these projects: Beech Street, all four middle schools, and all the modulares. That is our role. That is the only role that this committee has. I want to make sure everybody understands that piece as we go forward. That is important for everyone to know.

Alderman O'Neil asked do you want to take questions now up to what Mr. Rice has presented so far.

Chairman O'Connell stated I am hoping that is where the preponderance of the questions will be, but let's not leave it hanging. Especially as we have time; we are 28 minutes in. If you can run through it and then the questions will be wherever we want those questions to go.

Mr. Rice stated I think we will get to the point of being able to field questions on the elementary schools and middle schools shortly anyway. I was going to run through these slides in a very abbreviated fashion. Just speaking to the realities of the purview of this committee over the high school itself, where we are in the process. I won't just click all the way through, but just to give you a sense of what we have done, we have looked at overall models in terms of how high schools may be distributed throughout the city. We have focused on the notion of having some school choice involved with selection of high schools. All this is very exciting material that we did investigate as part of the long-term facilities master plan, but not necessarily pertinent to the discussions that we just heard a moment ago. There is also this notion of an alternative middle-high school, involved in terms of the overall high school picture for the district and the city. There were some program studies associated with where a new high school may be located, in terms of the size as well as what it may need for parking. As Rosemary went through earlier, we had some analogous aspirational images for some of the types of

spaces that may be included in said high school. We looked at a potential site and location option which was going to be on the existing Beech Street site, so there is a connection because this site could not happen without the existing Beech Street School being relocated and rebuilt as a new building on the adjacent park. We won't go into a lot of detail here; this is really just familiarizing everyone with what the elements of that site were. The components of the site in terms of what may be located on there, I feel the obligation to mention as we are looking at this that I know Gill Stadium is pictured as part of these slides. There is never an intention to modify or do anything with Gill Stadium building itself. It is on the site itself and that is why it is depicted in these images. There was one option location here that positioned ourselves on the footprint of the existing Beech Street site. There was a second option that shifted the ice rink that is at JFK Memorial Coliseum to the north and rebuilt it as a new building and shifted that high school to the south. This is a plan view of that. That was the look at the high school location that we had. It is worth taking a quick minute to look through both the schedule associated with these projects as well as some of the funding opportunities that exist. Some are going to be more applicable to forthcoming aspects of the long-term facilities master plan. Some of these dates are approaching fairly quickly. To start off at the top, in September 2024, that is this fall semester, there is a certain number of activities that are going to be occurring. One is that Wilson Street Elementary will be closed. In order to accommodate those students, we will be creating temporary modular classroom buildings at McDonough and Beech, and will have a roughly distributed amount of students go to each one of those temporary modular buildings. To clarify that in a way, we are not taking those Wilson Street students and putting them in a modular classroom at each location. Those students are going to get mixed in with the Beech Street students and with the McDonough students. Those modular classrooms are used to house all students combined throughout. Then in terms of the middle schools, the modular classroom buildings will be added at all four middle schools. This is to support establishing the fifth grade to eighth grade model at both Hillside and McLaughlin as we said earlier. We are also adding to them to Southside and Parkside right up front even though we are not going to be starting construction there immediately. Just to be able to create some additional capacity in terms of the number of students that are there currently. I believe in some cases we may be locating the fifth grade when they come up into the modular classroom buildings at the recommendation of the principals. In one case I think there may be some seventh-grade classes that end up out in the moduls at the middle schools. We are working with the principals to understand how those spaces are going to get utilized. The modular classroom buildings do have within them, in addition to classrooms, special education spaces, administrative space. We are really trying to make sure that students can be in the moduls and with their peers in a lot of different conditions and it is not that they are going to be there the entirety of the time. They will be moving in, even if the fifth graders are there, to the main buildings for unified arts, for cafeteria, for physical education. There will be a lot of back and forth. That is all happening by this fall. There is a lot of activity that is going on right now in terms of the planning and documentation associated with all the temporary moduls and the closing of Wilson. Then we look forward starting around September 2026 is when we are looking to have the initial additions and renovations complete at both Hillside and McLaughlin. These are the two schools where fifth grades will be migrating to them. We decided to not try to accomplish all four middle school projects, the additions and the renovations, at the same time because we are worried about oversaturating the construction market with that volume of work being done at the same

time so we staggered those projects out by about ten months. What that will allow is for construction to start eventually at Hillside and McLaughlin in terms of concrete foundations and steel work and get that work completed before that foundation and steel work would start at Southside and Parkside. That is why you see that initial target of December 2026 for Hillside and McLaughlin completion. We do have in May 2027 a target of moving into a new Beech Street Elementary School. In December 2027, a target of completing the additions and renovation work at both Parkside and Southside. That is where the schedule and timeline under the purview of this committee right now stops, because we are not going to be moving into the high school or years five to twenty of the master plan. That scope and the recommendations that are tied to Phase II, as Mr. O'Connell noted, will be coming towards the end of March or beginning of April in terms of outlining what those projects are going to be. A quick update here, and this may be retroactive in terms of looking at the capital improvements list. We had been working with the district to understand their current capital improvement needs and making sure that we are not doing work that will be redundant with the current capital improvement plan in the future. We can target funds effectively and in a cost-effective manner. Just as we circle back to the \$306 million that was bonded for to account for these Phase I projects, we want everyone to understand that this is representative of total project cost which is both hard construction costs - the building of the buildings, the construction of the sites as well as the design activities that are related to them like the procurement of furniture, of technology, things that are going to be in the building and are absolutely necessary in terms of making the buildings functional. All of those things are included and estimated under the total project cost. This is how, in terms of the breakdown that we have between new Beech Street Elementary School at \$76 million, and then the additions and renovations at the four middle schools at \$216 million, and when we add in the project costs associated with the temporary modular classrooms, we come up to \$292 million. If you ask yourself how we get to the \$306 million, there is contingency associated with this in terms of expecting the unexpected and trying to make sure that we are accounting for that in a responsible budgetary way. That is why we ended up bonding for that total of \$306 million. We did do some projection of the high school cost, but that is not pertinent to the discussion this evening. To describe the various funding opportunities with some of the construction that will be initiating here under the Phase I projects were more limited in terms of what opportunities we have. There are still some things that are on the table for us to consider. Obviously, the bonding, in terms of discussions with bond counsel, that was all crucial in terms of the financial models that were established and the bond limit that was established. Understand that was done in concert with bond counsel. The Inflation Reduction Act, that is available from a federal perspective. There is still opportunity to get reimbursement there. It is generally for energy efficient systems and construction that we could include as part of the new additions and renovations, as well as the new Beech. A schedule for the bonds; we have a table towards the end of this presentation. It is important to note that in terms of these Phase I projects that there is no impact on the tax cap in terms of the funding model that was established. There was the State School Building Aid that unfortunately is not going to be available for these Phase I projects given the timetable of when the next iteration of funds is going to be released. It will be potentially under consideration and use by the city and district once we get to those Phase II projects, the high school or any of the other Phase II recommendations with the remaining elementary schools. State Adequacy Grants. It is important to note that a lot of the funding for the bond that was approved is really tied directly to the

increase in the State Adequacy Grant that the district received. We have had other conversations as well in terms of opportunities for renewable rebates and discussions about funding CTE. A lot of these things are tied more towards high school opportunities than what we currently have in front of us. This is the bonding schedule for the \$306 million that we have as well as a secondary look if the high school was included. Again, that is not a pertinent slide at this point so the focus should be here if folks have questions on this particular topic.

Chairman O'Connell stated thank you for the presentation. Just one correction; the bond was for \$290 million. The project cost is \$306 million.

Alderman O'Neil stated I might be working backwards based on your presentation. I want a review on the Phase I. There was a number, \$216 million. That included Beech Street and the four middle schools, correct?

Mr. Rice answered the \$216 million was representative of just the middle schools. The \$76 million was for Beech Street.

Alderman O'Neil stated it might be hard for you to answer this but I heard from someone that when the district went out for the modulars that the contractors didn't know it was coming out. As you know, in your everyday work, the backlog is important for them. Just a recommendation, the sooner the district can let them know on the real construction I think the better that will be. It was just a comment that was made to me.

Mr. Rice stated it is a great comment. We certainly will potentially increase the amount of outreach for the permanent projects. I will say we did a fair amount of outreach, even for the modular site work construction. We had a couple firms that told us they were not interested in the work, just because the dollar value wasn't significant enough for them to pursue it. We did get three credible respondents to that CM RFQ that was put out. We are currently in the process of reviewing that and are hopefully on track to select one to start construction sometime around the beginning of April.

Alderman O'Neil stated it was just a comment made to me by someone that they could not get in the schedule on the modulars because they were already booked. The sooner we can get that out. Safety and security, I am sure you take that into consideration with everything that you're doing. Can you explain, I am guessing GSF is gross square footage, can you explain that for a layman?

Mr. Rice stated it is one of the terms that we internalize as the designers, but it helps for everyone to understand. Gross square footage is the entire built area of the building. It includes things that are hallways, mechanical spaces, the width and thickness of the walls themselves. The two terms that we use for GSF is gross square footage. The other piece that pairs with it is NSF or net square footage. The net square footage is the actual educational usable area within the building. We have to balance both of those things as we work through the process. The GSF is typically what the dollar per square foot of the building is tied to; it is looking at the entire build area of the building versus the useable.

Alderman O'Neil stated so common areas, mechanical rooms, electrical rooms.

Mr. Rice stated correct.

Alderman O'Neil stated I was looking at the square footage, and Parkside had the largest amount if I recall. I think it is in your presentation. Parkside is 40,350 GSF. There is already fifth grade there. Can you give me a simple explanation, please? This does not reflect on the School Board or the administration, but some of the things I thought were shoehorned in. I am glad that redoing the two that already had it is important to the community. Can you talk about why that was that large compared to Southside which had like 20,000 GSF?

Ms. Park stated when Parkside and Southside received fifth grade, there was not much done to the schools to accommodate the additional students. Parkside has one less story than the other schools. It also received a smaller addition overall when the other three middle schools, all the "Side" schools received their earlier renovations.

Alderman O'Neil stated then you work with the renovations as best you can. I know McLaughlin is a different era build, but is it going to create similar education opportunities in all four middle schools?

Ms. Park stated yes. The idea is to be able to provide spaces for team teaching; for middle school pod teaching that they are currently employing. McLaughlin has these wonderful team areas and learning common areas for each pod. Unfortunately, the other three schools don't have that. As Matt said earlier, it is hard for those students and those teams to have a sense of identity. There just isn't that space available for them. We are trying to bring these three buildings up to next generation middle school model teaching.

Alderman O'Neil stated I saw you reference some funding opportunities regarding energy. Are there potentially solar, battery storage, EV charging stations on site? Is that standard in today's design of a brand-new school or a school renovation that you folks are doing?

Mr. Rice stated we do a lot of energy efficiency measures as part of new designs. We always do them in concert with community correspondence to understand where the desire is in terms of supporting the community in terms of goals but also tailored to and trying to target any potential incentives that exist. One, for instance, the IRA. The Inflation Reduction Act, there is a large amount of incentive given there for geothermal heat systems. They will not give you rebates for air source heat pump systems. Both of those are all electric systems, so from an energy consumption standpoint they are both great in that regard. There are particular dollars available if you pursue ground source heat pump for geothermal systems. We just haven't gotten to that level of detailed design to know whether or not what particular strategies we are going to be pursuing. Certainly, there is solar renewable opportunities anytime we do an addition. If we were to put solar on the existing buildings, we would have to do a structural analysis to understand whether or not we have to enforce those roofs. If we are putting down a new roof anyway because the building needs it, it is a good opportunity to have some of those discussions in initial stages of design to flush that out.

Alderman O'Neil asked on the additions, is structural getting designed whether or not you use solar on the roof. Is that pretty common?

Mr. Rice stated yes. In this day and age, we wouldn't design a roof to not accept future solar as it would move forward. It is very incremental in terms of the cost if you're designing a new structure to do it and it makes sense.

Alderman O'Neil stated this is something I have heard Dr. Gillis talk about. She and I had a conversation about the importance of these buildings being community buildings. We are having separate from this project, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen hopefully in partnership with the school district, will be having a discussion about what opportunities for recreation, athletics, and other activities we offer the young people of this city. Dr. Gillis has talked about the need for these to be community buildings. There is probably no space more needed for that than the gyms. I am trying to think of an example where you don't have to go through a school in this city, and there might be some, but the high schools will be meeting at Memorial and you have to cut through a good part of the school to get to the auditorium. Is that common, Matt, to design the gymnasium? Some communities might say the performing arts section or something. That they have direct access from outside where you don't have to cut through the entire building?

Mr. Rice answered yes. Ideally, if we are designing a new building from scratch like we have the opportunity to do with Beech, we want to make sure we have the ability to close off certain areas of the building so they can easily be used for community use. Make sure that they have toilet room access that is separate from the rest of the building, so that when it is closed down after hours it can be easily used and effectively used. We see some communities using them as revenue generating opportunities if they can rent them out to different groups. Obviously, maximizing the community benefit will come first in terms of allowing that to happen. New buildings are easy. Existing buildings, it is still something that we focus on. There may be both safety and security measures that we can implement in terms of generating access, or directed access to those buildings. As you mentioned, it is tough in some of them because the gyms are located right in the heart of the building. We have to find ways of finding dedicated access for afterhours community use.

Alderman O'Neil asked but it is something you will look at at the four middle schools.

Mr. Rice replied it is certainly something that we will look for.

Alderman Terrio stated I have about six or seven questions, with my last question for Dr. Gillis. When you started your presentation, you mentioned explaining the logic of the Beech Street School site and in talking to different officials, I was under the impression that there were some alternatives to that. I'm assuming that is not part of your presentation. For instance, maybe building a new school at Bakersville. I have heard different things. I'm assuming that is part of a prior packet of information that we didn't get.

Mr. Rice stated right. We are happy to talk that through. We just thought, to go back on the past decisions or past approaches that were not deemed the preferred path forward, would have created more confusion than help. To explain where we've been, we did

initially look at building a new building at McDonough in lieu of building a new building at Beech. The real reason we pushed away from McDonough and shifted, was all the rationale that Rosemary ran through. This particular set of bullet items. That top bullet was the real key, this notion of investing in the city center and rebuilding in the same location where Wilson and Hallsville were removed. It makes sense to provide what can be a community school for those students in that neighborhood and ward, and not potentially shift them to McDonough. We initially were thinking of McDonough because it is a more straightforward construction effort there because you have an open field that you could build in. There is really a lot of great rationale for recentering it to the existing Beech Street site at the park adjacent to it. That was the reason. The work that we did prior to arriving at Beech Street in terms of all the other schools, those are going to be coming as part of the Phase II recommendations. Looking at the remainder of them, we were focused on Beech Street because of the immediate need to have Wilson closed, and what the immediate impacts are on the students there. Those were the highest priority of things that we are looking at. They need to get done as quickly as possible.

Alderman Terrio stated some of our schools are going to be adding population. McLaughlin, getting out of McLaughlin can be pretty tough. Have you also looked at traffic in your planning? New lights and things like that for access?

Ms. Fryer answered yes. When we performed our site assessments, we worked with traffic engineers who also went out and observed each site. We will be looking at the full range of possible traffic improvements from internal site circulation to traffic lights outside of the site. We won't be pursuing any of those for this first phase of modular installation, but we will look at that for the permanent additions and for the full improvements. We will work with the city and DPW about what will be allowable in terms of expanding the traffic improvements beyond the property itself.

Alderman Terrio stated my next set of questions are concerning Beech Street School and the Sheridan-Emmett Park. You might not know this, but maybe somebody on this committee or someone from the administration will. Although the Amoskeag Corporation is no longer physically existing, it does exist on paper. There is a law firm that represents them. A lot of the land, for instance I believe Gill Stadium is on Amoskeag land, and it has interests still protected by the attorneys at a local law firm. My first question is because you want to use park land, do we know if Sheridan-Emmett Park was Amoskeag land? The reason why I ask is because if the land comes from Amoskeag, we have to go to their attorney and get permission to build on it if it is their land. Do we know if it is their land, and did we get permission from Amoskeag if it is their land?

Ms. Fryer stated I believe it is part of the Amoskeag deed and it is something that we have discussed with the city and we have looked at plans for transfer to recreate the park as needed. It will be part of the Beech Street elementary park project.

Alderman Terrio asked has Amoskeag been contacted yet.

Mr. Rice stated I don't think we have reached out directly to them, no.

Alderman Terrio stated ok so we haven't gotten permission. So, it is part of Amoskeag, we know that, but we have not gotten permission from Amoskeag yet to take the land and turn it into a school.

Mr. Rice stated I believe that is correct. The other reality is that it is Parks land. It is Parks and Recreation land. We know we need to ask for permission to be able to build there so there are some steps that need to be taken in terms of proceeding with that construction there.

Alderman Terrio stated that is the series of questions that I am asking. Do we know if federal money was used for this park? If federal money was used it has to be paid back or we have to create park-land in like. Do we know if federal money was used?

Mr. Rice stated you are referring to the land water conservation fund encumbrances I believe in terms of that federal money.

Alderman Terrio stated I am asking specifically if at Sheridan-Emmet Park federal money was used.

Ms. Fryer stated federal land was used for Sheehan-Basquil Park. We researched all four of the parks in this area to understand and specifically avoided Sheehan-Basquil Park because it had federal grants associated with it.

Alderman Terrio stated my understanding is if federal money is used, then you have to deal with that also.

Ms. Fryer stated it is a separate park. It is shown in the image above, and is just to the east of the existing Beech Street site. We are looking at the park just to the west of the existing Beech Street site, which did not receive federal grant money.

Alderman Terrio stated it did not receive it. Ok, great. To transfer the land, because it is a city park to the schools, it has to go through the BMA and its Lands and Buildings Committee. I'm assuming that didn't happen, or did it?

Mr. Rice stated it has not happened yet.

Chairman O'Connell stated nothing has happened in that regard. Discussions have been at the executive-level of the departments. Various city departments have been in the discussions but nothing has been brought before the Board of Mayor and Aldermen yet.

Alderman Terrio stated so we will have to go through that. I have one last question for Dr. Gillis. I have been looking at the funding. We have been saying it is not going to impact the tax cap. On paper that is correct. I've been around long enough to know how the State of New Hampshire operates. I'll give you some examples of why I am concerned. Back in the 1960s, the state used to pay 40% of pension costs for teachers. Then they brought Police and Fire into that and it went down to 35%. Then over time, they got everybody in, and the state contributed less and less to pension costs and I think they went down to nothing. I think there is some talk about them contributing more

again but that happened. The other thing I remember with the State of New Hampshire is we had school building aid. That went down and it dried up completely for a while. It has come back or it will. Here is my concern with the State of New Hampshire, they give us money, they get you on the hook, and then things decrease or they completely pull it away from you. When I look at the bonding payments, it looks like Phase I is going to be about half of the money they give us and then Phase II will be about all of the money which is great. Again, it will not affect the tax cap. But, in light of history with the State of New Hampshire, do you have a contingency plan if the money decreases from the state or it dries up altogether?

Jennifer Gillis, Superintendent of Schools, stated let me separate your question out into two things. One, you are bridging both Priority I and Priority II for the full amount that we saw for the additional adequacy that came in. I want to keep those separate because we are nowhere close to what Phase II or Priority II might look like just yet. We have other things that we need to explore. Yes, we have been looking at historically what do our adequacy numbers look like, what do they look like going forward as well. We know what historically those funding numbers have resulted in. The formula, the law at the state level. We also track what that impact is for us this year. We will be talking about that a little later this evening when we do our budget presentation. We saw some of the property values in the city go up. We saw some of our free and reduced meal applications go down, so the perception is the property values in the city are increasing which actually decrease some of our adequacy aid. We had to go back in and figure out within the budget how to we reflect those shifts that are taking place. We have also gone in and done some research and what we are seeing is when the formula changes, typically we don't see those numbers roll back. What we do see is how it is applied can be a little bit of a shift, so the property values going up was our variable that shifted. Karen and I continue to look at if we did these projects how does this look, not this year or next year, but we are projecting out years at a glance. We will continue to advocate at the state level for building aid, for increasing some of the per pupil spending that goes on within our district, and we have seen some pretty positive traction within that work in the last two years. We are looking at all of it; we are not looking at it in isolation which is why having it actually broken into two sections – Priority I and Priority II – let's us bucket the work that we need to do. Knowing that Wilson needed to shift, we needed to move students out of the school as quickly as possible. Yes, we are looking at it. We will keep looking at it.

Alderman Terrio stated you are getting a lot of money from the state above and beyond what you need to pay for the bonds, but in light of the fact that the state has pulled the rug out from under us on multiple occasions, maybe put some of that money into a trust fund for a rainy day.

Dr. Gillis stated we have our expendable trusts. In our budget presentations, Karen has been sharing that our expendable trusts are in a very healthy place at this point in time. We are also looking at the connections to our capital improvement work that we are doing. We are trying to be mindful and smart with how we are deploying funds within the district. Looking backwards at what has funding looked at in the past, the retirement was a big reduction into all cities and towns within the state; that is gone. If it comes up a little bit, we know that is an increase, it is not a projected decrease. The state building aid, that was a decrease. That stayed very dry for quite some time. We have been up

advocating trying to get those funds back in so my hope is we are going to keep advocating for financial impacts that can benefit the city. We have to be smart with tax cap money, we have to be smart with the tax payers' money, and we have to do right by the students in the district, too. We are looking past, current, and future.

School Committee Member Turner stated I appreciate you coming tonight to recap the presentation. I have seen it a few times. None of this was really new to me, but I want to applaud you. You want to know how I know you've been in our schools? You referring to the sub-par status of many of our toilet rooms. You were referring to many interior windowless classrooms. You were talking to a middle school teacher that came from a middle school in Derry which has a pod-building. I have two students that went to Hillside; one is going to be a sixth grader there next year. I am very familiar with the layout, and it is not conducive to a team-style approach to teaching. Anywhere in the state you look right now, there is that fundamental team collaborative space. There are lockers right there, so they go from science, social studies, math, language arts. They are right there. They have that sense of community and sense of ownership to that team and that is clearly lacking from the triplets. I was happy that you touched upon that. My last visit to McLaughlin happened to be at lunch-time and it was uncomfortably crowded in the cafeteria. I know we are moving forward with our Owner's Project Manager, our construction manager, those are all smart moves. I can't wait to hear more about that. I applaud you for having boots on the ground and speaking the truth. I know many families in this district are eager for change and looking forward to getting beyond what has been the status-quo for some time.

School Committee Member Soule stated thank you for your presentation. I can tell you from my own experience, that SMMA has really dug into what Manchester needs. The conversation regarding the gymnasiums and libraries, if we are possibly able to have separate entrances. When we built our new elementary school, that is one of the things we did. Separate entrances for your library, cafeteria, and gymnasium. I think that is important for people to realize. You have been foresighted in everything you have done and you haven't left many details unturned. I want to say that the forums for families have been some well-attended, some not. Some of the issues – parking and safety, which we have already talked about – those pieces are important. I want to let this community know we will be watching building aid. You can rest assured, the first-time building aid is available for the City of Manchester, we will go after it. Once you get it, you've got it. That's what people have to understand. We will be in there. Our community has the opportunity to make use of that money. It is huge. I want to make sure the community understands that piece. I know because we accessed it in Somersworth the last year before it ended. We got 55% reimbursement. You can rest assured we will be on top of it. I know Sean Parr who is our chair of our legislative committee will be on that, but I wanted to let the community know that is important.

Alderman O'Neil stated I apologize. That is why they are educators, the two sitting to my left. Thank you for a great presentation. I had a little break from the Board the last two years. I look forward to working with you going forward. I was able to follow a lot of it. Your presentations are fabulous, they really are. Very detailed. As Committee Member Turner said, the fact you can talk about our schools, I was pretty fascinated with that. You are talking about our schools like they are your hometown. That is important. I thank the three of you and your colleagues for that. I look forward to working with you. I

feel a little under the gun staring across at Mayor Baines. The last time we did a major project was 23 years ago maybe, when he was the mayor. I don't know what that would equate to today, it was \$110 million.

School Committee Member Baines stated \$105 million.

Alderman O'Neil stated ok, and that was 23 years ago and that was the last time we had a major investment. I feel under the gun with Mayor Baines sitting across from me. We better get it right.

School Committee Member Baines asked when will that bonding capacity become available. What year?

Chairman O'Connell answered 2028.

School Committee Member Baines stated 2028. The school district is already paying for that bond on that. That will become available to the school district in 2028. That's part of the discussion.

Chairman O'Connell stated in summary, thank you. You have been fantastic to work with. I am looking forward to the next few months as we do two things. We move to action on the work that is going to be the subject of this committee, which is bringing our four middle schools up to speed, building extensions on them, the closure of Wilson and the consequent need for building a new elementary school, and the other work that is going to go on with siting the modulars at McDonough and Beech. In the fullness of time with the plan, ultimately the objective is that the City of Manchester and its people in the future will have a roadmap for education for the facilities for the future. The timing by which things get changed and when they happen will be determined by people who are not in the room today because it will be in the future but there will be a roadmap that we will have left as a legacy to those who come next who will be able to make rational decisions based on a real plan with action steps over time. Ultimately, this is all about the students in the City of Manchester. Manchester's children deserve the best schools. They deserve schools at a minimum – and I won't even accept that – comparable to the average school in the City of Manchester. We have sweat the acid in Manchester for too long. That is not nice to have. It means we have students in classrooms that are not suitable for modern education. They are real. If anybody wants to go look at them, there are real numbers to be had in terms of what easy access to the facilities, fresh air, daylight, there are multiple things that you can get scientific answers to. You improve the quality of the air and learning goes up by 1% or 2%. You improve daylight, learning goes up, academic achievement goes up by 1% or 2%. Also, we should keep in mind that the cost of doing nothing is actually horrendous for the City of Manchester. Doing nothing is costing the taxpayers a fortune. We are spending money on buildings that we shouldn't be spending. We should be investing in the future. This is an exciting time. I am looking forward to working with the committee as we move through this. As a piece of housekeeping, this committee is required to have a monthly report on the progress of the construction of these projects and on the finances. As soon as the Project Manager is engaged, and I was hoping we'd have an announcement to make today, but my understanding is that decision will be done probably by the end of the week. As soon as that is done, the Project Manager or the people who will be coming before us every

month in command of all the numbers and all the construction project details, we can have a robust conversation on a monthly basis. Thank you again for being here tonight. Before we close the meeting, we do have a piece of housekeeping, which has to do with organizing the date and times of our future meetings. We will at a minimum have a monthly meeting. If it is possible to reach agreement here tonight, I understand Alderman Morgan couldn't be here. If it is possible that we can agree on a night each month, we will do so. If we can't do it at this meeting, I've spoken with the clerk and he is happy to reach out to each of the six of us in the coming days to establish that day. If you'd like to do some horse-trading tonight that is fine. Or if it is better if we take this and deal with it.

Alderman Terrio stated we discussed this at our last meeting. Obviously, the Tuesdays that the BMA meets are horrible. What works better for the School Board?

Chairman O'Connell stated this night, which is the second Monday of the month, would work fine. It works on the calendar for the city. I've talked to the clerk. This time works.

Alderman Terrio stated we had plenty of time. We had an hour and a half. I'm ok with it and with deferring to you folks.

Chairman O'Connell stated if the meeting takes an hour and a half, we'll do that; if in the fullness of time we are able to expedite our work and it becomes a monthly regular thing, we might be able to move to 5:30PM. If we can reach agreement tonight that we will meet going forward on the second Monday of the month.

Alderman O'Neil stated I brought this up at the last meeting. My school board member, Committee Member Turner, put me in my place. She has a whole number of kids; I was worrying about getting one child to sporting activities. She has to get many. I'll make that work based on the recommendation of my school committee member.

Chairman O'Connell stated I presume we don't need a resolution. We can tell the public tonight that the monthly meeting of the Joint School Building Committee will be on the second Monday evening of the month going forward.

Alderman Terrio stated the first Monday of March will be the joint meeting between the two boards. Is that right? So, this committee will next meet on March 11.

Chairman O'Connell stated correct.

*There being no further business, on motion of **School Committee Member Soule**, duly seconded by **Alderman Terrio**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.



Clerk of Committee