

REVISED
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
February 20, 2024 at 7:00 PM

Mayor Ruais called the meeting to order.

Mayor Ruais called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman T. Sapienza.

A moment of silence was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Morgan, Goonan, Long, Fajardo, T. Sapienza, Kantor, O'Neil, Levasseur, Terrio, E. Sapienza, Burkush, Barry, Vincent, Thomas

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Ruais advised that the purpose of the public comment session is to give residents of Manchester the opportunity to address the Board. All people wishing to speak will have up to three minutes to do so and any comments must be directed to the chair. Any resident wishing to speak will come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized and give their comments.

Bradley Conway stated:

I am with a group called Southern NH for Palestine and we have some new resolutions for you to submit today and I will be reading it. The biggest change is that we added 30,000 people to the number of dead Palestinians in Gaza.

"Calling on the President of the United States of America, Joseph R. Biden, United States Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Maggie Hassan, and United States Congressman Chris Pappas, to demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza by Israel, Hamas, and other Palestinian militant groups, the release of all hostages and political prisoners held by both sides, the provision of humanitarian aid to Gaza, and an end to all U.S. Military aid packages and arms distribution to Israel."

WHEREAS, the Board of Mayor and Alderman recognizes that all human life is precious, regardless of race, religion, or nationality; and

WHEREAS, since the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023, Israel has engaged in a disproportionate and indiscriminate military campaign against the people of Gaza which has killed over 29,000 Palestinians, 70% of whom are women and children; and

WHEREAS, the Israeli military's campaign of bombardment, siege and invasion in Gaza has resulted in the displacement of more than 85% of Gaza's 2.2 million inhabitants, destroyed more than 70% of homes, and severely damaged nearly every healthcare facility in Gaza; and

WHEREAS, the Israeli military's campaign of bombardment, siege, and invasion in Gaza is funded in large part by U.S. taxes in the form of unconditional military aid packages; and

WHEREAS, through their federal tax dollars, Manchester residents contribute more than 1.7 million dollars per year to the Israeli military; and

WHEREAS, rendering Gaza uninhabitable likely amounts to "collective punishment" under Article 33 of the 4th Geneva Convention, and to "genocide" under the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; and

WHEREAS, residents of the City of Manchester refuse to be complicit in Israel's campaign of destruction in Gaza through the City's continued partnerships and investments; and

WHEREAS, the City of Manchester's Federal representative delegation led by Chris Pappas, Maggie Hassan and Jeanne Shaheen, has failed to represent the urgent humanitarian and diplomatic interests of residents of the City of Manchester, and the state of New Hampshire; and

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Manchester Board of Mayor and Alderman joins with representatives of other U.S. cities in calling on our President and our Federal representative delegation to demand an immediate and enduring ceasefire, the provision of life saving humanitarian aid in Gaza, the release of all hostages, detainees and political prisoners on both sides; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Manchester Board of Mayor and Alderman joins with representatives of other U.S. cities in calling on our President and our Federal representative delegation to demand an end to US Military aid packages and all arms distribution to Israel; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Manchester Board of Mayor and Alderman shall establish a committee to identify, divest from and prevent business with all entities involved in the US-Israeli military industrial complex.”

I have some materials for distribution and with that I am calling it a day.

Sebastian Rowan, Ward 2, stated:

I am here once again to speak in support of the ceasefire resolution. I would like to start tonight by thanking Aldermen Terrio and Long. My comrades and I have been calling and emailing all of you repeatedly in the last two weeks and these were the only two who were willing to have a discussion about this issue with us. Some of you at least answered your phones. Most of you never returned our calls and you should be ashamed. I hope all of you, apparently not, will at least stay in this room tonight to hear what your constituents have to say on this issue. Israel is committing a genocide in Gaza. We have a responsibility to do everything and anything in our power to stop this because this genocide is funded with our tax dollars. Every year, Manchester taxpayers send \$1.7 million to Israel to fund their military. The Senate just passed a bill that would send Israel another \$14 billion, which would include an additional \$6.5 million from Manchester residents. Some of you have said that this resolution has nothing to do with Manchester but what could Manchester do with \$8.2 million? We could pay the salaries of 125 teachers. We could fund the city's entire school, food & nutrition program, Youth Services Office and pay the salaries of the employees at both branches of the Manchester Public Library. We could double the Parks & Recreation budget. We could triple the Planning & Community Development budget. We could quadruple the Health Department budget. At the last meeting, some of you started a yelling match over \$150,000 to draft a bicycle plan. We could fund that 55 times. Instead, we send guns and bombs to Israel that they use to kill tens of thousands of civilians, including now almost 13,000 children. We are complicit in every one of these murders. Vote for this resolution and send a message to our federal representatives and the world that Manchester is not okay with this. Join the other 70 cities and towns that have already passed ceasefire resolutions, including the town of Durham who last night voted unanimously in favor of a ceasefire resolution or continue to ignore us and let everyone

know that you are fine with funding a genocide. Either way, history will remember your choice. Ceasefire now.

Alex Fowler stated:

I am here to urge you all to consider and adopt the resolution calling for a ceasefire in Israel and occupied Palestine which has put forth to you all by the public. I was present at your last session during which two aldermen, Joe Kelly Levasseur and Ed Sapienza, left the aldermanic chambers in a huff rather than endure the comments of their constituents. Their seats are conspicuously vacant tonight as well. Unless they both simultaneously had to answer a call of nature, I think that this flippant abdication of their duty to consider public comment was either a signal of their ignorance of the current global crisis or a glaring dereliction of their duty as public servants of the citizens of Manchester. Furthermore, Mr. Mayor I understand that you verbally indicated to some of my colleagues who drafted the resolution that there would never be any consideration whatsoever of the proposal even though an overwhelming majority of your audience, who attended the previous meeting and submitted public comments demanded the very same. The citizens of Portsmouth and Durham have also called for similar ceasefire resolutions in recent days and the latter city has even unanimously adopted it. All of you run the risk of making Manchester look like an undemocratic and reactionary backwater through your willful inaction rather than the Granite State's so-called Queen City. You run the risk of utterly alienating the people whom you purport to represent if you deliberately withhold even the mere consideration of such resolution and you will prove that you are nothing but deaf ears and hearts of stone if you ignore 1/10 of the atrocities that are going on now in Gaza. A little girl hanging from a window, her head and her legs blown off. A son putting the remains of his father in a plastic bag. A mother looking for her daughter's hair in a pile. A brother carrying the dismembered leg of his baby brother. This is why we are demanding that you endorse a ceasefire since it is less than the least you can do as elected officials to make it clear that our money, \$1.7 million from the Manchester taxpayers every single year, should not be going to fund and abet Israeli genocide but instead be used to address the crisis here of homelessness, lack of healthcare and subpar education in our city and in our state.

Blood is on your hands unless you speak out now because silence is complicity. Thank you for your time.

Matei Alexandru stated:

I am speaking for the NH Congress of Workers Organizations in support of the ceasefire resolution for Gaza, specifically surrounding comments you have made about why you will not support it. To begin, why take on this issue? The International Court of Justice has ruled that South Africa's charges of genocide are valid and that should mean something to you because you cannot pick and choose who gets human rights because our government is the only one that can stop the flow of weapons and funds and because 68-70% of Americans support a ceasefire and our federal government is dragging us into a crime against humanity anyway. 400,000 people gathered in Washington, DC and couldn't convince our leaders there so now we are here. Because I am not knowledgeable. In the age of the internet, you can become knowledgeable in just about anything. Why should we admire leaders who do not educate themselves, who do not seek to make informed policy decisions after having learned more about an issue? It creates divisiveness. Genocide creates divisiveness. Aiding, funding and supplying genocide creates divisiveness. Turning your back on your constituents causes divisiveness. The bulk of America stands for Gaza. We are not dividing anything. You won't vote for something that won't pass. The idea that we only stand for human rights if we don't risk losing a vote is cowardess or deception and one is as bad as the other. Do you really risk anything voting in favor of human rights, even if your colleagues won't? Turning away an Israeli activist. Turning that activist away didn't signal opposition or disapproval of genocide. Turning your back on Palestinians means turning your back on their suffering and the crimes being inflicted on them. Treating both sides equally by ignoring them both signals to the aggressor and the victim alike that the aggressor can do what they want and the victim will suffer what they must. If you really want to vote this down, that is within your power to do but shutting the door on your constituents to avoid dealing with the question is a complete abdication of the duty to engage with and represent your constituents.

Katie Carbonara stated:

Salaam isn't here so I am going to take my turn. It has been two weeks since we were last here and in those two weeks the violence in Gaza has escalated to some of the most horrific acts we have seen in over four months. 1.4 million in Rafa, most of them already displaced multiple times from their homes, are being bombed indiscriminately. Most of the hospitals in Gaza have been destroyed. Many people are resorting to eating animal feed as vital aid in the forms of food, water and medicine continues to be denied. It seems clear that Israel is preparing to fulfill the objectives they have been open about this entire time. The ethnic cleansing of Gaza, the murder of its citizens and the forced removal of survivors to the desert. It is the continuation of the 75-year long project of displacement, settler violence and land theft. In the two weeks since we were last here, a six-year-old girl named Hind Rajab was trapped in a car surrounded by her murdered family members. She spent hours on the phone with rescue workers and her mother begging for help. When Israeli occupation forces agreed to allow an ambulance to try to get to her, contact with the rescuers was quickly lost. After 12 days, it was learned that the two rescuers sent to help her were bombed by the IOF and Hind was left to slowly die alone in that car. At the last meeting, two members of this Board did not have the decency to stay in the room while we testified and it seems they have decided to do so again. I want to make it clear that those two aldermen not only disrespect us and community members in this city who have lost family in this genocide but also disrespect the lives and the memories of every one of the over 29,000 people murdered in this genocide, including Hind, her family members and those sent to rescue her. You act like the issue of a ceasefire doesn't matter to you or the people of this city but we are here telling you that it does. It matters because \$1.7 million of taxpayer money from the people of this city is going to fund the weapons that are being used to murder Palestinians. It matters because the continual funding of our country's imperial war machine is the reason our schools are falling apart, why so many of our neighbors are unhoused, why we don't have healthcare or student loan forgiveness and we are here to say that we refuse to be further complicit in this genocide. Last night in Durham, the town council passed a similar resolution and we demand that the City of Manchester, as the largest city in the state, do the same and pass this resolution in solidarity with the people of Palestine. Thank you.

Clark Hartman, Ward 3, stated:

I am a central committee member of the NH Congress of Worker's Organizations and I am here to speak in support of the adoption of a ceasefire resolution here in Manchester. Many of you on the Board have declined to support or sponsor the resolution based on supposedly being uneducated on the facts. While this can be solved by simple research, I decided to pull some history together for you today. Palestine has been under occupation since the 1940s with the creation of the Israeli state beginning in 1948. I would like you to imagine that if for thousands of years your family lived on their ancestral homeland and overnight it began being swept out from under you. Literally being forced from your home to relocate to an area less than half the size. This is called the Nakba historically for over half of the Palestinian population was forced from their homes for the creation of the Israeli state. If you look at a map of Palestine over the last 75 years, you will see Palestine only shrinks. This shrinking is not only forced displacement but it is the indiscriminate murder of Palestinians and with the ever-shrinking Palestine, the median age of the population has continued to dip. As of January, the median age is 19. To give you some perspective, the median age in the U.S. is 38. In England the median is 40 and in India the median is 34. I wonder if you understand the gravity of this, of how long the median in Palestine has dropped and that entire generations and families have been wiped off this Earth for the number to drop this far. Many of you have voiced that this is not a Manchester issue and I would like to argue that it is because this is a humanity issue. If we turn away now, we are further damning the Palestinian people. If you turn away now, you are no better than Germans who looked the other way as entire populations disappeared before their very eyes. We are watching a genocide in real-time and we are bound by our shared humanity to stop it; to use every last bit of our voice to stand against it. We are asking for the bare minimum, for Manchester to stand with cities and towns across this country and in NH and demanding a permanent ceasefire in Palestine. This is about the preservation of human lives. Free Palestine.

Olivia Lenox, Manchester stated:

I was born and raised here in Manchester. I graduated from Central High School and now own a small local restaurant in the Somerville neighborhood and I am also a

selectman in Ward 7. Mayor Ruais I know you are also a Ward 7 resident and I believe we were introduced at the polling place last month. I am here tonight to talk to you about Manchester's own ceasefire resolution. I read in Ink Link last week about Alderman O'Neil's feelings about having failed Manchester's youth and I want to take this opportunity to mention that young adults are not the only Manchester citizens who would like to see our city pass this resolution. I assume it is not lost on you all that the demographic on this Board does not accurately represent our beautifully culturally rich city and we are all watching live as this genocide unfolds and as atrocities are broadcast to the entire world. Citizens of Manchester are absolutely appalled that this city would even passively consider continuing to engage in partnerships with and investment in the war mongering state of Israel, especially when there is so much local infrastructure in blatant need of financial attention and rehabilitation. For these and so many other reasons, we reject any claim that this American-funded genocide does not concern our city. Maybe a part of you wonders whether this body has the right to weigh in on international issues. Maybe you are wishing that our geographical distance from Gaza constitutes a lack of involvement and you want to move on to other city business tonight. Or maybe you are having a hard time discussing this publically. I know that Alderman Levasseur was so emotional at the last meeting that he had to excuse himself during the public testimony. While these things can be hard to talk about, I think we can all agree that they are much harder to endure. Every day, right now as I speak Palestinians are enduring the unspeakable things that we now ask you to simply speak about. Try and remember tonight that your job is not to have opinions but to deeply consider our request as you navigate city business on our behalf and remember not making a choice is a choice in itself because genocide is not up for interpretation. Genocide is a noun. Taking a public stance against it on behalf of our city is not outside of your job description. It might not be what you expected to work through this year as a Board but it is an incredibly relevant topic and it should be treated as such. In being presented with this resolution, you are also being presented with an opportunity. While you do your jobs attempting to keep Manchester a safe and worthwhile place to live and to visit, consider that this resolution plays a huge role in making our communities feel safe and seen on a local, national and global level. Someday it won't matter what else you had on the docket this evening, this month or even this year. You right now have

an opportunity to leave a permanent mark of morality on Manchester's history by looking past your own fears with integrity and voting yes on this resolution. Thank you.

Matt Perzyk, Ward 6, stated:

I am here representing Worker's Democracy and also as Chair of the Congress of Worker's Organizations NH. Now I haven't really prepared anything so please bear with me. I already heard most of my views stated at the last meeting but I figured I would take this opportunity to address Sapienza and Levasseur who are not here for some reason. Now I would like to just say that this is who is supposed to represent us? This kind of infantile, this kind of weak-willed childish behavior to walk out on your constituency? That is adequately representing the city? The ICJ, International Court of Justice, has already recognized that there is substantial evidence for genocide here. That is the International Court of Justice and it is not just about having...Manchester is not so insignificant that we can't have a position on this. Seventy other cities have already passed ceasefire resolutions. No matter how insignificant you feel, you do have the decision to raise concerns about what is going on and to call out what is happening and no matter on what scale. In the future, how do you think generations are going to look back on you when you stood by as millions of people were massacred and millions of people were displaced? There are plenty of Congressmen and representatives in all levels of government who sided with the Nazis during World War II. Now at the time, that might have felt comfortable for them but now looking back we know they were wrong and, in the future, they will look back on us and see that those who refused to take a stand and even went so far as to side with the fascists who are committing genocide...the future will know and the future will see. I want you to consider that. I want you to consider what future generations are going to say when we look back on this history now. That is really all I have to say.

Jess Dampier, Manchester, stated:

I am a lifelong Manchester resident and I would just like to speak a little bit to the point that some have made that this ceasefire resolution is somehow not a Manchester issue. I would just like to remind everyone that a huge part of the economy of Southern NH is made up of weapons contractors like BAE and Elbit Systems and Raytheon. Many of

the workers who are making the bombs that are raining down on Gaza live in Manchester. This is very much a local issue, an issue that impacts every single one of us here and as many other Manchester residents who have spoken before me said, this is something that other cities across the countries and a growing list of cities across NH are now considering and passing. As a lifelong Manchester resident, I would be proud to see Manchester among the list of cities calling for an end to the genocide. Thank you.

Armando Martins, Ward 9, stated:

The people before me have and the people after me will speak to the fact that this is a city issue. We know that taxpayers spend \$1.7 million every year propping up apartheid for this genocidal state. I also want to speak to it as an issue of humanity more broadly. There is no neutrality. To abandon the ceasefire resolution would be to side with the ongoing genocide. We know that this is an issue of humanity and people are deeply moved by this. That is why so many hundreds of thousands and millions of people have been active in the streets in the last four or five months and active in their workplaces and active in their neighborhoods and their schools and blocking bridges and highways and occupying their Senators' offices. They are working 25 hours a day, eight days a week to stop this genocide and we would hope that you would join them and take this seriously. It has been brought up before that South Africa successfully charged genocide at the International Court of Justice. Last night, Brazil broke diplomatic ties with the genocidal state of Israel. Several large unions including the APWU, the UAW, National Nurses United, and the National Education Association, representing over nine million workers, formed the National Labor Network for Palestine. Over 70 cities in the U.S. have passed similar ceasefire resolutions to the one being brought up here today in Manchester. Thanks, Ed, for coming back. In NH we have four cities going through this struggle right now. In Durham it looks like it will be successful and Lebanon and Portsmouth are right on the same page with us. This is an issue of humanity. That is why there were Hague Regulations drawn up in 1907 saying that an occupying power cannot use force and violence to prolong their occupation. That is why the United Nations had a convention in 1948 saying that it is everybody's individual duty, responsibility and obligation to prevent genocide. That is why the United Nations

passed Resolution 2625 saying that occupied and subjugated people have a right to resist and thank God the Palestinian resistance is healthy. Ultimately, Palestine will be free. We know that for a fact. We know that child slavery in the U.S. was smashed and Jim Crow Apartheid in the U.S. was smashed and Jim Brow Apartheid in South Africa was smashed and Jim Crow Apartheid in Israel will be smashed. The Vietnamese people evicted the Japanese colonialists, the French colonialists, and the U.S. colonialists. The Palestinian people will be free and the working and oppressed people of the world who see their struggle and the struggle of Palestine will win. So, if I was in your position, I would consider it an honor honestly to be able to take this position publically and stand on the right side of history. Thank you.

Kevin Martin, Ward 11, stated:

I have been a resident here for six years and I would like to thank everyone who is here. I noticed one member didn't believe that our cause warranted their attendance but I thank the rest of you who are here to listen to the people of Manchester and what we are demanding is a formal ceasefire declaration for Israel against the ongoing genocidal Palestine backed and supported by the U.S. Empire. As of today, the death toll in Palestine has surpassed 35,000 deaths including over 14,000 children. We have more first-hand accounts and documentation of the genocide than we ever have for any global atrocity and despite this the entire capitalist ruling class, including our own elected officials, have turned a blind eye to this largely due to the huge sums of money that the Israeli lobby has used to bribe politicians here in America. The notion that the people we elect to supposedly represent us are more interested in lining their pockets rather than acknowledge literal genocide is appearing. The fact that when I clock into work in the first two hours of labor I provide and the wages I earn are taken in the form of taxes and using to fund this genocide is detestable because it means that I am forced to be complicit in something I condemn. Manchester alone gives \$1.7 million to Israel using these tax dollars rather than addressing issues happening in our own city. We have a housing crisis that is only getting worse and instead of focusing on our community, we are funding a genocide. Our elected officials are meant to represent and advocate for us but instead follow the trail of money for their own self-interest. We have seen officials walking out of their literal job in front of their own constituents when

these matters are addressed. If I were to walk out of my job because of something someone said, I would be immediately let go, so to have the audacity to abuse this privilege you have is not only disrespectful and insulting to me but to Manchester as a whole. We have seen the people of Manchester demand a ceasefire for months just as a majority of the entire world demands a ceasefire and an end to the entire Israeli occupation of Palestine. Every day that we choose not to showcase the lack of humanity by our officials that we will refuse to stand for. Thank you for your time.

Madeline Jones stated:

I am a third generation Palestinian-American and I have lived in Manchester for 13 years. This evening I wanted to share with you some of my family history. My grandmother and grandfather were born in the Christian quarter of Jerusalem in the 1910s. At the time of the 1948 Nakba, they lived in a close-knit community of their brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, parents and grandparents, along with their young family. Our family had been based in Jerusalem going back to at least the 1600s, many times longer than the City of Manchester has even existed. They were then forced from their homes at gunpoint by early Israeli settlers. With only what they could carry, they relocated to a refugee camp in Jordan where they would remain until they came to America in 1955. Sadly, it was at this time they were separated from their close-knit family and it would be decades, if ever, until they saw any member of their families besides their own children ever again. My family was blessed to be fruitful in America. I am one of 18 of Yesara & Evangelo's grandchildren, including two doctors, a lawyer, several teachers, bankers, professionals and artists. From my family I learned the values of resourcefulness, dedication and most importantly hospitality. To know Palestinian people is to be loved by us. We have tremendous hearts, amazing recipes and a deep respect for other people from all walks of life and every day each member of my family, all 80+ of us, are grateful that we were the lucky ones. Not everyone escaped the 1948 Nakba with their lives and millions of Palestinians never escaped at all. For our family still in occupied Palestine, freedom is a meaningless word. They cannot travel outside of Palestine and be guaranteed the right to return, and most of the time they cannot travel freely from one Palestinian territory to another. I also want to share the story of the Hatob family from Gaza; a family of 14 people, not unlike my

generation here in America who will never go on to become doctors, lawyers and teachers. Every single member of the Hatob family, ranging in age from 80 to eight months, has been killed in one fell swoop by Israeli airstrikes. I believe in my heart that they would consider themselves lucky to be amongst family even in death; a family that but for a chance of fate could just as well be mine. You may be able to tell by now that family is incredibly important to Palestinians which is why the new abbreviation out of Palestine breaks my heart so much. The abbreviation is WCNSF and it stands for Wounded Child No Surviving Family. Every day in Gaza, children who survive the siege cannot be counted lucky because every other member of their family has been killed. They have no one to hold their hand when they go into surgery to have their limbs amputated, no one to cook their favorite food when they get home from the hospital, no food, no home, nobody to care for them. I speak before you today as an individual Palestinian as a reminder to you that each and every one of the 29,000 Palestinians murdered since October 7 was an individual person with love in their hearts, hopes, dreams, a history and a future that was robbed from them. Every one of these Palestinian people deserve freedom and life just as much as you and I. Thank you for your time.

Mark Larochelle, 265 Myrtle Street, stated:

For this first part, I know a few of you are really going to be able to relate to this. I moved to Manchester when I was 24 or in 1987 for a \$40,000 a year job. I rented an apartment on Concord Street, just east of Central High School, for \$90/week. It had a kitchen, a porch, a bedroom and dining area with a den off of it and of course a bathroom. So, let's say that same guy moves into Manchester today and he lands an \$80,000/year job. For \$185/week he can rent a room with a sink, a single bed, a desk and a bureau and is sharing a multi-stall shower/bathroom with 25 other people. Regarding some of the new development going on around here, some nice buildings and I am pretty impressed, all exorbitant market rates other than some workforce units. I am going to give you another hypothetical. Let's say a young lady moves into Manchester and she lands an \$80,000/year job. A place like that would be pretty attractive to that individual. Why couldn't that person buy into that or something else? For example, a 350-unit building at \$2,000/month for rent...there is only one guy happy

in that month. If a person could buy into that and it doesn't have to be one of the new buildings but they could build wealth, equity and security. Now a lot of time I get the answer that the numbers don't work. Well, they would work for the people who could buy into it. The old adage goes, and we all know it, that money doesn't buy happiness. Well, I like to say that for sure if you are poor, you are not happy. I have this part right here bold and underlined. I am not suggesting government overreach or a new agency or new programs. I am just asking that this Board discuss this with the department heads and staff. I just want to finish by saying that I am really pleased about the make-up of the Board going into this term. When I say that I am talking about everybody. I believe that you are capable of making some really positive things happen in Manchester in this term. I urge the Mayor, Chairman and Board to consider this. Thank you.

AJ Coletti stated:

Does living your current life of physical convenience and ease provided by technological innovation also provide you with a state of emotional well-being? Just think about that. All of our sufferings are interconnected and that is why a ceasefire matters so much to me and these other people here. We recognize that as long as Imperialism is endorsed as a global society and as long as genocide is supported and as long as this world-wide corporatocracy continues to exploit and dehumanize and murder us while simultaneously devastating our environment, none of us are safe on this planet. Citizens around the world have been conditioned to turn a blind eye to catastrophe and our ancient values of connectedness to our communities and to the earth have been replaced by self-entitlement and the endless compulsion to consume. We are moths drawn to the flame of industrialization and it is burning us all up. The majority of us, mostly the older generations, have slipped into a sense of false comfort inside a system that exploits us for everything we have but leaves us with scraps because it is all we have ever known. Someone please explain to me how natural complex systems of life have sustained on earth for a millennium yet the modern homosapien is convinced he knows better based on these past 200 years of industrialization and the glorification of rugged individualism. The ongoing promotion of rugged individualism within a hierarchical society in which very few possess more money and power than millions of

us combined is simply something to keep us on our hamster wheels. It is unachievable. Remember last time when you heard at least five, or six or seven of us sit up here and read off facts about Palestinian death rolls, civilian injuries, people starving and dying of disease? You all sat up here with straight faces, some of you staring at the wall or picking at your nails or looking at your phone as your very own community members, the people you are elected to represent, describe to you a real-time ethnic cleansing. Nothing anyone said made you care and I predict none of it will make you care unless somehow you get it through your alarmingly thick and unempathetic skulls that the global imperialist mentality of those in power will only appear to benefit you for a little while longer, if it even is now. Is it? Come on? Are you serious? Seriously whose peace are you keeping by being for profit and, therefore, ultimately against the people? I am done.

Richard Girard, 283 Orange Street, stated:

I am here tonight to raise concerns over the proposed changes to the zoning ordinance. I understand from the Mayor's State of the City address that he seems to believe that a quick adoption of these changes is somehow necessary to combat this city's homeless problem. As someone who has been involved in housing issues in this city for over 30 years, and someone who studied urban land use planning in college, it is more likely these proposed changes will merely add more congestion to already crowded multi-family neighborhoods making them less livable and, therefore, less desirable and even lower rent than many of them already are. Doing away with Planning Board review for accessory dwelling units sounds good in theory but in practice it is problematic. Not all ADUs are equal. Planning Board review is not only needed to ensure that such developments are appropriate but also to ensure abutters' property rights are protected. Planning Board reviews ensure that neighborhood issues have the opportunity to be raised and addressed prior to actions that could negatively impact the quality of life and property values of neighboring properties. Reducing the parking requirements is just foolish. Having lived most of the last 30 years in R-3 and R-2 districts, I know first-hand what neighborhoods are like when there is insufficient off-street parking. Cars get parked up on sidewalks to ensure that there is enough room for two lanes of traffic and they get parked on front lawns and they don't get removed from the street during snow

emergencies. They park right up to corners, significantly reducing visibility for oncoming traffic. It is not only a bad look, it is dangerous and shouldn't be done. Reducing lot sizes to enable the construction of a fourth unit on the same amount of land as a three unit is also folly unless you are interested in making Manchester look and feel and function more like Lowell and Lawrence. Combined with the reduced parking requirements, this is going to increase density in a way that is detrimental to the quality of life. Before making such changes, you should take stock of Manchester's neighborhood crime rates. In doing so, it should come as no surprise that the neighborhoods most beset by crime in our city are those with the greatest density, which also happen to be those with the lowest rents and the least off-street parking. Why would we want more of this? I note that the comments in the document say that parking needs to be reduced in part because of the 10-foot landscaped buffer requirement around any driveway that parks five or more cars. Wouldn't it be better to remove the landscaping requirement, especially since anyone who has actually been in these neighborhoods know that such landscaped areas are almost always a mess? Why do we want more? Increasing density won't mean less homeless on our streets. It will mean more crime in our neighborhoods. The city would be better served by reviewing building and fire code requirements that needlessly add expense to renovations and new construction. It should also look for opportunities to repurpose commercial, industrial and retail spaces that are no longer viable for those uses. The Amoskeag Bank Building, Wellington Trade Center, Odd Fellows Building, Varick Building, Felton Brush Factory and several mills and other buildings are good examples of these adaptive reuses for residential needs. Manchester is full of other such buildings and ought to make every effort to ensure its building and fire codes are friendly to the redevelopment and avoid changes like these that are just simply hazardous to our neighborhoods. Thank you.

Kevin Criscione, 386 Rimmon Street, stated:

I enjoy walking, biking and driving to get around the city. However, there are a few spots that are way too dangerous and I think we all kind of know where they are – the bridges, Amoskeag traffic circle, Valley Street, Mammoth Road at the Candia Road intersection, Campbell and Union, a place called the neighborhood highways of Beech

and Maple Streets, and the debacle that is Queen City Avenue/South Willow Street and Cilley Road although there is a plan to change that thankfully. I have talked to drivers who hate these places and pedestrians who hate these places and of course cyclists who hate these places. I have actually had the experience of doing all three in most of them and after having a number of different conversations over the past few months surrounding this issue including to some of you thankfully, I have come to believe the conversations we are having around transportation could use some reframing. I feel like some of us act like it is a zero-sum competition between different groups on our streets – cars versus pedestrians versus cyclists versus buses and that favoring one will create a worse experience for the others. In reality, the data says the opposite. Building for multiple different modes of transportation – walking, biking, bus/car, does benefit everyone. Several wide-reaching studies have found that cities with high bicycling rates tend to have lower crash rates for all road users and a 2012 Chicago Department of Transportation report found that bicycle infrastructure projects reducing motor vehicle speeding, reduce crashes and improve people's feelings of safety on those streets across all modes of transport. I wanted to thank you for providing at least a second chance to the study for the master bicycle plan. I am in favor of the master bicycle plan and other studies like it. After all, we do need to make decisions with data. At the same time, we should focus on improving intersections that are so clearly unsafe for everyone that there is a consensus around the lack of safety and poor urban planning that seemed okay at the time. There are many pedestrians and drivers who feel just as stressed and unsafe as the cyclists and we should listen to these voices. In conclusion, addressing our worst intersections of roads will benefit drivers, pedestrians and cyclists nine times out of ten and all of those groups at the same time. It is not a zero-sum competition. There are common ground areas of improvements that we can all get behind. After living for a while in Manchester, I do think that the highway like structure of our streets is holding us back as a city economically, in terms of safety and in terms of quality of life. I encourage you to look beyond partisan divisions to change that. I also did just want to add that I am in full support of all of the zoning amendments that would allow for more affordable housing in Manchester. That is great and I would like to see more of that and more of a direct investment by the city financially.

Douglas Robertson, 404 Notre Dame Avenue stated:

Thank you, alderman, for returning from the bathroom, I guess. I want to add my support for the resolution for a ceasefire. I am sure you are all tired of hearing about it and I assure you you have no idea of what it means to be tired, not one clue.

Palestinians know what it means to be tired. The homeless people who live on your own streets know what it means to be tired, especially when you throw your cops against them. You seem quite willing to use violence against your own citizens in order to carry on business as usual but you seem to think what we are doing here is preventing you from doing that. Just as the business is usual that the Israeli Knesset has been engaging in for 75 years as they make business decisions that affect people's lives that engage them in genocide while they sit and stand in their special little seats talking about democracy. So, what is this business as usual? Is it fixing the homeless crisis in this state and this city? Certainly not except for by using violence. Is it using your time to fix the housing issue? Well, you are making some steps and pushing things around the edges but really not unless it is profitable for the private property owners. You can't be hurting landlords. Are you doing anything about raising the minimum wage in this city which at \$7.25 is the lowest of any state in the area? No. Nothing. The working class in this city remains unable to afford rent. It seems to be that the only thing you are willing to do is make transgender people uncomfortable and are leading the charge of death and assault that we see readily flowing across this country. You are attacking immigrants or this or that thing. I urge you to just stand for a moment and say what is the least that I could do. What is the very least I could do? It would be to say I don't support genocide. I fear that you all want to continue the same business as usual that the Knesset does and the Reichstag did. Prove me wrong.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Levasseur**, it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.*

Salaam Odeh stated:

I have been a resident of Manchester for over 30 years. I have four adult children and one of them has been on active duty for the past six years. He is a Navy Seal.

However, I was born and raised as a Palestinian refugee to Palestinian sematic indigenous peoples. I did write a speech but I forgot my reading glasses so my speech isn't here. But I guess I don't need my reading glasses. I can tell you that I lost too many people as family members. On December 5, I lost my aunt's daughter with her three children, ages 3-9, and her husband. They were buried in Gaza in a mass grave in a hospital parking lot. So far, more than 30,000 Palestinian civilians have been killed. More than 200,000 have been injured. More than 50,000 are missing. We will not be quiet and we will not allow 2.4 million Gaza residents be displaced and wander in the desert of Egypt. As a result of Palestine being illegally occuppied by the Israelis, there are 66 refugee camps. Most of them are actually in Gaza and in the West Bank believe it or not. Some are in Jordan and some in Lebanon and some in Syria. Those people have lived in those refugee camps for over 75 years. Imagine yourselves living in refugee camps for over 75 years raising children and grandchildren in refugee camps. There are over 10.5 million Palestinian refugees living in refugee camps. There are more than 6.5 million Palestinians between the Gaza strip and the West Bank living under occupation like my city Nablus. My town of Hawara I am sure all of you heard President Biden speak about this past April was set on fire by the illegal barbaric settlers in the West Bank in the city of Nablus. However, I was honored to serve as a state commissioner on the status of women and once upon a time I ran for alderman in 2008 and maybe some of you do remember me. I love my city of Manchester and I want to do something about stopping this genocide. It is not even a ceasefire. This is a genocide. Thank you.

PRESENTATION

2. Update from Jodie Nazaka, Economic Development Director, on the branding research and strategy.

Jodie Nazaka, Economic Development Director, stated unfortunately the projector is not working tonight, however, we have been told by Manchester Public Television that this is being transmitted to everyone watching from home and I do believe that all of the aldermen have this presentation in their agenda packet. With me tonight are the consultants that we are working with from Northstar Place Branding LLC and I will let them introduce themselves.

Sam Preston and Angela Brangaccio introduced themselves.

Ms. Nazaka stated before I turn the floor over to Sam and Angela, I am going to give a brief update of why we are here tonight. This all started in 2022 using American Rescue Plan Funds. The Economic Development Office initiated a branding and marketing strategy for the City of Manchester and our goal in this was to craft a unified brand and voice highlighting Manchester's unique appeals and assets, making it attractive to investors, businesses, retailers, visitors and residents while also keeping essential businesses and industries within our city; all while building a foundation for a healthy and vibrant tax base. For far too long, negative news has overshadowed our city. We have often overlooked the positive strides that we have made. Major investments like our minor league baseball stadium, which is home to the NH Fisher Cats and farm team for the Toronto Blue Jays, a civic center, the revitalization of our millyard which has quickly become the world leader in bio-fabrication, an 18-hole municipal golf course, two Frank Lloyd Wright homes open to the public, the Currier Museum of Art featuring an original Picasso and Monet, the Manchester Airport with access to over 200 destinations world-wide and growing, McIntyre Ski Area, the Millyard Museum, the SEE Science Center, over 70 miles of trails and bike paths, 2,000 acres of parks and conservation land, the Palace Theatre, the Rex Theatre, a vibrant food scene, and the list goes on yet none of these achievements have been at the forefront of our city's promotional efforts in recent years. The survey results that you will see tonight directly reflect a disinvestment in our community assets. We are making strides to change that practice and this strategy is a key component of that. This survey represents a minor component of this strategy and it sets a baseline for evaluating our progress for the next four years. For the returning aldermen, this presentation is identical to what you saw this past fall. The intention was never to isolate the survey results into a separate presentation but to integrate them in our final strategy. Nevertheless, in response to concerns raised about the transparency of the results, I have opted to adjust the plan process and present these findings tonight ahead of our scheduled presentation in the spring. The results likely won't be surprising, however, some might find them a little disheartening. I do want to emphasize that this strategy is not a solution to homelessness, it won't alter crime rates nor will it transform our

schools. The purpose is to shift the negative perception of our city by focusing on marketing efforts and highlighting our assets and investments. There are a number of department heads in their respective fields that are working on the challenges that you will see presented in the survey results tonight and I do want to close by saying hopefully there is one thing that comes out of this and that is that we can fix the projector in this room. Matt, I will take care of that for you. With that, I will turn it over to Northstar.

Sam Preston, Northstar, stated for those of you who have seen this before, I appreciate you coming back and for those that this is new, I am excited to share it with you. Just a little bit about us. Our agency is based out of Jacksonville, FL and this is all we do – municipality branding. We have done this for 250 cities in 46 different states and our process looks a little bit like an hourglass where the top half is all stakeholder and community education, inside gathering and research and we have been working on those things for the first four or four and a half months of the project. All of that leads into a DNA statement and strategy, which is what we will share at the end of the presentation tonight. We want to make sure that we have consensus from the key groups and stakeholders before we start working on creative branding and messaging development. The ultimate final deliverable that we have is some brand action ideas, which will be delivered in the final report. It will be a close to 300-page report full of ideas about how to bring this brand to life in a myriad of ways beyond just putting a new logo on flags or pens or letterhead or anything else. So, Manchester's primary goals as we have spoken with a lot of key stakeholders and the four main things we want to try to accomplish are we would like to diversify our economy and attract higher wage jobs, investment and development, try to professionalize our presentation to convey the value of city services or also just telling our story a little bit better, we want to clarify our vision and coalesce our residents around future goals and also attract new residents, talent and visitors. Now as long-time Manchester residents and as elected officials, what you will see in the research and strategy today is mostly confirmation and articulation and maybe not a whole lot of revelation but there will be a few things that might make you shake your head a little bit. One of the first bits of research that we started with was a community survey that was put out to the entire community. We left it open for a couple

of months so everybody had an opportunity or several opportunities to take this. We were able to hear from close to 450 people and we want to share some of the key findings from that community survey with you guys. We asked from the community's standpoint what are the best descriptors for Manchester and from the residents' perspective, the top things that came up were big city pros and cons, it's dangerous and unsafe and rundown and outdated. We also asked what are Manchester's greatest assets and what are our residents proud of. The history and reuse of the millyard, Manchester Airport, the location is truly an asset and then also downtown which has seen a great rebirth and a lot of great new things coming here. We also asked people to kind of self-reflect. We asked them how do you think people outside Manchester would describe Manchester and the top things that came up were crime and bad news, large unhoused population and by a large margin those two and the third one was a former mill town. Later on we actually do ask outsiders how they would describe Manchester but it is nice to see how our own residents interpret it. A fill-in-the-blank question here. We asked people what do people not know about Manchester that they should know or the hidden gems and the top things that came up were the restaurants, the parks and trails and the arts. Then other great things were the history, the location and the museums. We also asked what is most important to Manchester's identity as a community. So, if you take this away, Manchester is no longer Manchester. The top three things by a wide margin are the millyard history of innovation, being NH's largest city and business leader, and also the proximity to the mountains, ocean and the rest of New England. Another fill-in-the-blank question was what visible symbol or landmark is iconic in Manchester. The top three things were the millyard, the river and City Hall. One of the other things that we like to ask is how likely people are to recommend Manchester as a place to live, visit or conduct business to a colleague or friend. This gives us our net promoter score or our brand barometer and it helps us kind of set a baseline as Jodie mentioned so that in a year or two years you can ask the same question and see if we are headed in the right direction and if we are making any headway in any of these areas. What I want to share with you here is that brand barometer. Just a quick explanation of that. We asked people to rate it on a scale of 1-10. Anybody that gives it a 9 or 10 is a promoter and anybody that gives it a score of 1-6 are a detractor. Anybody that gives it a 7 or an 8 are passives and we don't count

them. The way that we do the score is we add up all the detractors and we subtract them from the sum who gave it a 9 or a 10. That gives us our net promoter score and we base this up against all the other 250 communities that we work with. You can see as we asked how likely are you to recommend living in Manchester to a friend or colleague, we have about 15% for promoters and then a huge number of detractors. The way that this kind of shakes out is you guys can see that Manchester is in blue and the national average is in red. For living, we have a -42%, visiting is a -30% and conducting business is a -21%. So far below the national average but I am happy to say that this is not the worst scores we have seen. We see a lot worse than this. It is an important time to figure out how we can tell our story the best way possible, how we can promote ourselves a little bit better and how we can really resonate with our own residents to give them something to be proud about. I want to share some of that outsider's survey that we did. We surveyed 400 people throughout New England trying to figure out how well is Manchester known, what is the reputation and what is that outsider's perspective. So just for a little bit of context, we surveyed 142 people from Maine, NH and Vermont, 130 from Massachusetts and Rhode Island and then 128 from Connecticut and New York. We have a total of 400 respondents and the very first question we ask is how familiar are you with Manchester. If anybody says not at all familiar, we terminate that response and we move on to the next person. Everybody who responds is at least baseline somewhat familiar with Manchester. Of that, we had to terminate a total of 542 responses meaning over 55% to 60% of the people that were surveyed know nothing about Manchester and those are people who live here in New England. As we compared Manchester to other neighboring communities, not necessarily immediately neighboring but throughout New England, you can see that Manchester has a lot of familiarity with it. It is kind of right in the midst of the rest of the group. If we were to bring back those people who knew nothing of Manchester, we are looking at only 13% or 14% of the people that are very familiar and only 36% that know even just something about Manchester. As we compare that with the rest of the communities between Worcester, Lowell, Portland, Burlington, Portsmouth, Concord and Nashua, we asked some questions like which of the following communities do you most associate with innovation and historic achievement. Manchester ranks first in most of the group. Who do you most associate with high paying jobs and bio-

manufacturing technology, research and development? Manchester takes first in a tie with Worcester. Who do you most associate with youthful energy and a distinct local culture? We have Portland, Burlington, Portsmouth and then Manchester. Which of these communities do you think offers the best downtown experience complete with dining, shopping and entertainment? Number one is Portland and then there is a three-way tie between Burlington, Portsmouth and Manchester. Which of these places is the best for someone to raise a family? Burlington is first and then Portland and Manchester. The best place to visit over a weekend is Portland, Burlington, Portsmouth and then Manchester. Which of these places is the best spot for someone to start a business? Manchester is number one. So, it is important to see it from the outsider's perspective. We are kind of middle of the pack or at the top from an outsider's perspective in desirability. Now people know that this survey is specifically about Manchester and we are not asking them to decipher between other cities but rather solely focused on Manchester now and we asked which of these adjectives best describes Manchester, NH. The top responses are a big city, shopping destination, manufacturing and innovation and blue collar, hardworking and self-starting. If you look down towards the very bottom, you see dangerous and unsafe and rundown and outdated but from a resident's perspective those things are at the very top. So, outsiders view Manchester far better than our residents do. Again, a story to tell and how can we bring some more positivity to our residents and how can we give them something to really celebrate and cheer on. Another question was what is most important to the distinct identity of Manchester. The top responses were the convenient location, history and use of mill buildings, and then the airport. What is the primary purpose or main reason of these 400 people that were surveyed...why did they visit Manchester within the last three years? The top responses were visited family members and friends, shopping and ate at a restaurant. Again, coming back to truly just the importance of giving our residents something to celebrate and speak positive about. They are our best advocates or they should be. They are the number one reason why people are visiting Manchester and we want to give them something to celebrate and something positive to say to all of those visitors that are coming here. So, all of that research and all of that insight kind of leads to some strategy. As we are going through this brand exercise, the job of the brand is to tell your most competitive

story but the job of the strategy is to determine what that story should actually be about. The research led us in a lot of great areas. We heard a lot of great quotes and I will share some here:

"We need to remind people here of all the things to be proud of because there is a lot."
"The city does a terrible job of selling itself and promoting itself."
"We are a little rough around the edges but generally we have great character."
"Manchester's positives are just not promoted."
"It seems like we dwell on the negatives a little too much."

We did hear a lot of great things like:

"We are scrappy and we get things done."
"There are so many instances when this city has pulled itself back from the brink; we have both fight and stamina."
"Nobody sits back. We all roll up our sleeves and get into it."
"We have a great history but we don't want to just rest on that. We want to continue moving forward."

What is distinct and what separates Manchester from other mill towns or from the rest of New England or from neighboring communities?

"The mill buildings are crucial to our identity."
"Manchester has the most advanced tech in the state."
"The mills have gone from fabric to fabric of life or from jeans to genes."
"Manchester is progressing further and faster than others."

Again, all of that leads into a DNA statement or strategy. This isn't an outward facing or this isn't a public document or anything. As we go through the creative process, we like to put on a hat as if we are Manchester and this DNA statement that we have kind of encapsulates that personality. The one we came up with for Manchester is "For those inspired by eras of perseverance and purpose, Manchester, New Hampshire's largest city, is where an ethic of ingenuity has always been part of our fabric (both yesterday and today) so your curiosity and creativity are rewarded with advancement." That is everything I have got. It is a condensed version of the research and strategy. The full presentation is about 130 or 140 slides but we wanted to give you guys a little bit of a snippet and sneak peek. Does anyone have any questions?

Alderman Long stated thank you for the work. I absolutely, wholeheartedly agree that we need to look at the positives and we also need to identify the negatives. You have done that. With respect to...what was it originally a \$2 million budget?

Ms. Nazaka replied the ARPA project is for \$2 million. The contract with Northstar for four years is \$140,000. That gives us a sizable amount of money to start doing buying whether that be wayfinding signage, media, websites, or marketing materials. The strategy will help us identify what those funds will be spent on.

Alderman Long asked is that \$2 million on target to go through the four years.

Ms. Nazaka answered yes assuming we get the final strategy which should be at the end of March or beginning of April. We can then start moving forward with all the fun stuff.

Alderman T. Sapienza asked you said this is the same presentation you gave us in the fall.

Ms. Nazaka replied correct.

Alderman T. Sapienza asked and we are much closer and in March we are going to have the final strategy. Are you going to tell us anymore about what the final strategy is? I see what you presented but I don't see an update.

Ms. Nazaka stated this is the same presentation that was presented to the aldermen in September. At the time that we were giving that presentation, we knew that we were going to have a new mayor and we knew that there would most likely be half of a new Board so we wanted to make sure that all of the aldermen last year got an update and because of transparency concerns we thought we would divert from our original process. We were originally just going to give the final strategy update when it is received at the end of March or April but we deviated a little bit. You are correct that this is not new information for half of the Board.

Alderman T. Sapienza asked so you don't have any updates at all.

Ms. Nazaka responded since we last met with the aldermen what we have been working on is the brand identity so color schemes and the more visual piece of it. There is a branding sub-committee that has been working over the last several months to kind of go through the back of the house. Once that concludes, which is relatively close, that is when we will have a better idea. Angela is also here if you want her to talk about what some of the strategies might be.

Angela Brangaccio stated we have been working on a four-year strategic plan as well building out essentially what makes sense for Manchester's strategic goals and incorporating that into the broader strategy. Also, that will be based off of what Sam mentioned, the brand action ideas. Those are kind of two distinct pieces but they work in concert together. We want to make sure that the four-year strategic plan works with that strategy. Built into that plan there is going to be a strategic communications plan and brand roll out guidance for the City of Manchester because it is a very sensitive process.

Mr. Preston stated as of now, nothing is concluded yet so there is nothing to report as far as a definitive direction but it will be coming in the next month or so.

Alderman O'Neil asked is it unusual that you find that the city you are working for sees itself one way and outsiders see it a different way.

Mr. Preston answered no that is not unusual at all. That is why our research is so intense. The research lasts 3-4 months. We survey the community and we survey outsiders and we have focus groups and one-on-one interviews with residents. We also have focus groups and one-on-one interviews with outsiders. Especially in New England, we are our harshest critic so we see things a little bit more negatively when we have had more time to be worn down than an outsider would. For the most part, people are coming to Manchester because they want to. Visitors come here because there is something to do and they are seeking something. They do view it in a more positive

light than maybe our residents would who have been here 20, 30 or 40 years and have seen it from their view as such a highpoint to where they might view it now. No, it is not unusual.

Alderman O'Neil asked is there an example of somewhere you have worked where that has been reversed.

Mr. Preston asked where people view their city so highly but outsiders see it negatively.

Alderman O'Neil answered yes.

Mr. Preston responded I can't think of one where it has been that inverse. For the most part, when communities really do love where they live, in every other community that I have worked with those outsiders also view it in a very favorable light. There might be a couple of snide remarks about the city but it is generally very favorable.

Alderman O'Neil asked in the survey where you asked Manchester people to look at it, there is a reference to the Merrimack River as a visual iconic landmark. The millyard not surprising but the river is second yet when you go to the outsiders, they don't see the river as an asset. That has come up in Manchester before as far as how we can use the river as an asset. Other cities use their water. Any thoughts on that?

Mr. Preston replied it is interesting to just look back on the history of Manchester. The river truly was life. That is what life consisted of and that is how business was built here in Manchester. It is not necessarily the same anymore. Businesses change and industries change and technology changes of course but it is still an asset or an untapped asset. How can we get back to utilizing it the right way and how can it truly be a mainstay not just for our residents but how can we attract more people into the city because of what the river has to offer?

Alderman O'Neil asked was the sample you got a good enough one to paint a picture for you so that you know what the next step is.

Mr. Preston answered absolutely. It sounds like a small number and it is but we try to get 1-3% of the total population to complete the survey. While it doesn't sound like a lot, it is statistically sound. Whether we here from 1% of the population or 85% of the population, the same themes come up and the same percentages are there. As you guys are aware I am sure, it is hard to break through the noise and it is hard to get people to do something, even filling out a five or six-minute survey, which is why we leave the survey open for two months and go through as many efforts as we do to give everybody an opportunity to weigh in and give their voice.

Alderman O'Neil stated thank you for the work.

CONSENT AGENDA

Information to be Received and Filed

3. January 2024 report from the Office of Youth Services.

REFERRALS TO COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON BILLS ON SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING

4. Communication from Jeff Belanger, Planning & Community Development Director, proposing amendments to the Manchester Zoning Ordinance to encourage housing construction:

"An Ordinance amending the Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 155 of the Manchester Code of Ordinances, to increase from three (3) to four (4) the number of units permitted per lot without an increase in required lot area in zoning districts that permit multi-family uses; to reduce parking requirements for multifamily uses in the R-3, C-1, and RDV Zoning Districts; and to remove the requirement that accessory dwelling units receive a conditional use permit, among other amendments."

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

5. Resolutions:

"Amending the FY2024 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) for the FY2024 CIP 210224 Modernization of Food Protection Program."

“Amending the FY2023 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Eight Thousand Three Hundred Sixty-Five Dollars (\$8,365) for FY2023 CIP 611723 NAEH Consultancy.”

“Amending the FY2018 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Sixty-Two Thousand Six Hundred and Forty-Three Dollars and Twenty Cents (\$62,643.20) for the FY2018 CIP 711118 Traffic Signal Corridor Upgrades.”

Bond Resolutions:

“Authorizing Bonds, Notes or Lease Purchases in the amount of One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) for the 2024 CIP 713224 Munis ERP Software (Water Works).”

“Authorizing Bonds, Notes or Lease Purchases in the amount of One Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,500,000) for the 2024 CIP 713324 Main Relay and Cleaning and Lining Mains (Water Works).”

“Authorizing Bonds, Notes or Lease Purchases in the amount of One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) for the 2024 CIP 713424 Raw Water Pumps (Water Works).”

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

6. Recommending that the summary of abatement requests submitted by the Chief Engineer be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
7. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$10,000 for CIP 210224 Modernization of Food Protection Program be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
8. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$8,365 for CIP 611723 NAEH Consultancy be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
9. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$62,643.20 for CIP 711118 Traffic Signal Corridor Upgrades be approved.
(Unanimous vote)

10. Recommending that the following Bond Resolutions and Budget Authorizations:

- CIP 713224 Munis ERP Software in the amount of \$1,000,000
- CIP 713324 Main Relay and Cleaning and Lining Mains (Water Works) in the amount of \$1,500,000
- CIP 713424 Raw Water Pumps in the amount of \$1,000,000

be approved.
(Unanimous vote)

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, HEALTH AND TRAFFIC

11. Recommending that the following traffic regulation be approved:

2-HOUR PARKING

On Chauncey Avenue, on the whole circumference of the cul-de-sac
Alderman Morgan
(Unanimous vote)

*HAVING READ THE CONSENT AGENDA, ON MOTION OF **ALDERMAN O'NEIL**,
DULY SECONDED BY **ALDERMAN T. SAPIENZA**, THE CONSENT AGENDA WAS
APPROVED.*

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, HEALTH AND TRAFFIC

- 12. Recommending that the request for an all-way stop with vehicle-activated flashing stop signs at the Union Street and Campbell Street intersection be approved contingent upon Fiscal Year 2025 budget funding.**
(Aldermen Vincent, Morgan, and Kantor voted yea; Aldermen Barry and Goonan voted nay.)

Alderman Morgan stated based on conversations I have with people in my ward where most people are for it but some are against it, I feel it is best to send this back to committee so we can talk more with constituents and provide further study regarding the best course of action.

*On motion of **Alderman Morgan**, duly seconded by **Alderman Vincent**, it was voted to refer the committee report back to the Committee on Public Safety, Health & Traffic.*

- 13.** Recommending that the request for signage upgrades and installation of an overhead flashing light at the intersection of Webster Street and Smyth Road be approved contingent upon Fiscal Year 2025 budget funding.
(Aldermen Vincent, Morgan, and Kantor voted yea; Aldermen Barry and Goonan voted nay.)

Alderman Barry stated one of the things that I have always prided myself on is the fact that we have some of the most dedicated and committed department heads and I would say they are the best in the state. One of those is Kristen Clarke and we rely on her to do the research that we need to get recommendations on what we should do as far as intersections go or signage throughout the city. In this case, she noted that the study doesn't meet the criteria needed to put a flashing light in that area. One of the things that was brought up through conversations was the fact that we could reconfigure the intersection, which I think may be a good idea if an additional study is done. I know that I received phone calls and emails and I will defer to Alderman Goonan because he took the time to go down to Smyth Road and Webster to talk to the residents there. I will let him talk about that if he wants to. The other thing obviously is the cost. When our department head tells us that it doesn't meet the criteria, I have always followed that advice. I received phone calls in the past from residents in Ward 10 that wanted the same thing done. We have some pretty busy streets in Ward 10 with Boynton Street being one of them. There were quite a few times where at certain intersections they wanted flashing lights and stop signs and so on but according to her recommendation it didn't meet the criteria so I went with that because again I trust our department heads. I think it is important that we do that. One of the problems that we will run into, in my opinion, if we vote for a measure like this and bypass her recommendation is that it will open up the floodgates for other people throughout the city who will come forward and want the same thing in their wards. We have to be very, very careful because it is going to get really expensive. Thank you.

Alderman Goonan stated I did speak to a lot of the residents on the edge of my ward, as well as Alderman Morgan. I am really encouraged by the redesign. I think Kristen does a great job and I do respect her opinion on the traffic flow. I looked at it myself and I think she is right on. My personal opinion and the opinion of most of my constituents is that the redesign should do most of the work and then we can discuss signage and

other options after that. I know they want to hear the plan and I would like to sit down with Kristen and get together with all of the residents.

Alderman Morgan stated Alderman Goonan and I did have a conversation about this being a Ward 1 and Ward 2 issue. The two of us can come together and figure something out. I feel good about this.

Alderman Barry stated in reference to the reconfiguration of that intersection, when I talked to Kristen and I don't know if she wants to come up but she had explained to me that right now in the north end there is some sewer work going on. Fred McNeill from EPD is overseeing that work and from my understanding he could do the reconfiguration under the budget he has for the CSO project. If that is the case, I think we should go that route. It will obviously be a cost savings for us as a city and we can kill two birds with one stone.

Alderman Levasseur stated I think we can just take a vote to amend the report to allow for a restructuring by the city. This report says there is going to be a light added and I assume you are not interested in putting a light there right Kristen? I assume you are going to go forward with a recommendation to make sure that what we are passing tonight is the recommendation that you have not what came out of the committee.

Kristen Clarke, Traffic Engineer, stated what came out of the committee was looking at three different options with flashing signs with a dangerous intersection sign or an overhead flashing light. The committee approved sending it to the full BMA contingent on FY25 funding but they didn't pick which of the options they wanted. The intersection redesign wasn't on the original list of alternatives because we had been asked to look at signage but in looking at the intersection, we think the site distance coming around the intersection is what is causing some of the safety concerns and we think that with some minor reconfiguration within our existing right-of-way we can solve the issue without needing flashing signs.

Alderman Levasseur asked so this doesn't need to go back to committee right. You are just going to look at reconfiguring it?

Ms. Clarke stated redesigning it doesn't need a motion from the Board because it is in our right-of-way and we are not installing any additional traffic control devices.

*On motion of **Alderman Levasseur**, duly seconded by **Alderman T. Sapienza**, it was voted to receive and file the committee report.*

Alderman Levasseur asked there is going to be something done there right. I want it on the record.

Ms. Clarke answered yes. EPD's work is planned for 2025 so we don't want to go in and dig it up right now and then have them come and tear it up so it might not be immediate but they have said they can include it in their project when they dig up and rebuild Webster Street.

REGULAR BUSINESS

- 14.** Communication from Laura Shea advising the Board of her resignation as a member of the Arts Commission.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman O'Neil**, it was voted to accept with regret.*

- 15.** Communication from Amber Guilbeault advising the Board of her resignation as a member of the Arts Commission.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman O'Neil**, it was voted to accept with regret.*

- 16.** Communication from Owen Friend-Gray, Deputy Public Works Director, requesting approval of an employee's pension application under the Old Retirement System.

Mayor Ruais called Phil Doyon forward.

*On motion of **Alderman Barry**, duly seconded by **Alderman Burkush**, it was voted to approve the request.*

Mayor Ruais stated Phil I was blown away. Director Clougherty had shared some bullet points on your background and history in the city so I wanted to give you a Resolution honoring your retirement. I will read it and then I would ask the BMA to come up and have a picture taken with you and thank you and congratulate you on your years of service.

Whereas you have been a lifelong resident of the City of Manchester; and
Whereas you have proven yourself to be an indispensable member of the Highway Department serving Manchester for over 55 years of meritorious service; and

Whereas you have installed over 50 miles of curbing, plowed 100,000 miles of road and have done every job in the Highway Department from trash to sewer to roads to management; and

Whereas you have always shown yourself to be the consummate professional who always went above and beyond the call of the duty,

Now, therefore, be it resolved that I, Jay Ruais, Mayor of Manchester do hereby proclaim and recognize Phil Doyon's retirement.

s/Mayor Jay Ruais

I urge all residents to join the Board of Mayor and Aldermen in thanking and congratulating Mr. Doyon for his years of selfless service to the City of Manchester.

17. Budget projections to be submitted by Sharon Wickens, Finance Officer, if available.

Sharon Wickens, Finance Officer, stated the FY24 general fund expenditure and revenue forecast as of February 20 based on department head estimates is as follows. The current projected general fund operating surplus is \$110,000. The operating surplus is comprised of an expenditure surplus of \$67,000 and a revenue surplus of \$43,000. Through January, health costs are running roughly \$1.5 million over plan. Departmental expenditure surplus is expected to continue to increase as vacancies remain open coupled with the city's hiring freeze. Any additional surplus will help to offset the higher health insurance costs. Health insurance costs not offset by surplus

will be covered by the health insurance reserve, which has a balance of approximately \$3.3 million. On the revenue side, there has been an increase in elderly deferral payoffs, Drop Off revenue, and golf and ice rentals. However, offsetting these revenue increases is a steep drop in Comcast franchise fee revenue. The first two quarterly Comcast payments received are at payment amounts not seen since FY2008. The forecasted surplus does include \$275,000 from the contingency account. There were 25 retirements through February 20 compared with 13 retirements at this same time a year ago. Severance paid through February 20 amounts to \$941,814 compared to \$607,180 a year ago. The severance reserve account is anticipated to have a balance of \$1,438,551 after all related entries have been posted. Also attached are the departmental overtime reports as of February 10 and a summary by department of severance paid through February 20.

Alderman Levasseur stated the last line regarding the \$1,438, 551, that is not what you are anticipated to be left after all retirements for the year correct.

Ms. Wickens responded correct. Our best estimate is that there will be a remaining balance of \$715,000.

Alderman Levasseur asked and that is based on information you currently have.

Ms. Wickens answered correct from the departments.

Alderman Long asked with respect to the total surplus, historically April, May and June have seen a major influx of revenue. Is that still anticipated?

Ms. Wickens replied last year we had a boom in building permits. They were \$900,000 over budget. We do not expect that this year. We expect them to meet budget. Auto registrations I believe were down a bit because a trucking company had left and things like that. I was looking at her revenues and they were lagging a little bit. I look at them a little differently than Brenda does in that what you collect in January I would expect would be a lower dollar amount than what you would collect in say May or June. People

buy more cars then. January was a great month so auto registrations are coming back but do I think they are going to beat budget? No. I do think departments will start turning back a little bit more money in expenditure surplus because of the hiring freeze but on the flip side I also expect that \$1.5 million to grow. It could be upwards of \$2.5 million but I think it will be closer to \$2.2 million. We are just through January and we are already \$1.5 million over plan.

Alderman Levasseur asked on the health insurance, you said there is \$3.3 million in the reserve. You haven't gone into that correct?

Ms. Wickens replied right. We are right now pretty much using every bit of surplus that we can generate. We have \$1 million in surplus going against it so if we were to close the books today, the hit to the reserve would be \$500,000.

Alderman Long asked plus the \$3.3 million.

Ms. Wickens answered it would go against the \$3.3 million. If we were to close the books today, we would need to charge the reserve account \$500,000 so that \$3.3 million would go down to \$2.8 million.

Alderman Levasseur asked so you are already going to start going into the reserve in March.

Ms. Wickens replied at this point yes.

Alderman O'Neil stated we talked a little bit about the health insurance in the Accounts Committee. Sharon, could you work with Lisa Drabik and maybe Anthem to try to dig down and get the story of this \$2 million increase? Usually there is a story.

Ms. Wickens stated well costs have increased again but most of it is because of really sick members. That is the bulk of the issue.

Alderman O'Neil replied I am not looking for names or anything. So, it is an unusual year then?

Ms. Wickens responded no. We have been having this right along it seems and it is different people.

Alderman O'Neil replied well if I look at the two previous years it is a \$200,000 increase not \$1 million. I would like to see some background on what is contributing to that.

Ms. Wickens stated I can provide you with some information without names.

Alderman Kantor stated to follow-up on what Alderman O'Neil said, I am wondering if the rising cost is because of the mandated vaccines and the mandated masks that we had to wear for so long and if that has increased the sickness and so forth. If we can look into that science, because that is the science I believe in; all science and lack of censorship, too.

Ms. Wickens responded we can ask that question to our broker, USI.

*On motion of **Alderman E. Sapienza**, duly seconded by **Alderman Terrio**, it was voted to recess the meeting to allow the Committee on Finance to meet.*

Mayor Ruais called the meeting back to order.

20. Report(s) of the Committee on Finance, if available.

The Committee on Finance respectfully recommends, after due and careful consideration, that Bond Resolutions:

“Authorizing Bonds, Notes or Lease Purchases in the amount of One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) for the 2024 CIP 713224 Munis ERP Software (Water Works).”

“Authorizing Bonds, Notes or Lease Purchases in the amount of One Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,500,000) for the 2024 CIP 713324 Main Relay and Cleaning and Lining Mains (Water Works).”

“Authorizing Bonds, Notes or Lease Purchases in the amount of One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) for the 2024 CIP 713424 Raw Water Pumps (Water Works).”

ought to pass and layover.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman O'Neil**, it was voted to accept the report and adopt its recommendation.*

The Committee on Finance respectfully recommends, after due and careful consideration, that Resolutions:

“Amending the FY2024 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) for the FY2024 CIP 210224 Modernization of Food Protection Program.”

“Amending the FY2023 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Eight Thousand Three Hundred Sixty-Five Dollars (\$8,365) for FY2023 CIP 611723 NAEH Consultancy.”

“Amending the FY2018 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Sixty-Two Thousand Six Hundred and Forty-Three Dollars and Twenty Cents (\$62,643.20) for the FY2018 CIP 711118 Traffic Signal Corridor Upgrades.”

ought to pass and be Enrolled.

*On motion of **Alderman Terrio**, duly seconded by **Alderman E. Sapienza**, it was voted to accept the report and adopt its recommendation.*

21. Report(s) of the Committee on Lands & Buildings, if available.

There were none.

22. Resolutions:

“Amending the FY2024 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) for the FY2024 CIP 210224 Modernization of Food Protection Program.”

“Amending the FY2023 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Eight Thousand Three Hundred Sixty-Five Dollars (\$8,365) for FY2023 CIP 611723 NAEH Consultancy.”

“Amending the FY2018 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Sixty-Two Thousand Six Hundred and Forty-Three Dollars and Twenty Cents (\$62,643.20) for the FY2018 CIP 711118 Traffic Signal Corridor Upgrades.”

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman O'Neil**, it was voted to waive the reading by titles only.*

*On motion of **Alderman O'Neil**, duly seconded by **Alderman Kantor**, it was voted that the Resolutions be Enrolled.*

23. Communication from Emily Rice, Solicitor, related to an allegation of a violation of Charter Section 9.03 (c).

Emily Rice, Solicitor, stated our investigation was concluded and our office has found that Alderman Kantor did not violate the Charter. The case is closed and there will be no further action and our recommendation is that the Board vote to receive and file our January 10, 2024 report.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded **Alderman O'Neil**, it was voted to receive and file.*

NEW BUSINESS

Alderman Long stated with respect to the CIP presentations, I just want to be assured that all of the aldermen will be informed of those presentations. Moving forward, just be aware that there are some aldermen that would like to attend.

Mayor Ruais replied yes. There was a miscommunication and that has been rectified. Going forward, everybody will be notified of those meetings.

Alderman Long stated I have one other thing. I believe as an elected official I am of the perception that I am going to promote the assets of Manchester. I am going to identify the shortfalls but I am also going to state the actions that we are currently taking to find solutions. I would ask that as elected officials we promote and identify shortfalls that we are taking action on and not just put down the City of Manchester. I think it was in your state of the city where you mentioned ManchVegas and Manchganistan. That doesn't help. We are paying \$2 million for branding so let's get it right.

Mayor Ruais responded I couldn't agree with you more. That has been one of the centerpieces of everything that I have been talking about. We have to be extraordinarily careful with our language and we should be promoting Manchester in a positive light, obviously recognizing where we have to grow.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated I am particularly disappointed that public comment was shut off. I have never seen it before and I hope I never see it again.

Alderman Terrio stated I have two things. I don't have a problem with people speaking but it is my understanding that the person didn't sign up. That was the issue I believe. The second thing is I was called by a constituent whose son goes to Memorial and her nephew goes to Memorial and a bunch of her friend's kids go to Memorial and she was almost in tears after the most recent violence. Her kid and her nephew and her friend's kids are terrified of attending school and that should never happen in our school district. A child should not be afraid to attend school in Manchester. I know Mayor that you said the School Board is going to address it and you are going to forward me that email. I hope the School Board takes rigorous action to address what has been going on at Memorial High School.

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Levasseur**, duly seconded by **Alderman E. Sapienza**, 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