

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN AND BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE

March 4, 2024 at 5:30 PM

Mayor Ruais called the meeting to order.

Mayor Ruais called on School Committeeman Baines to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

A moment of silence was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

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

School Committeemen Turner, Parr, Soule, Want, Bonilla, Bergeron,
Potter, Spillers, Baines, Senecal, O'Neil, Gonzalez, Argeropoulos,
O'Connell

1. Presentation regarding the project details of Phase I of the School District's Long-Term Facilities Plan.

Mayor Ruais stated I would like to thank everybody for coming out this evening, specifically our Board of Aldermen and the Board of School Committee members. I deeply appreciate you being here to get a presentation on Priority I. During the January 16 BMA meeting, an interest was expressed in getting a presentation, particularly for those Board members who were new and were looking for some additional information so we thought it would be a good idea to offer this opportunity to have a conversation and get a presentation on this. I will turn it over to Superintendent Gillis.

Jennifer Gillis, Superintendent, stated I want to say a quick thank you for the opportunity to ground us in the details of Priority I of our Long-Term Facilities project. Why did we embark on this project? As a district team composed of district administration and the Board of School Committee or BOSC as you will hear me say this evening, this work was initiated from the results of the development of the district's strategic plan which, as you know, was a community-led, data driven plan which incorporated years of robust community forum feedback. Our long-term facilities planning is not a one person or a

one voice product. Rather, it is the culmination of school facility assessments, feedback from families and projections of future needs. In our work, we were aware of the following key considerations: building age. Average building age in our district is 75. I just want to remind us that average lifespan is 50 years; a useful lifespan. We are no longer at a point of doing nothing with our facilities. Class sizes. While we have made significant progress in this area, we are limited in continued reductions due to our physical spaces. This plan prioritizes decreasing class sizes to align with our target policy guidance. As a reminder, in grades K-4 that is 20 and under and in grades 5-12 it sits at 25. The only caveat to that is labs which sit at 24. Educational program. This plan enables us to match programs like Esteem Lab or Career Pathways and opportunities available to our students with the physical spaces to support their learning. Physical improvements. Given our schools were constructed generations ago, this makes essential improvements to areas such as classroom design, indoor/outdoor spaces, air quality, temperature, tech integrations, furniture and lighting possible. Efficiencies. This is an investment that lowers operational costs in the areas of energy and environmental impact. Community engagement and connectivity. This plan is more than just improving the learning environment during the school day. This is a community investment. We envision using our facilities more frequently for community events. We are also focused on strengthening our career pathways for our students. Our work with the Chamber of Commerce and ReGen have highlighted the need to bring our learning spaces into the 21st century. I also want to share some information on our timeline to date. Please note that this information is also listed on our web page under the Long-Term Facilities tab where we have maintained and updated details about our plan. In June of 2022, I presented an overview of our facilities planning which highlighted our need to review options for Wilson Elementary, completing the alignment of our middles into the full grades 5-8 model, and planning around high school siting. I followed this June 2022 update with a deeper update in August 2022. In this update, I proposed the three high school, four middle school and twelve elementary school model. This model would ultimately be reflected in our long-term facilities plan. Following board approval of the 3-4-12 model, I moved to the development of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and a Request for Proposals (RFP). This work ultimately yielded our vendor proposal of SMMA in February 2023 at our full board meeting. At

that time, the board approved the recommendation to use SMMA for our long-term facilities planning project. We have invested a sum of \$1.6 million into this long-term planning and thoughtful work on our long-term facilities plan. While a project of this size would typically require at least 12 months of work, we, as a team, broke this work into two priorities given the urgency of our work. In Priority I, we consistently prioritized the following actions: plans for the closure of Wilson Elementary School given the advanced age and state of the facility coupled with the inability to further decrease class sizes given the physical limitations of that building; bringing all middles in the 5-8 grades model; completing the alignment for our middle schools which started in 2019. As a reminder, Parkside and Southside are in the 5-8 model while Hillside and McLaughlin are yet to transition; and begin investigation of possible sites for a new high school. In April 2023, we began community visioning sessions across the city. In August 2023, the BOSC approved the scope of Priority I with the only expectation that we revise the new elementary location from McDonough Elementary School to Beech Street School. The BOSC felt strongly that they wanted this location as it focused in the center of the city and allowed improved access for Wilson families. On November 21, 2023, we presented to the BMA which yielded in a favorable vote and a layover resulting in final approval on December 5, 2023 of the bond for Priority I. Please note that the plan for Priority I has no impact on the city's tax rate. It is important to note that we have been providing monthly updates at the BOSC Finance & Facility meetings, we have been updating our district webpage and have resumed the Joint School Buildings Committee. We have been sharing updates in our community meetings and in our family and partner communications. In addition, our community forums have remained a venue for ongoing questions and answers. I also want to share that the agendas and materials for the BOSC and BMA are public documents and are posted on our respective webpages insuring transparency throughout this process. I do want to note that we offer and will continue to offer tours and opportunities to ask questions of the plan for both the Board of School Committee and the Board of Mayor and Aldermen members. As we navigate this period of time and next steps of the project, I want to remind us of our original why. The Long-Term Facilities Plan is our opportunity to not only improve the physical environments of our schools, but reflect on the educational programming and improvements taking place in our schools right now. Some of those improvements

include lower class sizes, increased graduation credit requirements, industry recognized credentials, focus on ABC (attendance, behavior and curriculum) data, align curriculum resources and materials coupled with professional development. We are seeing the work in our schools moving in the right direction following years of lagging outcomes only exacerbated by the pandemic. At the core of the work is our why and our why is our students. We understand that a combined focus on educational programming, staffing and facilities positions us to provide transformational educational opportunities to promote high quality post-secondary options for our students. I say this often because our why is so important. Healthy and thriving public schools are a direct link to healthy and thriving communities. It is my pleasure to transition us to a presentation from SMMA. I want to stress that the presentation is the same presentation we have seen at the Board of School Committee and the Board of Mayor Aldermen on 11/21/23. There are two updates this evening and those are the timeline and the placement of the modular and those are reflected in the packets on your tables. With that, Lorraine is going to take the mic but we are going to ask all of you one huge favor. Can you flip your nameplates forward so SMMA can see names so they know who they are talking to?

Lorraine Finnegan, Architect & Principal, SMMA, stated with me tonight is Marissa Fryer one of our civil engineers, Jennifer Suzy, project architect and Matt Rice, a project architect. Matt is going to take you through the elementary and middle school portion and I am going to take you through the high school, the schedule and the costs and after that we will take questions. I can't promise we will have every answer for you tonight but I can promise we will get back to you with answers. If you would please allow us to just get through the presentation and then we would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Matt Rice, Project Architect, SMMA, stated thank you everyone for coming together this evening. I really appreciate the event that this is in terms of the two boards coming together. We are going to start off talking about the elementary school scope associated with the Phase I priority projects which, as Dr. Gillis outlined, is the construction of a new Beech Street Elementary School. This school will be sized

appropriately to accommodate both the current Beech Street students as well as the Wilson students in the final condition. We are talking to talk first a bit about the site associated with the new Beech Street Elementary School. This is the existing area where you can see in the red outline and then you can see surrounding it that there are many different areas that are actually city owns P&R delineated parcels. We understand as part of this process that the project's responsibility is to go before the Lands & Buildings Committee and request the use of this land so that is going to be part of the process moving forward. That is just something to keep in mind as we go. The initial concept for Beech, and I have to point out that this is not a developed design, while it looks very similar to a plan this is the result of an early master planning study. So really what we were looking at here was making sure that there was the ability for us to fit a new Beech Street School of the size that you see depicted here on the site. There needs to be additional design and programming activities that we will be starting to engage in move forward and that is based on detailed discussions with the staff in terms of understanding all of the educational needs as we move forward. This is really a proof-of-concept layout that we put together. As I noted, this would be a completely new construction projected located on the Sheridan-Emmett Park that is located to the west of the existing Beech Street School site. We are currently estimating that it would accommodate the program in about three stories of construction. It, again, is going to be designed for grades K-4 to accommodate approximately 730 students. Keep in mind as part of this, and I know everyone has heard of the process in terms of the modular construction, but temporary modular classroom buildings will be required in terms of the construction for all of the Phase I priority projects and we will get into a little bit more detail about what that entails moving forward in the presentation. A little bit about why the new Beech Street school here in this location. Again, Dr. Gillis mentioned that we initially looked at a site adjacent to the McDonough School as a location for the new combined school but it was really an intentional shift to focus on the city center in terms of investing in the urban core of the city where the students are and building there. That was really a large rationale behind why we are proposing a new school in this particular location. Because it is in this location, it means that it is a walkable site for the majority of families that will be attending; a very important piece. It really is the opportunity to create next gen learning environments within this new building. The existing school as

it stands now, has a good number of windowless classrooms and that is something that we really want to remedy and rectify as we move forward with new construction and that is what it will allow us the opportunity to do. We know also that because we are building on the Sheridan-Emmett Park we are going to be taking a very valuable resource, which is green space in the city center, and we know that we need to replicate that green space as part of the construction project moving forward. The existing Beech Street School, after the relocation is done, would then provide an opportunity in terms of site to recreate that green space as well as potentially the site amenities that are located on the Sheridan-Emmett Park such as the basketball courts. We have a couple of aspirational images. When we talk about next generation learning environments what do those mean? The image on the top left is actually a neighborhood common space. What this allows for is in every grade level within the new school, there is a shared common space that students and staff can all congregate around the classrooms actually open up onto this central space. What it does is create a sense of place within the overall building to allow a smaller cohort of students to really create a sense of identity and a sense of community and is really central to the thinking that we have about how educational environments can really look and feel moving forward. You also see an image on the right-hand side of an outdoor learning environment. This one is actually a rooftop outdoor learning environment where we can create safe protected areas where students can still get the benefit of being outside with fresh air instruction. We certainly have the ability to create those at grade as well. These two types of spaces represent the general concept of differentiated learning opportunities. When we think about giving students the ability to learn not just in a classroom at a desk, which is really an outdated way of education, we are really providing opportunities for them to learn in a space that is more suited to their own personal learning modality. We are now going to look at the temporary modular classrooms that are being planned and actually under construction right now in terms of preparation for arriving for the fall semester. What we have been stressing repeatedly in terms of these modular classroom buildings is they are not the portable classrooms that everyone is used to seeing in the city and the district in the past. These have a much higher caliber of construction to them in terms of their durability, fit and finish. They really are intentional learning environments. They are temporary in nature and will only be there on-site for a

limited amount of time but the quality of them is much higher. What we find when we use these types of temporary modular classroom buildings as part of school construction projects, and they are very typical in terms of their use, is that staff and students actually want to be out in these buildings. Almost invariably they are an improvement in terms of the climate and providing air conditioning and heating that is fully functional. They also provide a fully modern set of educational technology as well. So, they are really a step-up, even in the interim condition, in terms of an educational environment. I am going to play a video now that will give you a sense of what this particular precedent is. It is worth noting here that this is a two-story modular building. All of the modular buildings that will be used as part of the Phase I priority projects are single-story buildings so there is a slight difference there. This is a building that was designed for elementary school and is used for elementary school students. For the middle school modulares, the interior look and feel will be slightly different than what you see here but really what to focus on as you look at this is the types of spaces and sort of the quality of the construction. Again, wholly dissimilar from what the portables were in the past. We are going to shift gears now and run through what is envisioned for the middle schools. There are additions and renovations planned for all four middle schools. Really what we are trying to focus on here is equity across the district for middle school education. The additions are going to range from 20,000 to 40,000 square feet and really when we talk about renovations it is not just addressing things such as toilet rooms and things that are more functional and pragmatic in nature. While those are getting addressed, what we are also looking to do is actually provide a transformational interior renovation and experience for staff and students focusing on next generational learning for middle school students as well. Really, that is centralized around the concept of team teaching at the middle school level. To talk through the four sites now, we are going to start with Hillside so you can understand where the building is in the center of the image here and then you will see as we walk through all four middle schools both a yellow block which indicates where the temporary modular classroom building is going to be located and you will also see a blue block which is where a permanent addition is going to be located. We are also going to give you some insight into the potential for the renovations on the inside of the existing building. Again, just as I mentioned for the new Beech Street school, keep in mind that what has been planned

to date is master planning level study and really what we have to do moving forward also with the middle schools is get into detailed programming with the staff and get student input as well to make sure that we really crystalize what the vision of each of these middle school renovations is going to be. At Hillside, we are looking at approximately at 38,000 square foot addition. This would be a two-story addition again to house grades 5-8. Hillside is one of the schools that will be getting the 5th grade as part of this renovation process so creating the additional capacity in terms of the school is part of the addition/renovation project. It will be sized for approximately 1,100 students. When you look at the diagram that is up on the screen, and unfortunately, I am color blind so some of these colors fly right over my head, but if you will pause with me there and just understand that the boxes we are showing here are diagrammatic in nature. You see these yellow spaces that are labeled team in very small text that are located in different spots throughout the existing building as well as the addition. In the same way we were talking about a neighborhood commons being something that would exist in the elementary school, classrooms to really front onto these common spaces creating a sense of place for a team at the middle school level is just as important as it is for the elementary school so we are trying to create a sense of place within the overall building with these renovations; both in the additions as well as the renovated portion. We will shift to McLaughlin now. The temporary modular classroom building is going to be located really at the edge of the soccer field that is through here. We will be modifying the footprint of the soccer field slightly and allowing a road to circle around in terms of circulation to make sure that is still enabled. The permanent addition then is looking to complete the circuit if you will of what is represented in the courtyard in the front. We will actually be adding a secondary circulation option to McLaughlin in terms of how staff and students can move throughout the building. It will alleviate a lot of congestion in the hallway by providing a secondary option in terms of how everyone circulates there. Again, the program that will be going into that addition is something that is going to be studied moving forward. We know that we need a cafeteria expansion there in terms of providing some additional space. There was no addition put in previously so that will provide some additional capacity. There has been some discussion on alternative PE space or potentially expanding the functionality of the gym with performance areas. Really within this square footage we are going to be crafting

the program as we move forward. At Southside, the modular classroom building is going to be located just off the bus entry drive. As you come in, there is a circulation loop that is located here at the front of the building. We are going to be taking over that small circulation loop but we will still allow buses to circulate in the path that they are currently around the building. There will be minimal site impact here in terms of how the overall site operates. The addition that we are going to be putting here is again a two-story addition. It will be two-story additions at all middle school locations. You can see that will be located on the footprint of the existing parking lot. The addition itself potentially has a cafeteria expansion and then we are going to have the opportunity and ability to also locate teams within the addition footprint. It is important to note that when we located these additions thinking about how they would work on each site, certainly we are taking into account site constraints. In some cases, many of the middle school sites are very constrained sites in terms of what we have to make sure is still accommodated both during construction as well as in the finished condition. We also want to try to make sure that they are going to provide next generation learning environments in the finished condition. Lastly the Parkside site. We have the temporary modular classroom building located behind the building. We are proposing an addition that will again link and connect the cafeteria over to the addition that was put on later. Again, we are creating potentially an outdoor courtyard environment here to provide outdoor learning environments that will be safe and protected in terms of surrounding area interaction. We are also creating a secondary circulation loop through the building so this again adds some functionality to the overall building in terms of how it is operating. Here you can see again cafeteria expansion is a common theme where it is necessary where the cafeterias were not previously expanded. You can see that connection that is happening from one side to the other. Again, Parkside already accommodates grades 5-8 so this is really right-sizing some of the parts and pieces to better accommodate the reconfiguration.

Ms. Finnegan stated as part of the master plan, the scope included a proposal for a new high school, conceptual design for a new 2,000 student high school, but as part of Phase I we pulled back from that and said okay where could a new high school be located in the city. So, Phase I looked at many different sites within the city. We know

from our experience that an approximately 2,000 student high school would require in and around 10 acres. Marissa and her team undertook a study of public and private lands within the City of Manchester to see what lots would provide that 10-acre site and we narrowed it down from there. I think most of you have heard us talk about the Gill Stadium/Beech Street site as an opportunity and that is where we focused as we started to narrow down the site. Again, Phase I was purely where might a high school go. As part of the high school process, we really need to look at your four buildings, your programs and what the focus of the future high schools in Manchester would be. We are looking at two comprehensive high schools and one magnet high school. That is not saying where any particular program would go at this time but looking at what is offered where and how can we look at a range of courses to accommodate all of the high schools in different areas of the city. So, looking at Memorial and MST with the current MST programs that provide 20 career tech programs which are so needed, as well as the full range of courses as one potential school, even though they are two physical buildings. Looking at a new comprehensive high school that wouldn't duplicate the CTE offerings that you have but rather look at pathways that you don't have right now and working with some of the industry in Manchester and surrounding areas to make sure that we are offering those pathways like Dr. Gillis talked about – the STEAM Pathways, Biomed and AI; things that are out there now across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and across the nation and something that Nashua and Concord are starting to talk about. These are programs that students will need to know as they come into a career. Then a school for the arts. There is so much happening within your schools so could we put a focus on a school for the arts for those students who really feel drawn to that and would that provide an opportunity for a separate pathway. Our goal as part of the Phase I priority has been working with the principals and looking at how we can develop a curriculum that will touch all of this, making sure it presents access across the district, and making sure that we are creating opportunities for students and that they see themselves in a school and want to go to school at that location and it is driver for them and keeping them there and they see an opportunity after school. Working with that, we are looking at making sure that that program is diverse and broad in its curriculum. In addition to that, as we have gone through the master plan working with the district, we realized that a lot of your students go out-of-

district for some of their needs. There are not the physical programs within the city for serving some of your students with severe disabilities and social/emotional/behavioral challenges. As part of this relook at your high schools, is there an opportunity to bring those students back and keep those students in district and provide the facilities that are needed to support them here. That is part of the goal. As with any high school design, we go through what is called a program analysis to understand what is the square footage needed and what can be accommodated and for 2,000 students what type of spaces are needed. The diagram on your right is an analysis of that program. Starting at the very bottom, the green, the core academic, these are your classrooms. Your general education, your humanities and those classrooms. The orange is CTE albeit STEAM or pathway programs. Then it works up through a media center, which is the library of the past which is no longer being used as a library today. They have become far more than just books. You then have arts and music all the way through admin, PE, etc. So, this is how you would see the breakdown of that and this tells us that we would need approximately 400,000 gross square feet to accommodate 2,000 students in this type of a program. Looking at that, it helps us generate what a footprint might be and, therefore, how many acres that footprint needs to sit on a site. Obviously, there are auxiliary spaces with that like outdoor play and parking so we take that into consideration. As Matt showed you some aspirational images for elementary, so too we have demonstrated some aspirational images for high schools. Space is expensive and no longer can a cafeteria for example just serve the three meals a day. It needs to be used for the time in between and in the evening. So, the image on your right is what we call a learning stair. We use this as a connection from one floor to another but it also provides differentiated seating for during lunch time. It is a lecture hall for times in between. It is a gallery for an evening event. So, again, we are looking to reuse space more than you currently do. This is an auditorium and I wonder how many times a day this gets used right? These spaces cost a lot of money and we have to use them more than what they are scheduled for. The space on the right is a media center. In this image you see very few books. These spaces have become homes for students for maker spaces, after hours learning, study halls, technology driven exercises and programs...again, a little bit more than what we think about when we think about a library. These spaces have become more and they have become the heart of the school

in many of our projects and really important spaces where the students can feel safe and that they belong. As part of the Phase I priority, we looked at a siting option. Looking at the Beech Street site, it is 16 acres and that includes Gill Stadium, the hockey rink and Beech Street school. I am not going to stay too long on these because this was, again, just a siting location. I just wanted to give you a sense that we looked at this and what is there. We understand there is an underground combined storm sewer and we understand we are buffering between residential and commercial. We created these massing images for context so when we provided a new massing image people understood the relationships from what is there to what would be there in the future potentially. We provided two proposals knowing that the high school is potentially on that site as well as the hockey rink. In Proposal 1 it was an option what if we retain the ice rink? How would a building form around that knowing that a 2,000-student high school needs 4,000 square feet? You would look at a four-story academic bar, the blue is a gymnasium, the purple is an auditorium and then there are the spaces in between. You see the footprint of Beech Street on the site beside it working within the existing confines within the existing streets just to give an overview. Option 2 is what happens if we don't let the hockey rink dictate where a building could be placed and how might you do that knowing that the hockey rink would need to be replaced? There is no suggestion that you are taking it away. Again, these are conceptual diagrams. Would you work around the topography and build the school more into the back of the Gill Stadium site and provide a new hockey rink and that connection across the ball fields? Again, this is another overview. I am going to move on to the schedule, funding and costs. I know you have all seen the PowerPoint. It was sent out to you and it has been presented so I am going to go through it again at a high level. Years 1-5 of the master plan was Priority I looking at closing Wilson this September, additions and renovations to the middle schools and moving through with the programming for the comprehensive high school. A master plan is typically framed for about 20 years. You update the plan as you make projects and things move ahead. Things will change in that time. There may be a spike in enrollment and all of the sudden you need to do something different. A master plan is an iterative product that you work towards as a road map. Not every project gets done in year one and not every project gets done by year 20 but it gives you a guide for what you need to be moving towards. During that

time for the Phase II work, which we are working on, we have been working with the district on looking at what capital improvements are planned. We don't want the district to go ahead and make capital improvements where there might be a recommendation for a more comprehensive renovation or should there be a recommendation for a closure. We want to look at where you are investing your money as it goes towards the master plan. We have been working with our cost estimators and working through the options for Phase II to get cost estimating complete. I am sure most of you understand the difference between project costs and construction costs but we do find that many people don't understand the difference and once you put a number out there, if you are talking about construction costs and all of the sudden you bring in a project cost people can be surprised. The construction cost is what you pay for brick and mortar to build the building. It includes the site work but it is the functional price you pay to the builder to construct your building or your house or your kitchen renovation. In addition to that, you have owner's project manager and you have a designer and you have construction testing that has to happen. You have to buy the table and chairs to go into those spaces and the computers and the technology for the students to use. That is captured in what is known as soft costs. The two together form what is called a project cost. We want to make sure people don't lose sight of that when you are talking because there is a difference in the two numbers. The total project costs that we have presented at the BOSC and were approved by the BMA last year was a new Beech Street Elementary School for \$76 million, additions and renovations to the four middle schools for \$216 million, with a total projected project cost, including the temporary modular classrooms at six locations, with a recommended range from \$292 million to \$306 million. The cost of the temporary modular are in there. We made a recommendation to the district to purchase the modulares. There is a point in time when leasing them is no longer worth it and you are paying more to lease them than to purchase them. The district purchased them and, therefore, you can reuse them if other projects are coming or you can sell them which many communities do. They sell them back when they are finished with them. We were asked to give a sense of how much a high school would be for 2,000 students. This was a range that we had provided knowing that people are interested in knowing what that cost is. This is not in the Phase I priority and not within the \$306 million. Then we looked at funding opportunities. We met with your Bond Council and

we looked at whether temporary modular could be bonded, which they could. We looked at different options for bonds. We looked at the Inflation Reduction Act and what opportunities there were for green schools and rebates. As Dr. Gillis mentioned, this proposal, the Phase I proposal, has no tax impact. In addition to that, I think we all know that there is school building aid that is limited. Right now, with the change in the building aid, the first time that we can apply that on your behalf would be April 2025. The Phase I projects will not be eligible for school building aid but projects that move forward after that would potentially be available for building aid. The reimbursement from the state does not come close to what you would need to do your projects. That doesn't mean it is not worth going after and that is something that we will be pushing forward. Other opportunities. The state adequacy grant. I think most of you know that is where some of the additional funding came from. When the district received more money, they earmarked dedicated amounts. As I mentioned, rebates are available so as we do updates to these buildings, they are available for rebates – local, state and federal. The CTE Perkins Funds. The district gets a set amount of money based on that. Looking at MST and what a new pathway might be, it will be the same bucket of money so we want to be careful that we are not drawing from one pot to give to another. That is important for us. Then there are public/private partnerships. We had a number of meetings about public/private partnerships. It is not something that is done commonly on the east coast but it has been done in a few locations on the west coast. This is where you would have a deal with a contractor to build your building but in return, they are going to get something back whether you are leasing it back from them or giving them a different site. There is a lot to be communicated around that. We looked at new market tax credits to see if there were any options for the district to take advantage of that. It is very rare in public school construction and more common in private or charter schools. That has some hurdles to it and may not be beneficial for the district in the long run. Working with the district, we met with PFM, your financial advisors. They ran a bonding analysis. This particular one was for the \$306 million, which has the highest proposed debt service of about \$28 million and paying down to \$17 million. We did run another bonding analysis which would look at what if you added the high school in that. I think the highest was \$44 million. So, the \$20 million annual

debt service for the Phase I priorities would start in FY26. That is our presentation tonight. I will open it up for questions.

Mr. Rice stated before we jump into questions, I want to offer up two clarification points because I have been corrected on it in the past. With the \$306 million project cost, the bonding that was there was for \$290 million as a value. I just wanted to clarify the figures. Also, as it relates back to the potential existing Beech Street site for the high school, we understand that the BMA previously noted that neither the Gill Stadium or ice rink were to be included in the actual project. That is something that we will be respecting as we move forward. Really, we wanted to just show everyone the work that has been done to date in terms of that Phase I high school site study.

Alderman Terrio stated I was present at the last Joint School Building meeting and I believe I spoke with you about the fact that we were told the property for the new Beech Street School belonged to Amoskeag Corporation who gifted it to the city. The Amoskeag Corporation still exists on paper and is represented by a local law firm. There was some talk about going to that law firm to see if the Amoskeag Corporation would permit the city to give up the park and put a school there. Has there been any progress or update on that as far as going to them to get their permission?

Jennifer Suzy, SMMA, stated we have talked to the city about the procedure to make sure that we are not crossing any boundaries but we haven't reached out directly to the Amoskeag lawyers yet.

School Committeeman O'Connell stated just as a clarification, the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company is represented by a board of trustees, not a law firm, and that board of trustees is made up of community members. While no formal conversations have been had, I just wanted to let you know it isn't a law firm but a board of community members. I expect they will concur but just to be precise, that is what it is.

School Committeeman Potter stated I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the reduced costs that the city and school district would have in terms of efficiencies in

preventative maintenance costs as our buildings continue to deteriorate. How far would that go in terms of paying for this project?

Ms. Finnegan answered as part of the master plan scope, we did a full building analysis of all 21 buildings. Our architects, engineers, mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire protection walked through all of your buildings and we did an analysis of every system – the roofs, windows, doors, boilers, piping, etc. Just so you know, we also did an educational analysis so how effective are your spaces educationally, which is a different analysis but it is important to understand because if you are just going to fix the windows, it may not fix the problem. Many of your buildings are at the end of their useful life and the capital planning budget that is set aside, which is roughly \$3 million, will not cover what is coming down the road towards you. Working with your capital improvement plan, I can't give you a number tonight, but that is part of what we are doing. The master plan is saying offsetting future what is really a lot of deferred maintenance frankly as well as future maintenance that is going to have to happen. Buildings today are more energy efficient – the windows, the roofs, the boilers, everything is more energy efficient. You have invested a lot in bringing gas to all of your buildings. You do great maintenance for what you have but there is a point in time where it is just old and broken and it needs to be fixed. Those costs, while you have a construction cost today, it will give you dividends because it is easier to maintain and more energy efficient. You are not leaking out your heating through your windows. There are some spaces in your schools that are absolutely boiling and you walk outside the door and it is freezing. Trying to modulate that heat, the next thing is you have people opening the windows but you are still heating the building. Those are the benefits. It is not a quantitative number but I think we can get you something to talk about what our experience is with that.

Alderman E. Sapienza stated thank you for the presentation. Henry Wilson School currently operates at capacity. It is not being abandoned because it is being underutilized but it is being abandoned because of its poor physical condition, correct?

Ms. Finnegan responded very poor physical condition.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked is it beyond renovation.

Ms. Finnegan replied it is beyond renovation for what you can do to that building to make it what it needs to be.

Alderman E. Sapienza stated okay so it is beyond renovation.

Ms. Finnegan responded what I will say is you can renovate anything for a cost but if you renovated that building into what it needs to be, it would not be worth the investment.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked what is the plan for students who live north of Henry Wilson School. Are they going to be expected to walk to Beech Street?

Superintendent Gillis answered we are actually working right now on the division of the enrollment for Wilson. We have a few different models that we are looking at and are hopeful to bring that out into the community next week. I am going to hesitate on answering your question fully. I will frontload a little bit. You will see at Finance & Facilities next week that information coming forward. We have looked at different models and we are looking at the walkability of the school and trying to mitigate how much impact that will have on our families.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked do we need more square footage per pupil today than say 30 years ago. The reason I ask that is because I hear that a given school is at capacity but then I also here that that same school had more students in years past. Could you please explain that for the sake of clarity?

Mr. Rice replied yes you need more space per student to teach with a modern pedagogy. Really the reason for that is the creation of some of the spaces that really address individualized learning needs for students which were really ignored in terms of the past and how students best learn for whatever various modality they best learn in.

Also, when we look at the creation of spaces, such as these neighborhood commons and these team commons, there is additional space there that is required to be able to properly accommodate even the same number of students that we are looking at, even at the maximum capacity of the building. It is actually another reason, also, why the existing Wilson School could really not accommodate the current population even if it were to be renovated and designed as a modern learning environment as opposed to just recreating the patterns of the past.

Ms. Finnegan stated one other thing is obviously the class size. The district has set class sizes. In an elementary school they are essentially your homeroom. It is not like at high school where there is a utilization factor and you are going in and out of classes. This is your homeroom so setting a class size dictates how many students you can have and, therefore, how many classes you need.

Alderman E. Sapienza stated just for the sake of accuracy and clarity, I am not entirely sure if it is accurate to say that this project has no impact on the tax rate. The money that is coming in from the state could be used for other educational expenses and I just want to be square with the taxpayers. On top of that, state money is taxpayer money. I don't agree that this project is not going to have an impact on the tax rate. Also, there are quite possibly going to be cost overruns which none of us can predict at this point. I just wanted to mention that for the sake of clarity. My final question is SMMA is the consultant on this obviously. Are you going to be involved in the construction process?

Ms. Finnegan responded we are involved in the design.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked how about the actual construction.

Ms. Finnegan answered we don't build it. We would be overseeing that as part of our scope but we don't build. You hire a contractor.

Alderman Fajardo stated I represent Ward 4 which is the location of McDonough School and I attended the community meeting that you hosted there and some of the feedback

that I am about to share you did hear there. Some additional feedback I have heard since then I wanted to share with you. I would say the biggest concern is about the traffic impacts. I live right near McDonough so for the last week or so I have been keeping a timer during pick-up and drop-off. Pick-up is roughly about 20 minutes start to finish and drop-off is more scattered. I am wondering with this kind of contained time block if there is an opportunity to be a little more creative in how we handle the traffic flow around the school. I know modifications exist right now where E. High Street will turn into a one-way for example but I am hoping that we could look at that even further because with the addition of the extra students, extra parents and extra staff, what is already kind of a pretty clogged traffic scenario I expect to get worse. That was one thing that I wanted to ask. I don't expect you to answer that now and I know that will involve work with our Highway Department if I recall correctly. I just wanted to officially put that on the record as part of this conversation. Also, I am hoping there is an opportunity to take a look at the intersections and sidewalks that lead up to McDonough, which is already a pretty highly walked school. I think when we are bringing more people...there are already areas for improvement. For example, Lowell and Weston Streets become a giant ice block just because of the bad grading on the street. The water doesn't drain correctly so it is always pretty rough there. That is something that I have also heard raised. I am also curious to know, in the demo video of the modular that you showed, it looked like there was a decent amount of surrounding outdoor space and I am curious if that is also planned for the McDonough modular and if so, will that be contained? I also have one more question. The last thing is related to how you picture returning McDonough back to its original condition when it is all said and done.

Mr. Rice replied that was a lot of questions. I do want to put it under the umbrella that the modifications at McDonough, as well as Beech Street, are temporary in nature so they are going to be happening while students are dislocated from the existing Wilson School before the new school is going to be built for them. We certainly respect the fact that it is an inconvenience and we have to respect that design to it but it will also only be there for a limited duration of time. In terms of some of the longer-range options in terms of figuring out some of the issues with icing potentially, that is something we would look at as part of the Phase II project more comprehensively to understand the

surrounding environment. Certainly, traffic patterns will be looked at as part of the temporary modification as well though and we will try to find ways to improve that given the additional volume that is going to be coming. We heard that loud and clear at the meetings that we have had. In terms of what you saw in the video surrounding the modular, that wasn't necessarily intended to be indicative of exactly what is going to be found at each of the sites. We have had detailed discussions with each of the principals to understand sort of what the options and opportunities are. At McDonough in particular, we are looking to create sort of a compensatory area of playground because we will be occupying some amount of the playground with the modular itself but we have made strides after the meeting to try and push it away further to maintain as much of that original playground integrity as possible. When the modular is taken away, we will certainly be returning it to at least the condition that is there currently. Part of that will also be forward thinking looking to Phase II. If there are opportunities to realize part of Phase II in terms of what we put back versus just building back in Phase I, we will do that as opposed to just being myopic in terms of our approach.

Alderman Long stated I am concentrating on Phase I. For Phase II, I will follow the school board to keep up with what they are doing with that. In my opinion, all schools are community centers so I hope there is a focus on making sure that every renovation and new building will have that focus where people don't have to walk through the whole school to use the community facilities. With respect to Sheridan-Emmett Park, I see on the plan that you want to start construction in October 2024. When do you anticipate coming to the Lands & Buildings Committee? Would that be soon?

School Committeeman O'Connell stated the Joint School Buildings Committee is meeting next week and it will be coming through that process. That will be the first opportunity to talk about the process with the three aldermen and three school board members and where the impacts are likely to be from this project on city land and what approach we should take and when or how it should go. I agree it is now an urgent matter and it needs to be dealt with and it will be coming up on Monday.

Alderman Long asked when is this anticipated to go to Lands & Buildings.

Ms. Finnegan responded I would anticipate within the next month we would have our first informational meeting with the full committee.

Alderman Long stated I would imagine that you have had a conversation with Amoskeag Manufacturing and there is a deal set-up. I know they have worked well with us in the past so I don't anticipate any issue with them. I don't know if there is going to be a cost factor in that but that would be up to them. Also, the replacement green space is what?

Ms. Finnegan replied as part of the Beech Street School, there are costs included to demolish the existing Beech Street and we would restore that to an equivalent of what would be taken away; so, lawns, basketball courts, etc.

Alderman Long asked so it would be the same footprint.

Ms. Finnegan answered yes and that is included within the cost of the \$306 million.

School Committeeman Turner stated I was curious when you were talking about secured outdoor learning spaces at Parkside and McLaughlin, was there consideration about connecting that one new portion of Southside in order for them to have a similar secured outdoor learning space.

Mr. Rice responded I think that is certainly an opportunity that we can investigate. Again, the plans that we have developed are really just proof of concept to make sure that something can fit. As we get into those detailed program discussions, if that is identified as a priority, we can certainly look at ways of making that a reality. Nothing in terms of the plans you see here are set in terms of the actual layout. We really anticipate the opportunity to develop them based on community conversations.

School Committeeman Turner stated I just wanted to point that out. I recognize that at Hillside the layout you proposed doesn't allow that sort of connection but the slide that shows Southside, I would love for that to be investigated further.

Alderman Levasseur stated I have some questions regarding the total square feet of Phase I with your renovations and Beech Street. Do you have that available?

Ms. Finnegan answered we are somewhere between 150,000 to 160,000 for the middle schools in total and Beech is 106,000.

Alderman Levasseur asked how many levels will there be at Beech Street. Two?

Ms. Finnegan replied three levels.

Alderman Levasseur asked so you are going from a three-level to another three-level school. You said the new building is three levels?

Ms. Finnegan responded the existing Beech Street is two levels.

Alderman Levasseur asked right so you are going to go to a three level.

Ms. Finnegan replied correct.

Alderman Levasseur asked what is the thought process for that. My understanding was that you wanted to go low level for safety reasons and evacuations. That is not correct?

Ms. Finnegan answered no.

Alderman Levasseur stated my understanding was that was the reason we are getting rid of Wilson; because of the levels. That is not right?

Ms. Finnegan responded no.

Alderman Levasseur stated okay so there is misinformation out there on that. So, you are going to go from a two to a three. Is that going to be done by stairs or will there be elevators also?

Ms. Finnegan replied you always have to have elevators in new buildings.

Alderman Levasseur asked what is the current square footage of Beech Street.

Ms. Finnegan responded I don't have that but we can get that to you.

Alderman Levasseur asked and the square feet of Wilson.

Ms. Finnegan replied I don't have that either but can get back to you.

Alderman Levasseur stated I would assume that the 106,000 that you are planning for a new build is going to be approximately the amount of the square feet currently or is there a jump.

Ms. Finnegan responded the 106,000 is specific to the 734 students so it is population driven.

Alderman Levasseur asked what is the population right now at Wilson.

Ms. Finnegan answered 398.

Alderman Levasseur asked so the total square footage is about 266,000 and that is broken down into the \$292/square foot cost.

Ms. Finnegan answered it doesn't work that way.

Alderman Levasseur stated I was afraid of that. I know we are taking out costs for managing the project, etc.

Ms. Finnegan stated the new Beech Street School is a brand-new construction so it has a different cost delta to renovations. Even the additions at the middle schools have a different cost than the renovations because you are working within an existing structure. You can't just take it and divide it.

Alderman Levasseur asked is it a lower price for a new build versus renovation or the other way around.

Ms. Finnegan answered the other way around.

Alderman Levasseur asked so it is cheaper to do a renovation per square foot than it is for a new building.

Ms. Finnegan replied not necessarily and not for these projects because of what we are planning. It is not given that it is cheaper to do renovation rather than new construction.

Alderman Levasseur asked so normally a renovation is lower per square foot cost than a build out but in this particular instance you can't tell us which it is.

Ms. Finnegan responded I am not sure I understand your question.

Alderman Levasseur stated I am asking on the renovations that you have at the 150,000 square feet for the middle schools, is the cost per square foot different than the cost for the 106,000 square foot new Beech Street.

Ms. Finnegan stated it will because at the schools you have also retrofitted your lighting so our intention is to save all of that new lighting that you have already done. You have already gone and done some work with ESSER funds on the HVAC so we are not going to replicate that. We are taking into account what can be saved within those existing

buildings and what you have already invested. We are not going to throw that stuff away when it is new in some areas. Each school is different. It is not a one-size-fits-all or divide the math by five and you get the same number. It doesn't work that way.

Alderman Levasseur asked for the Joint School Buildings meeting that you have coming up next week, can you break out the numbers on the renovation and new build.

Ms. Finnegan answered we can.

Alderman Levasseur stated I appreciate that. Per square foot and total cost would be nice.

Ms. Finnegan replied yes.

Alderman Levasseur stated so you are going to go from a two level to a three with total encompassing of the students from Wilson. I think you estimated 800 or a little less?

Ms. Finnegan answered 734 students.

Alderman Levasseur asked what is the enrollment at Beech right now.

Ms. Finnegan responded 464.

Alderman Levasseur stated on the issue of getting the park...

Ms. Finnegan interjected a point to remember is that you currently have 5th grade at Wilson. You have to remember that the goal here is to move out 5th grade so it is not a one-for-one evaluation.

Alderman Levasseur asked so there will be fewer Wilson students coming over to Beech. Do you know how many?

Ms. Finnegan replied 69. The numbers are dynamic. Enrollment numbers are dynamic. It is not the same number at the start of the school year as the end of the school year.

Alderman Levasseur asked on the issue of getting the park land across from Beech Street, what is the alternative plan if it does not go through.

Ms. Finnegan replied we would look at the Beech Street site.

Alderman Levasseur asked so addition or a complete tear down and build.

Ms. Finnegan answered we would have to analyze that.

Alderman Levasseur asked so you don't currently have enough modular to do something like that.

Ms. Finnegan replied correct.

Alderman Levasseur stated I am not sure about the technical maneuvering on the park but even if Amoskeag granted the park land, it still has to be approved by Lands & Buildings correct.

Superintendent Gillis replied it has to be approved by Lands & Buildings and the full Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

Alderman Levasseur asked even if Amoskeag agrees.

Ms. Finnegan answered yes that is our understanding.

Alderman Levasseur stated thank you for your time. I appreciate it.

Alderman Kantor asked how many 5th grade classes are leaving the schools and going up to the middle schools.

Asst. Superintendent Ransdell answered 10 classes at McLaughlin and 10 at Hillside.

Alderman Kantor stated so 20 classes going to the middle schools. With that, I was wondering why wouldn't the Wilson School kids have school choice and they can pick their elementary school instead of going to the modular because I do have concerns about the modulars and the back and forth during the different seasons and the safety and security. Also, when kids are out and about there are some kids that run from school. I just know that everyone has gone through so much with Covid and the stability of their environment is really important. I am just a little confused on why we don't have the kids go to the other elementary schools.

Superintendent Gillis replied it becomes a capacity issue at the other schools just the same as we are seeing right now with the compression at the current schools that have 5th grade still in them. We have a number of our west side schools who saw the roll up of 5th grade and they are using their space. We don't have the flex within all of those buildings to take mass numbers into those schools with the new class size in place. Right now, elementary and middle schools are holding with their catchment area. We are looking at all of those boundaries to make sure they are clear and we have the feeder pattern set. We will start to see school choices when we have more discussions about the high school model.

Alderman Kantor stated I am a little confused because the attendance numbers are down.

Superintendent Gillis responded I actually have some really good news. We worked on attendance today and we are seeing some pretty remarkable gains in that area. I believe one of our elementary, Bakersville, saw a 15% increase. We are seeing 8-10% increases and I attribute that to our campaign "Show Up Manchester." We are seeing our student attendance really start to go in the right direction so thank you for bringing that up. The Mayor just reminded me about the safety concern regarding moving students in and out of the buildings. We are having some pretty intense conversations

with all of our principals to look at what those traffic flows will look like. Student safety is always our first priority so we are building that into all of the plans at this point.

School Committeeman Baines stated I would like to make a few observations. I hope we can provide some opportunities for people who have not been involved in education to visit some 21st century schools. A number of years ago now, when we worked with West High School in developing the STEAM Ahead initiative, which was supported by the business community, no one said no to contributing to change the way we deliver education. They had an opportunity through another grant to visit High Tech High in California and I would urge people who have not been involved in education to Google High Tech High and see what a 21st century learning environment looks like. Another observation I would make is that in 1915, my mother walked into Wilson Street School. I am sure that school was a state-of-the-art school for 1915 but as she got older, she used to shop at the Mohegan Supermarket downtown. Just think about how all of these industries have changed. Teaching and learning has changed dramatically since most of us have been in schools. A lot of the teaching is focused on project-based, hands-on, minds-on learning which requires adaptable space where people can work in teams. When we were doing STEAM, we used to bring teachers to Dyn where Jeremy Hitchcock had created that environment for his employees and everyone worked in teams on projects. That is the way STEAM Ahead was constructed at West High School. Teaching and learning has changed but our buildings have not. If you were building Memorial High School today, and by the way this school was designed around 1958/1959 and opened in 1960. I was a freshman in that class so I have been around this building a long time and my kids all went here and one of my grandsons went here too. It is a nice school but again it wouldn't be designed like this today. Also, another observation. McLaughlin Middle School is the only middle school that was designed for middle school education. These other middle schools that we have were designed for a totally different type of education where it was teacher centered instruction. The teacher was in front of the class and the students were in their neat little rows absorbing information, taking notes and regurgitating it back. That is not what it is today and we have an opportunity, inch by inch and step by step to move Manchester schools into a 21st century learning environment. This is just the first step and this is an important step

for us to make. We have the land to do it and the resources to do it and it is the right time to do it, especially with what is going on with Dean Kamen and the ARMI project. Just think of the people that are coming into Manchester right now. Thousands of new apartment buildings are being built and they are being filled up and there is still more demand for it. What he is creating in Manchester is capturing the attention of the entire world and we have an opportunity to complement not only what he is doing but what other businesses are doing in the community and that is why the Chamber is fully behind this project. This is the first time in my time in Manchester that the Chamber has actually stood up publically and is taking a firm position around supporting this kind of learning environment and it is because that is what their employees are demanding. They want employees that come to Manchester to work in Manchester, live in Manchester, bring their kids to Manchester and send their kids to our schools. When we have an opportunity to begin that change, and again this is just the first step with Beech Street. Let's not look for ways to derail that because these are the most vulnerable students in our community at Beech Street School. They come from all over the world in search of the American dream. Go visit Beech Street School or visit Henry Wilson School. Go visit Bakerville School. I went to Bakersville and that was built in 1917. This is a great opportunity to move the school district forward. I hope we can find a way to navigate through the process. I do understand the apprehensions that exist but this is the time to do it. If there was ever a time to really move Manchester forward, this is an opportunity so I hope we can find ways to address the concerns people have and move the district forward.

School Committeeman Argeropoulos stated thank you for the presentation tonight. I appreciate seeing it again. It has been a few times now but it has been a while so it is always good to get a refresher on it. My first question and some of these are going to bounce back and forth between the Superintendent and SMM. My first question is one thing you guys hit on was that alternative school, which I know isn't quite now but when we think about that I believe and I don't want to have wrong numbers because I don't have them written down but when we think about specialized transportation, as well as the actual funding we have for some of the needs we have to meet with students, that

was somewhere between \$10 and \$16 million in our budget alone this year. I don't want to be off so is that ballpark correct?

Superintendent Gillis replied you are in the ballpark but Karen is checking our exact number.

School Committeeman Argeropoulos stated my question is when we think about an alternative school and bringing services in, I know we are talking about money that we are going to spend and we ought to be cost-effective. Thinking about that number, that is one that I think we can save on right away. So, when we think about the amount of money we are spending per year and what we are bonding and those sorts of things, money that can then come right back to us. That would be my first question. Is that something that would be addressed by having a potential alternative school in-house where we are not transporting students and not having to pay for services that we can't provide here in the Manchester school district?

Superintendent Gillis answered correct but keep in mind that we have to go slow to go fast when we build those alternative types of schools and we can't build it for every population that we serve within the district at once. We are looking at a roll in of what those alternative programming schools could look like. We have a group of high school principals that are starting those discussions working with Asst. Superintendent Ransdell to start to map out what alternative schools could look like for us. Selena Malora, our Chief of Student Services, will be infusing what our current numbers look like and what do the current needs look like for our students. I will also couple that with we are having conversations with surrounding districts to figure out who is looking for what type of program. Right now, we have a number of students whose needs are pretty significant. We are looking for an out-of-district placement but there are no seats so we are looking at how do we also help fill the current demand that we are seeing.

School Committeeman Argeropoulos replied to answer that question in short, yes, we can cut costs there.

Superintendent Gillis responded yes.

School Committeeman Argeropoulos stated my next question and it is one that was brought up a few times here but I want to be specific when I ask it is most cost-effective so the question is do we renovate some spaces, do we build new spaces, what does that look like. I know for example the middle schools were just mentioned. Think about Southside. I went to Southside about 13 years ago and at that time we had these long hallways with these compact classrooms. You don't have any team spaces and you have these lockers that are jammed on top of each other and places where students can hide whereas fast forward to today where I am a middle school teacher down in Nashua in a school that was renovated two years ago. We have a common team space that we can use when we have team time and we have areas that have been built specifically to meet the needs, small learning classrooms we can send para educators to, we can have teachers meet with students one-on-one so we can really get that targeted instruction. The question to tie all that together is, is it really more cost effective to renovate a building and have to tear down walls and things like that or just kind of create a new build? Are we doing what is most cost effective here in the Manchester school district trying to create spaces that are going to meet the needs of our students and families?

Ms. Finnegan replied I think you are doing what is most cost effective. We have looked at it and McLaughlin is sort of an easy answer right because it was designed as a middle school so we are just creating that extra pod. The other schools – Parkside, Hillside and Southside were built as a junior high. Yes, they are going to be a bit more challenging but you have made significant investments in them over time and recent investments as well with some of the upgrades. Not every project is going to be a replacement project. As we complete Phase II, not every project is going to say build a new school. We know that this needs to be cost effective for the district and you need to be able to implement it. With the smaller additions needed for those, it just made sense to do a renovation. If the size of the addition was half or more than half of the size of the existing building, really then you would start to say okay where are the gains and what are we getting for doing 50% more as an addition and is it worth it in the long run.

That is phased construction remember. You are leapfrogging around the building and that tends to take longer to build and, therefore, there are additional general conditions and general requirements and your contractor is going to be here longer so there are things to consider. With the size of these additions, it really did make sense to say let's do a renovation.

School Committeeman Argeropoulos responded that is my question. In Phase I we see renovations where you said this building is something that we can use where it is going to be more cost effective to renovate some of these spaces but at the same time Wilson School is not something we can actually save. This is a building that is beyond what we need to do with it so we need to build a new building because in this case that is going to be cheaper.

Ms. Finnegan stated if we renovated Wilson into the space that you need, the capacity of that building would drop significantly more than what it is and, therefore, you are spending a lot of money for fewer students than are in it today.

School Committeeman Argeropoulos stated I have two more questions. We are talking a lot about money but we also want to talk about community and where we want to put our priorities. When we think about public education, and I know the Superintendent said it, but public schools really are a place that is for our students, for our families and they are community centers. We want these to be places where students want to feel like they belong. When they walk into it, they don't look around and see bathrooms outside here where we have stalls that can't close and we have lighting that is really dim and not working for everybody. We have those sorts of things. Part of what we are doing here is because we want to invest in our public schools and our students and our families and say it doesn't matter that we live in Manchester, you still matter and you deserve something as good as somebody in Exeter or up on the seacoast or in any of these towns that are investing in students. Is that correct?

Ms. Finnegan answered yes.

School Committeeman Argeropoulos stated my last question is for the Superintendent. When we think about this, what will not doing this...let's say we went back and said we don't want to do this at all. What does that mean for our students and our families in Manchester? What is the cost of not doing anything at all?

Superintendent Gillis replied I think the cost of not doing anything is seeing people vote with their feet. We are hearing the demand from the business community very clearly. Your schools need to step up and get into current state. That means everything – the educational programming going on inside, the staffing that we provide and then the physical spaces. I think by doing nothing, we essentially stall out the city. I will say that we have a number of administrators sitting in this room today and a number of our staff members from across the district and the city. I am in their debt. They have been pulling heavy weight. Every indicator that we have right now is starting to go in the right direction. We know our student outcomes aren't where we want them to be. We know attendance wasn't where we wanted it to be. We are seeing all of those markers start to move. Doing nothing is a real clear message that we are going to hold status quo which isn't the message we want.

School Committeeman Bonilla stated honestly it is pretty cool to see all of us together. I don't know a whole lot of you here but honestly it is critical for the city to see all of us together collectively. It shows that we are moving this forward. I know that none of us want to move this back because at the end of the day our students and families and teachers back there, especially from Wilson, will be impacted. I know that we all want the best for our students and for me especially representing Ward 5 with Tony, I know we want the best for the community of Ward 5. The community of Ward 5 deserves that and we recognize that that is why we are investing in that part of the city as well as throughout the city to ensure that our students have everything they need to move forward. We know that buildings as well are investing in our infrastructure. These buildings are not just school buildings. For a lot of our youth...a lot of us that grew up in Manchester and I know a lot of you did here and we are trying to give more love to the city. These buildings are consistent spaces for our youth. We recognize that a lot of them don't have consistency at home but we can provide that within the school district.

We can do this with all of you here. We need to collaborate together and we are showing this to the City of Manchester. If we have any issues, let's elevate and utilize this space to get anything that we may have questions on to move forward because again we don't want to be battling back and forth. We have the experts here and back there and we have our leaders to do this. I am looking forward to doing this. I know we are not going to be moving back. Thank you.

Alderman Morgan stated at McLaughlin you mentioned modifying the soccer field. Are you planning on keeping it a regular size field?

Ms. Suzy answered during the time the modulars are in place, it will be slightly smaller than the existing size but it will still meet the regular minimum size for a middle school age group soccer field.

Alderman Morgan asked have you taken into consideration how it is going to affect athletics and the use of the field because they use that for sports.

Ms. Suzy replied we have heard that and we specifically designed it to meet the minimum size needed for regulation.

Alderman Morgan asked so it will be regulation.

Ms. Suzy answered yes. It will be slightly smaller than what it currently is but it will meet the minimum size regulation.

Alderman O'Neil stated there are two items that we talked about, Matt, when you appeared before the Joint School Buildings Committee. I want to echo Alderman Long's comments about community center. I know you said it is going to be tough at the four middle schools because you are restricted on what you can do there but obviously access to the gym and other facilities will be important. It is a little easier to do with the new Beech Street. I want to echo Alderman Long's comments about the community center. Just to mention, and I haven't heard this come up, but security and

safety and is there coordination going on. I understand there are some grant opportunities out there that I haven't heard come up. I hope those are things you are exploring and that you will have discussions with the proper people on the city side to do work with the school district on that. Thank you for your presentation.

Ms. Finnegan responded the answer is yes, we are in communication on safety and security. Safety and security is one of the highest things in school design, whether it be a renovation or new construction.

School Committeeman Gonzalez stated I am pretty much going to improvise for my bilingual brain and I have to warn you that I learned English here. I wasn't born as a native. I do see the improvement that the City of Manchester has undergone since I moved here in the late 1990's. I remember when I ran for mayor in 2003. I was very concerned on the status of the schools and the district and everything that was going on. The city was dilapidated then. We saw Bedford, Hooksett and the likes leaving Manchester and that created a crisis here in the city. I remember visiting some of the schools and was thinking oh my God, these schools seem to be worse than some of the schools from the country that I came from, the Dominican Republic. They bring everything up to speed even though they are a developing nation. Here we are in Manchester, the largest city in the state and we are losing all of these students that provided revenue to the city. From 2003 to 2024, count the years. That is 21 years and I have seen what I call now the signs of the times. This city is vibrant. There is new development and it is unstoppable. So goes the school system. Mayor Baines mentioned the fact about new technologies. I remember that I was his competitor in 2003 and he beat the heck out of me. I appreciate that he managed to be re-elected. I was critical of the school system. I was always thinking about taxes and I was always thinking about the mom and pop's budgets and I am still. I cannot go back to what I call the old times. We are in the 21st century and I have to tell all of you that I appreciate your presentation. The City of Manchester needs to move in this direction with all the brains as I see them tonight here. This is the right type of meeting that was called for. This is basically to give people the opportunity to present their ideas and come together for what is best for the city. The new superintendent, Dr. Gillis, happens to be very,

very focused on bringing the school district up to speed. We have a new mayor, and I also believe he is very proactive in that. I happen to believe in community and working together. I am talking too much but remember what I told you about my brain. It is English and Spanish and I have to translate back and forth. It is not like my colleague School Committeeman Bonilla who was born here. When you are like me, you have to take your time to elaborate and make sense. Sometimes people ask me to repeat. I hope I don't have to repeat myself because then you guys would be in trouble. Having said what I said, I see so many players from the past in the present and I was one of them. I am not going to name names but I have to say that I am glad to see the brains being put together to analyze this and hopefully we are going to have the best school district with the best schools up to speed with new technology and new infrastructure for the 21st century. I appreciate your time. Thank you.

School Committeeman Bergeron stated my question comes from the Phase I project for high school location under aspirational images. I just want to commend you. I don't know if you have ever been to Manchester Community College but it kind of looks like the area depicted when you walk into your college. I know that a lot of us here on the various boards have been to a lot of events there and the way they turned that around for the community is really great. I am really looking forward to the fact that when our students leave high school, they can say oh I have already seen something like that because now they have to leave high school to go and see it in a college. What you are saying here is we care enough about you to give you that feeling and get you ready for college as well. Thank you.

Alderman Thomas asked on the numbers that are under every school for the students, for example under Parkside it says 1,000 students, is that projected or is that the amount of students that are there.

Ms. Finnegan answered those are projected. That is the goal when you have the complete 5-8 through the four middle schools.

Alderman Thomas asked so that is projected even though middle schools might not be at capacity right now and we might have a lot of emptiness in the schools.

Ms. Finnegan replied your middle school buildings are over capacity right now.

Alderman Thomas asked all of them

Ms. Finnegan responded yes.

Alderman Thomas stated another question I had was I know there are a lot of conversations about our vulnerable students and we have a very large population of them. Many people here tonight have already spoken about them. Has there been any talk of a more specialized school for those children here in the city, not at a high school level? You can't be starting at a high school level when issues start before elementary school?

Superintendent Gillis replied you are correct and as part of our discussion we are looking at what alternative programming could look like district-wide, not just at the high school. We have right now targeted high school and middle school as our starting point but we understand and we agree. I have two members of our team, our EL Director and our Special Ed Director, who would advocate until the end of the day to make sure we are getting kids back into the city. It is very much a part of the work that we are doing but we have to start somewhere so we started at high school and middle school first.

Alderman Thomas asked why wasn't that put on the forefront because of our population. I am wondering why, if we have all of this money that we could be spending on new buildings, we didn't hold some stuff off on the high school level or some other level and get those children the help that they need. I know that a lot of residents do complain about the lack of special education. You can't have kids going through schooling having issues that aren't addressed and hope they can do all of those really great programs in high school.

Superintendent Gillis answered I don't think it is being held off. The team is actually right now looking at a whole review of what special ed looks like within our schools. Ms. Malora has done an audit of all 3,000 IEP's and we are getting a pretty good sense of what the demands are in our schools and like I said we are just working backwards starting high school and middle school first and then pitching back into the elementary schools. We just can't do all of it at once. We had to pick a starting point. Nobody doesn't want our students back in our schools.

Alderman Thomas stated I appreciate that and that is why I was asking because we have students going out of district for that and I don't want the message to be sent that hey you guys can wait. We are going to do all of these great areas for other schools and kind of keep transporting you out.

Ms. Finnegan stated I think part of our job and what we bring is right-sizing your schools. The question is why isn't Wilson okay or why don't we just renovate it and Mr. Baines talked about when he went to Bakersville and the spaces aren't the same today. When we right-size your schools for the appropriate population and the programs that are needed, the capacity of those buildings reduces significantly and then all of the sudden we are looking at where are we going to put all the kids because if we say this wasn't designed for the programs that we have today, this wasn't designed for special needs and it wasn't designed for ELL but you have to provide those spaces, now I have fewer classrooms for students. So, the middle school projects will accommodate those new spaces. Beech Street School will accommodate those new spaces and part of the Phase II recommendations are saying this is what it means to right-size your schools and this is what it means to your buildings. I am just going to make one up and say you had Building A and you thought you had a 500-student capacity when in reality you have a 410-student capacity because you need to provide the spaces for the programs that are either being held in corridors or in closets or behind an operable partition that wasn't meant to be there or those students are being moved out of district because you can't support them. That Phase II recommendation is going to include how to bring that back through all of the elementary schools.

Alderman Thomas asked how were the schools chosen to be in this plan.

Ms. Finnegan replied we are looking at all of your buildings; all of your schools but the district strategic plan is to go with the 3-4-12 model so three high schools, four middle schools and twelve elementary schools. As we started knowing that we were looking at the existing middle schools as I mentioned earlier and smaller additions, they were moved to priority because you already have two middle schools that took grade 5 and are completely squeezing their space. We wanted to move up the other 5th grades so we could meet that cohort. When we looked at Wilson, out of all of the buildings we went through, that was the worst building that you have. So that became a priority. It is not to say that the other buildings are not going to be addressed. That is part of the overall master plan.

Alderman Levasseur asked did you look at a cost for tearing down Wilson and putting up a new school with 68 fewer children in it.

Ms. Finnegan asked with 68 less children in it.

Alderman Levasseur replied well your 5th grade is moving out of Wilson.

Ms. Finnegan responded no we did not.

Alderman Levasseur stated the reason I ask is if Phase II never goes through, that is going to give you a lot more room for maneuvering as far as Beech Street being gone. If you don't get the park, you could leave Beech Street alone and take down Wilson entirely and put up a new school. Can you look into the cost of that and whether or not that would be a money saver? You are spending \$76 million to build a school for Beech Street and Wilson. If you don't get the park, you could leave Beech Street alone and then you could do a new school at Wilson. The footprint is there for a brand-new school.

Ms. Finnegan answered no. If we add in the programs that we just talked about, it is a lot less capacity than the 68 students. I think that is the point.

Alderman Levasseur asked so you don't have enough square feet at Wilson to put up a brand-new school with fewer students. You could, if you wanted to, put a small addition on to Beech Street and take 100 kids from there. You just completely refuse to do anything with Wilson even if it was a tear down and new build?

Ms. Finnegan replied we are not proposing replicating Wilson.

Alderman Levasseur asked what if you don't get the park land. You don't have a contingency for that and secondly if you are not going to get Phase II through which from the litmus test that I have the city does not want another high school and doesn't want a brand-new high school. The members of the Board that I have talked to, I don't believe you have the votes for the bond on that so we need an alternative plan just in case. You don't own the land. You didn't get the park. You guys wanted all of this property and you designed all of this and rushed it through the Board when you had the favorable votes and now you have a brand-new Board and a brand-new Mayor and you are probably going to have to break a wishbone and hope you get the land or the votes to get the land. That is a pretty precarious situation so I am wondering if there are going to be some alternative ideas here.

Ms. Finnegan answered not tonight.

School Committeeman O'Connell stated first of all, I am grateful that we are here tonight and thank you to everybody here. I have confidence that as a community represented by the 28 or 29 members here that Manchester will reach a solution that is right for the City of Manchester. I think if everybody just had some faith and some trust the answer to what happens with our schools would be delivered by both the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and the Board of School Committee and our Mayor. We are going through this process to get to an end state that will be the optimum end state we can come to as a group of people here. I don't like the construct, with great respect, about you and they

or they and us. There is no they or us. It is all we. That is how I feel. With regard to the options, I just want to be clear that the rationale clearly was Wilson Street School has to go and we can talk about that at length but it has to go and we need to get 5th grade into the middle schools. Those two things determined the order of operations here and the reason why we went the way we went. The work was done to look at should we build extensions on schools. For example, you see the result on the middle school side. The decision was not to build a new middle school. On the other school, the cost and benefits of building an extension to Wilson Street School was done. I want to be clear because it seems from listening tonight that that hasn't been said expressly. I saw the output and you gave it to us, Ms. Finnegan, which was the cost associated with building an extension to Beech Street and McDonough. The other choice was to build one new school at McDonough or build one new school at Beech Street. The most cost-effective answer was to build one new school. That was the vetted detail. I just want to make sure that is said for the record. The second thing is that Phase II of this project is going to involve 11 elementary schools and 4 high schools that we have today. So, we have 4 high schools and 11 elementary schools that need to be decided next and everybody at this table is going to have a full voice on how that works out. On Phase I, the work has been done and the needs are clear. I heard Alderman Thomas talk about it and Alderman O'Neil pointed to it. This is not a want to or a like to. There is a real driving need for this. Lastly, I want to say this. We have touched on the issue of cost-effectiveness here and School Committeeman Argeropoulos asked about the cost of transportation and the cost of programs for children outside our district. As I said to Mayor Ruais when we first met after the election, I talked about a space in our budget that was approaching \$30 million and that included \$13 million of specialized transportation separate from the \$3-\$4 million we are spending on regular transportation. That \$13 million has grown exponentially over the last three or four years and the cost of the programs to send people out of the city has also. So, there is a lump there. We might not capture all of that \$13 million, but we can capture quite a bit of it by doing some of this work. I will leave it there. I want to thank everybody for being here. I am certainly up for this and excited to move forward. My ears are wide open to listen to and heed...I would like to finish by saying I would like to thank Dr. Gillis for the

leadership she has shown in this process and for the great work done by the team at SMMA. I am impressed and excited to move forward. Thank you.

School Committeeman Bonilla stated I have heard a good amount of folks talk about the land and I know certain folks have concerns about the land here. For example, Aldermen Levasseur and Terrio, if you want to know how to support SMMA in making sure this gets through we would definitely appreciate it. Again, we are doing this collectively together; both bodies ensuring that we are giving the best possible resources to the community and specifically Ward 5. Again, if anyone else on the BMA has connections, please let's just do this collaboratively to ensure that we are providing solutions and not creating further barriers. I know that no one in this room wants to create any barriers for our students and teachers in the City of Manchester. Thank you.

*This being a special joint meeting, no further business can be presented and on motion of **School Committeeman O'Connell**, duly seconded by **Alderman Levasseur**, 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