

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC HEARING – SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPPLEMENTAL
APPROPRIATION)
October 30, 2024 at 5:00 PM**

Mayor Ruais called the meeting to order.

Mayor Ruais called for the Pledge of Allegiance; this function being led by Alderman O'Neil.

A moment of silence was observed, with Alderman O'Neil asking to remember Shirley LaFrance.

The Clerk called the roll.

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

Absent: Aldermen Morgan, Terrio, Vincent, Thomas

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

1. Resolution:

“Authorizing the utilization of excess revenues from the Manchester School District Fiscal Year 2025 budget revenue estimates for a supplemental appropriation of \$6,517,315 to the Manchester School District pursuant to Section 6.05 (a) of the City Charter in Fiscal Year 2025.”

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

Richard Girard, 283 Orange Street, stated:

This discussion has been sort of interesting. When asked about whether or not the \$6.5 million could go back to the taxpayer, the Superintendent of Schools said she thought it should go to the school district because after all, it is the least well-funded school district in the state. I'd like to give you some facts about school funding so you know what numbers are included in this least well-funded argument or not. One thing it doesn't count is the \$85 million the school spent in COVID funds over the last three fiscal years. It doesn't include the \$70 million in regular federal funds that the school district got over the same period of time. When the schools asked for the \$35 million that came in increased aid, the prior Board pushed it through. Elected members, when they came through with a program that would spend \$18 million a year on Phase One of their building project, no one said anything except for Alderman Levasseur. When they came through with pay raises that totaled \$12 million in the first year alone, people sat here silently. The prior Board pushed it through and none of the elected officials said anything. That \$18 million is a 150% increase in the current debt-service the city has, or the schools have. Do you know how much of that is counted in the per-pupil education number that is calculated by the state? Not one penny. There is at least \$25 million in your current operating budget that is not counted towards the per-pupil expenditure by the state. You're not really getting fair numbers. If you do Phase Two, that's \$21 million on top of that. That is just for the high school they are proposing at the Beech Street site. Let's talk about the \$6.5 million because it has been said by members of this Board that it has to go to the schools because it is adequacy aid. If that were true, and it is not, then you could conceivably argue that the \$96 million in state revenue that is now in the budget is well exceeded by the \$228 million that the schools had appropriated to them. That is a \$132 million difference. I think the \$6.5 million is there. That \$6.5 million could lower the city's tax rate by \$0.52 per thousand. That would reduce the tax hike that this Board voted for and that you supported Mayor despite all of your promises to the contrary to the voters of this city. It would lower that tax rate by 81%. I'll close on this. You have a \$9 million hole in the school budget because you allowed it to use surplus and trust-fund revenues as revenues so you could avoid cuts under the tax cap. Under the tax cap, if you follow it, that needs to be replaced next year. Assuming that revenue won't go away, and it won't, that \$6.5 million will go a long way to closing that \$9 million

hole that you're going to have to deal with in the next budget. The taxpayers deserve a break especially from the politicians who promised to give them one. Please do not appropriate this money.

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

*This being a special meeting of the Board, no further business can be presented and on motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman O'Neil**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

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

City Clerk