

COMMITTEE ON JOINT SCHOOL BUILDINGS

January 14, 2025 at 5:00 PM

Chairman O'Connell called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

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

Messrs.: M. Lenfest, J. Soucy

1. Presentation from LeftField regarding the School District Priority One Project to date.

Mark Lenfest, Senior Project Manager at LeftField, stated we will start with a progress update on activities completed within the last thirty days. We continued the modular punch list over the winter break. We made substantial progress. The flooring issues were resolved. The power issues were addressed. Not to get too far into the weeds, but we did a mechanical startup procedure with Triumph which rooted out the problems. We feel very confident that we will be wrapping up all issues regarding the modulars in the next coming weeks. Exploratory work at Hillside and McLaughlin was undertaken, specifically the roofing which was tested, as were the drain lines which were scoped for their performance values. We continued the closeout of the modular contract. Group 1 and Group 2 contracts were executed. We are continuing pre-construction meetings for Group 1 and continue development of logistics for the Group 1 projects. We are continuing the development of the various project schedules. Those were shared as part of the Committee's package. We continued middle school programming and did an exploratory of the culvert at Sheridan-Emmet Park, which is a coordinated effort with the design team and DPW. We continued P1 website development and are on target to have that completed in February. We also continued communication with all stakeholders.

Chairman O'Connell stated Group 1 being two of the four middle schools, which is Hillside and McLaughlin, and Group 2 is work on the second two middle schools, Parkside and Southside. P1 is the Phase 1 work. Since we are starting a new year, it is good to revisit what we are saying here so it makes sense to the people who are reading this. I just want to make sure there is some clarity.

Mr. Lenfest stated I appreciate that. We live in that vernacular every day; I apologize. We should have made that clear.

Chairman O'Connell stated just once in a while. We get used to it, but once in a while it is good to revisit it.

Mr. Lenfest stated as for the thirty-day look ahead, as David reminds everyone we are already into that thirty days. We have addressed various modular unit thermostat issues. Jim Gigante oversaw that for the district. I'm not exactly sure what the issue was. We replaced roughly ten thermostats that were not functioning correctly. They seem to be working correctly now that they have been replaced. We will keep the district informed of how that progresses. MEP training for modular equipment. Now that

we have gone through this new enhanced startup procedure, we are going to engage DPW or Facilities and make sure their folks are up to speed on the latest units that have been installed. Refinement of IT at the modular. This is our coordination with the ongoing projects that are independent of ours that Steve Cross and Manchester School District is undertaking regarding upgrades and switches and services to existing buildings along with their IP phone system. We will be continuing closeout of the Triumph modular contract. We will continue pre-construction for Group 1 and Group 2. We will execute an amendment for Group 1 projects related to the exploratory work, which was defined in the budget package. There will be continued development of various project schedules and coordination of construction phasing for Group 1. There will be continued progress of construction documents for Hillside and McLaughlin. We are estimating the 75% construction documents for Group 1 projects, and we will do a reconciliation estimate. That will be done with the CM firm. Bid early release packages for Group 1 have been begun at this point. Continued development of the Priority 1 website. We will be wrapping that up in February. Procurement of material testing services. We are going to be using the district's procurement guidelines. We have been in contact with them. There will be continued communication with all stakeholders.

Alderman O'Neil asked what do you mean by estimate of 75% for Group 1. The estimate is being done by Consigli, correct?

Mr. Lenfest answered correct. What we do as we progress through different phases of the development of documents is we go out to various trades and we confirm the values to make sure that we are on budget. It is a milestone check on the budget.

Alderman O'Neil asked where does reconciliation come in.

Mr. Lenfest replied for reconciliation, the CM will give us what they believe the values are and then we will reconcile that. We go back with the design team, and they will check that all of the correct materials were used and we will check to make sure that the unit prices carried on all of those conform with industry standards.

School Committee Member Soule asked regarding the middle school programming, who is involved in that.

Mr. Lenfest stated SMMA takes the lead on that. They work with the superintendent and engage all stakeholders such as the principals.

School Committee Member Soule stated I am just making sure that the principals are engaged.

Mr. Lenfest stated Jim Gigante goes to all of those meetings along with the design team. They engage the principals and all of the department heads.

Jen Soucy, Project Architect at SMMA, stated we are ongoing now with the programming for Parkside and Southside because we are in schematic design. We meet with the principals and the curriculum leads, food service director, various departments and groups that we need information from.

School Committee Member Soule asked can you explain the exploratory of the culvert. Was it an issue or are you just making sure that it is going to work should we move forward?

Mr. Lenfest stated it was to make sure it was going to work. It was capturing all of the dimensions and the status of it. Basically, DPW had worked with the design team to make sure the dimensions are correct and the condition of the existing structure is correct.

Chairman O'Connell stated that work is not ongoing now. That work all came to an end once the Board of Mayor and Aldermen voted not to continue with Beech Street School. We are not expending any dollars on that project right now.

Mr. Lenfest stated that is correct. For clarity, there was a DPW piece that they were wrapping up, but we are not spending any money. That job is on hold.

Alderman O'Neil stated I hope the members of the Committee know the great Jim Gigante sitting in the back there. He gets mentioned all the time; there he is.

Alderman Kantor stated you said the modulars, all the problems with them, are all set now.

Mr. Lenfest replied yes. Originally, the biggest problem we had was there was a lack of power or consistent power. What it turned out to be is the mechanical units had not been 100% completed in the factory. What was happening is they weren't going into a self-defrost mode which was triggering them into an all-electric mode and there were not utilizing the heat-pump technology. It was causing an excess demand on the available electricity. SMMA has an excellent electrical engineering department. They got involved, identified the issues, and the issues have been corrected. We have had no issues in the last week.

Alderman Kantor stated when Mayor Baines was talking and said that what was presented to their Board and what was delivered was not what he saw...

Mr. Lenfest interjected I'm sorry, who.

Alderman Kantor answered former Mayor Baines who is the School Board member from Ward 9. He mentioned that the portables that were presented were not what was received. Since the aldermen were condemning all the students to the portables, he actually said it is not what we actually signed up for.

Mr. Lenfest stated I am not aware of that. The contract documents that we have, those are the portables.

Alderman Kantor asked do you have pictures and everything of the portables and what was originally presented to the Board. He made it clear that what was presented was not what was delivered, and he is outraged. Going into this when we did a stop or a pause on Beech Street, the School Board members were saying that the aldermen were condemning the students to the portables but I thought these were state-of-the-art

portables. Do you see where I'd like some clarity on what was presented and what was actually delivered? Do you have some of those pictures? Before, it was ok to spend \$16 or \$18 million for the portables, or \$17 million. What was actually delivered?

Chairman O'Connell stated I can bring some clarity to this. This isn't something you would be aware of because you probably weren't at the meeting. This was something that Committee Member Baines mentioned at a School Board meeting. He didn't describe himself as outraged. He hasn't indicated that.

Alderman Kantor stated there is video. He was pretty upset.

Chairman O'Connell stated he didn't convey that to the Board of School Committee. I took his comments to mean that the video that was presented as part of the overview, was a video that showed the product from Triumph, the manufacturer, was a two-story as opposed to one-story. From a visual point of view, if you were relying on the video, that was a big difference. That was said at the time. There was a difference that did come up, which was the video showed panels on the outside of those modulares. There were color panels. Right now, they have aluminum walls. On the video, they had paneling placed on the aluminum walls which made them look different. The actual procurement and the signed documents and everything were for the units as they appear today and the ones we got. There is no gap between what was specified and what we received and what we paid for. There is a gap between the video that showed the two-story units and, more importantly, the outside look which was different. This was examined because having those outside panels would change the look of those modulares on the outside. We have specific numbers, I don't know if you have them at hand, but the district and the team visited the issue of putting those panels up which hadn't been specified but were on the video. The point was made that the video looked different because they had these colored walls. The team was tasked with pricing them with color walls, which were never specified or ordered. It was just the difference between what is on the video and what was in the documentation. The price was six figures. Do you remember what it was off-hand?

Ms. Soucy stated I don't want to misspeak, but for all six buildings it was probably close to upwards of \$80,000.

Chairman O'Connell stated I remember close to \$100,000. Internally, it was we can get panels on the outside that would make them look more like the video but it was going to be around \$100,000. It was a big number. The decision was made internally by the district and by the team that they wouldn't spend the money to make the outside look like the video. One other point, there is no gap or distance between what the district specified they wanted in documentation, and there are lots of documents and we can have those at any time here, and what was paid for and delivered; it is exact. The gap is from the video. I can't speak to Mr. Baines's comments. I heard what he said at the meeting and was a little surprised by it. We haven't been paying for something we didn't get.

Alderman Kantor stated I believe in complete transparency. What you show should be the same as what is documented and what needs to be delivered on. It is important

when we make decisions that the visual equals the documents and that is clarified. It is very misleading.

Mr. Lenfest stated I agree with Alderman Kantor. That video and presentation pre-dated our company's involvement. We were not hired prior to that. We came in and received the contract documents for the system that had been purchased. As the Chairman said, that is what has been delivered and installed. I would agree with you, but we weren't present for that.

Alderman Kantor stated thank you for clarifying that.

Alderman Terrio stated I think part of the confusion is that those modulares came through this committee before when Alderman Morgan was a member and before Alderman Kantor was here. I was here. I was disappointed, too. I remember vividly a two-story structure that looked like a permanent structure. It didn't look like it was pre-fabricated at all. It looked like it had been built on site and I was impressed. I even said to the mayor that we can use these buildings after the fact because they were beautiful. I thought we could use them for something else after we were done with them. Of course, we can still use them, but what I saw delivered was a big surprise. It is not your fault, but the video didn't show us the modulares that we got. It showed us something very different. I thought we were going to get these beautiful buildings and then we got something else. We are where we are. In the documentation, Beech Street School is currently on hold and is tentatively set to begin construction March 6. Is that correct?

Mr. Lenfest stated I don't believe we have a construction date at this point. Everything has been on hold.

Alderman Terrio stated in the documentation, where it says on hold, it says March 6 for construction.

Mr. Lenfest stated that was a previous date that has not been adjusted. We don't have the information back or permission to move forward on that project.

Alderman Terrio asked this is more of a tentative question, but if the project does go forward and I believe we are voting on it next week, when do you foresee a tentative construction date going forward.

Mr. Lenfest stated I couldn't answer that. I know that we would immediately pick back up on talking with Harvey and wrapping up the contract with them. That was placed on hold as well. Then we immediately jump into the schedule and try to recoup that schedule and do everything we can. It depends on Harvey at this point and what they are able to do. The design team was also placed on hold, but SMMA has jumped through every hoop we have asked them to. If there is a favorable decision next week, we could report that at the following meeting.

Alderman O'Neil stated when you go to the next slide, Beech Street is only at 40% for the design. When it got put on hold, it got put on hold. So, construction is not going to start any time soon.

Mr. Lenfest stated a lot of times on construction you don't necessarily need 100% of the design. It would depend. We could do early packages, especially with that particular site where it is a heavy civil package. Regarding the culvert, there would be some potential work to be done, or what we call early enabling. I'd have to consult with David Saindon, but there would be opportunities at that point.

Alderman O'Neil stated I hope we wouldn't be moving forward until we had a little more than 40% design.

Chairman O'Connell stated we are out over our skis, here. The project was stopped. The entire team was disbanded. The multiple people working at SMMA on this project were sent on to other projects. They are not available to reassemble quickly. If a decision was made to move forward, then the design team will have to reassemble with some different people and any decision to turn the first sod will depend on multiple meetings that will have to happen. I want to be clear; I am taking the decision to halt as a decision to halt. As an individual on the School Board, let alone as the Chair of this committee, all work on that project ceased as of the vote of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. No other work is going on, and no taxpayer is paying a dime for anything on that project as it stands today. The day, whenever it comes, that a decision is made to move forward, then we will revisit and see what the timelines will be and how long it will be and how soon we can get up to speed but we don't know because we have Jen from SMMA here today and if she were to get a phone call from the City of Manchester next week to say we want to go back and move forward, SMMA themselves are going to have to assemble a team of architects, engineers, designers, planners, etc. They will have to get them all in a room, bring them all up to speed, and say we are going to start this project again. I agree with Alderman O'Neil, however, that it is a long way down the line from there. Harvey will get their instructions when we are a long way further down the design process. I do think the big picture is that when we lost the date that we lost, we generally lost a semester. Schools don't open in the middle of a semester. Schools are opening in September or in January. Once you lose that September date, even if you could rush to get there by October 15, you are really working on January 1.

Mr. Lenfest stated that is a correct statement.

Chairman O'Connell stated we are going to know which semester it is going to drop in to. If we are fortunate and there is a vote to move forward, it is possible that we lose the one semester and the school will open in January of that year as opposed to September. That will be the optimum.

Alderman Terrio I was under the impression that a lot of the design was already done.

Chairman O'Connell stated 40% and that is a lot. The design goes into all the smaller pieces within the building, but you are right, the scoping piece and the size, the outline, the square footage, and all the requirements for what is needed for that school in terms of how many square feet is needed is all done but it is at 40%. You can't just turn off the light and turn it back on; there is a delay.

Mr. Lenfest stated the update summary for modular is we have a minimal amount of closeout to be completed and that should be this month. Specifically, we are waiting on

some replacement parts on some bubblers. Beech Street is at 90% on the programming and 40% on design. We have a contract, or we had one ready to go. We will need to adjust any schedules related to that, but we were pretty much ready for execution with Harvey when that got put on hold. McLaughlin is in Group 1 with Hillside and is 100% complete on programming. We are wrapping up the design. We are going to be doing those 75% estimates and those contracts are signed. Parkside and Southside. Parkside is a bit ahead of Southside. On the programming aspect, we have quite a bit of Southside programming going on at the moment. Design by schedule is where it should be, trailing behind Group 1. Both of those contracts are signed with Harvey. This is a snapshot showing how we are tracking on the \$306 million budget. This was included with more detail in your packages. This was not in the previous package. We did an invoice approval on Friday so we reviewed that with the district. It was signed off on on the 10th. Payment approval is scheduled for the 16th with a check date of January 17th. That log should be available tomorrow with the update that we send after this meeting. On the schedule, the big one is the Beech Street project which is on hold. Other than that, there were no major schedule changes from the previous submission. This was included in the JSB package.

School Committee Member Turner stated I know there were some emails back and forth in December regarding the flow of traffic at Hillside, maybe December 11. There were some emails about the flow, and that there was going to be a group looking into that. A month later, I didn't know if there was any news about that. We talked about that last night at the full board meeting as well. Is there any new information?

Mr. Lenfest stated that is ongoing. There was a meeting with Manchester Police and Fire this afternoon. I wasn't in attendance but Jen and Jim were.

Ms. Soucy stated it was logistics. Consigli was reviewing their site logistics plans during construction and before and after, not specifically the long-term solution.

Mr. Lenfest stated it plays into the long-term because of the circulation around the building and the Fire Department's input. We have a follow-up meeting with Consigli, and with Kristen Clarke the Traffic Engineer. We will be meeting with Kristin and talking with her and the Fire Department and also get the Police Department's input.

School Committee Member Turner stated that might be something good as an informational piece to come to this group. I don't want to keep asking the question. If there is work happening, it would be good to have that.

Mr. Lenfest stated we can put that on the thirty-day reports and talk about that on slide two.

Chairman O'Connell stated there is an important clarification here to be made. The meeting this afternoon, what you are referring to, had to do with Consigli the construction company that is going to be building at Hillside. It has to do with where they are going to store their equipment, the times of day they will be allowed to deliver product, all of that stuff and how it will affect traffic and the neighborhood. There is a separate topic which has to do with traffic and arriving at school, and the problems on Reservoir Avenue. That issue is not under the purview of this committee. It is a city

issue. The decision to make Reservoir Avenue one-way was DPW's decision alongside consultation with Police and Fire. It has nothing to do with and was not a product of the building work going on at Hillside. There is some confusion there because there have been challenges there on Reservoir Avenue regarding accessing the school in the morning since the one-way was put in. I want to be clear that is fully the work of our three colleagues on this committee from the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. That work was initiated and executed by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

School Committee Member Turner stated I brought it up because it is in our packet on page sixteen. It looks like it is on the bottom of page fifteen, Group 1 Hillside and McLaughlin.

Mr. Lenfest stated David Saindon did make a commitment that we would update this committee on how we were progressing with our traffic and how it ties in. That is why I am comingling the two. We are talking to all the stakeholders based on what our end product is going to be and making sure that Kristen at Traffic is aware, as well as Police and Fire. We have no issue with reporting back.

Chairman O'Connell stated I agree. I just want to be clear that at McLaughlin as well as Southside and Parkside, any time you are doing construction there is going to be impact on the locality and traffic. That is fully part of our consideration about what is happening and how people get in and out. There is an aggravating factor at Hillside and I want to be clear because there is a misconception in the community that the changes made to the traffic flow at Hillside on Reservoir Avenue and the sidewalks that were put in and making it one-way was the work of somehow the Board of School Committee and the School District. It wasn't. We can talk about whatever we want, but I wanted it to be clear.

School Committee Member Turner stated I am on multiple committees and if this is not the committee to ask the question to then I won't. It says clearly in here that it was continued weekly, there were pre-construction meetings, the team has been analyzing site logistics related to drop-off and pick-up operations, bus, student, and vehicular circulations. It seemed like a natural segue to ask the question here because it says it in the packet but I am happy to stay in my lane and ask it in a different meeting. I just know it is not quite working right.

Chairman O'Connell stated I am not saying we cannot discuss it in this committee; that is not what I was saying. There is a division of responsibilities here.

School Committee Member Soule stated it doesn't matter whether it is part of this committee, the Board of Aldermen, or the School District; we are all in this together. We are going to fix it together. That is the important piece. Now we know about it, and it is what is really happening. That is important; we can fix it together.

Alderman Terrio stated I agree that maybe a referral is in order, or maybe some of the committee members can go to the Committee on Public Safety, Health & Traffic to talk about it to get it fixed. For my own curiosity, McLaughlin, Hillside, Parkside, Southside, after we do this rehab, what is the expected life-expectancy of these buildings?

Ms. Soucy replied typically it is fifty years. There will be maintenance items just like any other school that need to be addressed, but generally we say fifty years is typical.

Alderman Terrio stated the original buildings are pretty old. You are saying fifty years after we do the rehab?

Ms. Soucy answered correct.

Alderman O'Neil stated I want to thank School Committee Member Soule. We are all in this together. We are all in this. You can't be saying this one is responsible. We are all in this together.

2. Monthly status and financial report for December 2024 submitted by LeftField.

*On motion of **School Committee Member Soule**, duly seconded by **School Committee Member Turner**, it was voted to accept the report and submit it to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and Board of School Committee for informational purposes.*

Alderman O'Neil asked in your planning and design are you able to take care of any advantages to expand gym space in the middle schools.

Ms. Soucy answered as I have mentioned, we are not expanding the existing gym spaces from a cost perspective and logistically but we are adding in alternative PE spaces to both of the schools to supplement.

Alderman O'Neil asked what does that mean. Can I go in and play basketball in there?

Ms. Soucy replied they will not be fit-out with basketball equipment, but they are spaces that are flexible that can be used for alternative gym space.

Alderman O'Neil stated there may already be curtains in the existing gyms. Do they work well or should those be included in the renovations?

Ms. Soucy stated related to the curtains it is our understanding that they are functional. Specifically, we will look at that to see if we need to address that to see if they are operational.

Alderman O'Neil stated anything we can do to enhance the space so it can be used as two gyms at times would be important. There is not enough gym space for the needs of the city.

*There being no further business, on motion of **School Committee Member Soule**, duly seconded by **School Committee Member Turner**, 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.

Clerk of Committee