

BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN

January 21, 2025 at 7:00 PM

Mayor Ruais called the meeting to order.

Mayor Ruais called on Alderman Fajardo to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

A moment of silence was observed with Mayor Ruais asking everyone to keep Glenn Ouellette in their thoughts and prayers as he had a health scare but is on the mend.

The Clerk called the roll.

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

Mayor Ruais stated I have one recognition that I would like to make this evening. Can I have the Street Plus cleaning team come forward please? Every successful city has employees that help keep it on track and running on time. Thankfully here in Manchester we have an abundance. We have a wealth of incredible employees here in the city. Our Economic Development Office, led by Jodie Nazaka, has championed our Street Plus Cleaning Team led by Operations Manager James McGee from the very start back in July when we launched this initiative. People are definitely noticing a big difference in the downtown and the cleanliness of our city and our year end numbers, which I would like to share with you tonight, are extraordinarily impressive. Our dedicated street ambassadors who are out working in all types of weather provided the following services over the last six months – they collected 82,410 pounds of trash in the downtown alone, they removed 820 stickers, pressure-washed 950 block faces, removed 606 pieces of graffiti, removed 174 large items of debris, racked up 96 hours of snow removal and hopefully this weekend was the last of the snow that we will see, and they had 62 hours of leaf removal with the leaf dragon. Our hard-working ambassadors led by James McGee are as follows: Jose Sanchez, Florencio Pepe Jimenez, John Espina, and Esther Espina. Please give them a round of applause. I want to thank you for all of your work. It is an honor to have you here with us this evening. Please keep up the incredible work here in the city.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Ruais advised that the purpose of the public comment session is to give residents of Manchester the opportunity to address the Board. All people wishing to speak must sign up with their name, address and topic prior to 7 PM. Once called, they will have up to three minutes to speak and any comments must be directed to the chair and concluded when their time is up. If the Clerk calls their name and they are not present to speak, they will not be given a second opportunity. Any resident wishing to speak will come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized and give their comments.

Hannah Kesselring, 652 Hackett Hill Road stated:

I have been coming to the BMA meetings for a few months now and I have been listening to all the speakers talk about schools and education but there is one thing I haven't heard much about and I think it is really important. How can we actually help kids like me get a better education? We should be talking about how every student, no matter where they live or what their background is, has a chance to do their best. How can we improve the classroom we have now and make sure kids have the right resources to learn? All of these things matter more if we want to grow up with the skills and knowledge to do great things in life. My grandmother is a teacher and she told me the other day she asked for 10 books and an electric pencil sharpener for her class but they said no because of the budget. I am asking that we spend more time talking about how to make our education better because when we invest in kid's education, we are investing in a better future. Thank you very much.

Gavin Telfer, 98 Sagamore Street, stated:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak here tonight. I would like to speak briefly in support of the completion of Phase 1 of the school facilities plan, specifically the land swap of Sheridan-Emmett Park with the current Beech Street School. Like many of my concerned fellow residents, I have been following the ongoing conversation around Phase 1, particularly over the past few months. I also spoke about six weeks ago where I expressed, as many others have, my belief that education is a public good and that it is well past time to seriously invest in our schools. It appears that the key issues on this project, such as ensuring fiscal responsibility, the continued availability

and use of park space, and no new increases to property taxes have been addressed thoroughly. With those things in mind, a vote at this point to delay the process even further would really just continue to kick the can down the road and frankly harm our students. I want to believe that none of the members of this Board want to do that. As elected officials, you don't mean to cause any harm to our students and families in Manchester. If I am right about that, I think it is time to do the right thing and move forward with this investment in our schools. Thank you.

Sara Lievens, NH:

I am the Assistant Principal at Beech Street Elementary. I am the former Assistant Principal of Wilson Elementary. I am here tonight to ask you to uphold the previous decision to move forward with all of Priority 1 and the building of a new Beech Street School. The staff and I have sat here in these Chambers numerous times over the past year and a half listening and speaking in favor of what is best for these students and families. We celebrated when the vote came in last year. Although bittersweet to lose our Wilson School, we knew that only the best was coming for students and staff but here we are again to ask you to do what is right. A yes vote tonight would show the city that we put education first and that the staff, students and families of this district matter because they are our future. A yes vote tonight would show that we will not be left behind as other communities push forward with 21st century learning spaces. I am here tonight to ask you to not discount this community. All of the parents may not be here tonight but they do show up. They pack the bleachers to watch basketball games and fill cafeteria benches at family nights. Don't discount this community. Many of our students wake up each day in a situation that would cause many of us to take leave from work but they don't stay home. They come to school. They come because Beech is their safe space. On our wall of alumni fame, we have entrepreneurs, real estate agents and a professional soccer player. Don't discount this community. Our staff are tough, resilient, dedicated and above all they show up each day and give all that they have to these students and each other. They may not speak at every Board meeting but their voices are heard loud and clear in the classrooms as they continue to care for their students. We have teachers in our building who were once Beech Street alum. Don't discount this community. You have heard from parents, staff, community leaders and members, and local businesses all asking for the same thing; to show the city that

we put education first and that we care about our future and the students who will lead it. Thank you to those of you who have voted yes and those who have not yet. Please do not discount your community. Thank you.

Erin Kerwin, 291 Ray Street, stated:

I am here tonight to ask you to vote yes on Item 36 on this evening's agenda. Please allow the partial release of the deed by Amoskeag Industries, the change of use for Sheridan-Emmett Park from park to school use and accept the scope of expectations identified in the letter from LeftField dated January 14 to be paid entirely from the existing \$306 million bond for the Priority 1 budget. As you know from the FAQ sheet, the total project costs for the rebuild of Beech Street School would cost less than a renovation of Beech Street. Beyond that, there would be a significant educational disruption to teaching and learning if renovations were to take place in the current Beech Street School while school is in sessions. Seeing that this is a two-year project, there is no way to avoid this interruption. Construction on the current Beech Street School would likely cause an increase in the duration of the project due to phased addition and renovation work. Also included in the FAQ sheet are details describing the new basketball court and soccer field that will be replaced at the current location of the Beech Street School with Stanton Park and the Sheehan-Basquill Park remaining untouched during construction, as well as other nearby fields, there will be plenty of available park space. The end result will be the immediate replacement of the new park that has been described to be superior to the current Sheridan-Emmett Park. Lastly, in the FAQ attachment is the reminder that Phase 1 has already been approved by both the Board of School Committee and the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. Included in that bond is the money for the new Beech Street School. The bond debt service is being covered by the current school district budget and will not result in an increase of property taxes. If this Board is truly concerned about the plight of our taxpayers and the value of every dollar, then I would hope that they are using their political influence and voices at the state level to fight for every dollar, including the fiscal impact to the local taxpayers of HB1115, the universal voucher passes. With no cap on income levels on eligibility, we are looking at a cost of over \$100 million per year that would divert from our public schools. Local taxpayers would be subsidizing extremely wealthy families who send their kids to elite private schools. Our city needs your influence to help

prevent this burden on our local taxpayers. In closing, this plan has been well thought out, questions have been asked and answered, and I urge you to vote yes tonight and strengthen the state of our school facilities. Thank you.

Lou D'Allesandro, 332 St. James Avenue, stated:

I am honored to come before you this evening to speak positively about the Beech Street School project. I have been a resident of Manchester for the last 60 years. I taught at Bishop Bradley High School, taught at NH College and represented the city on the school board, as an executive councilor and as a state senator. The public interest is of maximum importance to me. What benefits the public is essential. It is essential to the growth and development of this city, this state and really our country. Certainly, education must be a premium and the facilities in which that education is imparted is essential. It is essential. On the school board, I participated in the acquisition of the kindergarten for Bakersville School. The city repelled that for a time but we finally accepted it. We got a very positive result because of that. I participated in the addition to Parkside so that we could handle the middle school concept there. I have seen projects that have been essential to the development and growth of the city and the educational experience that kids require. Many of you have sent your children to the Manchester public school system. I see some of you whose fathers and mothers were friends of mine and close associates of mine. We know how important education is. I served on capital budget when I was in the senate and I served as chairman of finance when I was in the senate. This project is financially sound. The debt service is taken care of and the money has been allocated and the school district will take care of the debt. That is essential because you don't want a negative impact on the tax rate. It is a very positive situation. The money is there. What will be provided is an enhancement to the children of this city and what more valuable product do we have than the children of this city? They are our future. I am on the downside of the curve but my children, my grandchildren and my great grandchildren are on the positive side. I want for them what was available to my family. I hope and pray that you will positively consider this project because it is meaningful to the city and state but more importantly to the children of this city who are the future of this city and the future of our state. I thank all of you for allowing me to speak before you tonight and I am very appreciative for your public

service; each and every one of you who have done so much for the enhancement of our city. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Julie Turner, 285 Ray Street, stated:

I am here this evening to urge you to vote yes on Item 36 on tonight's agenda. I encourage you to approve the partial release of the deed by Amoskeag Industries, authorize the change in use for Sheridan-Emmett Park to school use and accept the scope of expectations identified in the letter from LeftField. As has been discussed at length since the November 19 BMA vote, we community members, business leaders, families, board of school committee members and district leaders have been seeking a path forward so that the momentum on the district's long overdue facilities plan can continue. I see that attached to this evening's agenda is a length, frequently asked questions document and I hope that it satisfied any remaining questions. Answers surrounding the inquiries regarding the replacement of park space, funding, and renovating versus rebuilding were all included. Since my comments must be directed to the Chair, I want to take a moment to recognize Mayor Ruais and what I read in the press release today. The release mentions that voters have seen the hard work that you put in to addressing affordable housing, homelessness, commitment to fighting crime and working in a bi-partisan manner to improve this city. I would venture to say that our public schools and our 12,000 students are a bi-partisan subject and that if folks are feeling optimistic about the future of our city, then that rosy sentiment cannot be uncoupled from the outlook of our public schools. If the goal is truly to be the best mid-sized city in the United States, then we cannot ignore the fact that our 21 school buildings need attention. The school district and BOSC have worked tirelessly to improve educational programming and staffing, but in order for Manchester's school district to be the district we dream of, we cannot ignore the third leg of that stool; facilities. Looking ahead, I hope that this evening's vote will propel Phase 1 across the finish line and that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen can work in unity with the Board of School Committee to swing for the fences for our students. Together, we can attempt to satisfy high aspirations for our district that are challenging to achieve. As has been stated before, we cannot afford to do nothing. A new community school would be the consolidation of the Beech and Wilson students and would concentrate services and community partners that will help those families who may be in need of assistance

outside of the classroom. In closing, I ask you tonight to please vote yes on Item 36. It is way past time to invest in our facilities and in the future of our schools. Thank you for your time.

Jessica Susan, 89A Elmhurst Avenue, stated:

I am not only a property owner but also a landlord on the south side and I am asking you to vote no on the Beech Street School project. For those of you who have voted no already, thank you. For those of you who haven't yet, I urge you to vote no. It is a fiscally conservative vote. A no vote is not a vote against children or parents or the city or teachers or anyone involved. It is a vote to be fiscally conservative and to use our money in the best way possible in this very challenging environment when things are very, very expensive. Let's keep Manchester a great place to live, work and play and an affordable place to live, work and play. Thank you.

Chris Potter, 470 Silver Street, stated:

I will be very brief. I know a lot of this ground will be well-covered today. I want to address a specific concern. Some of you have said to me in discussions that it is not just the facility that impacts student performance and you are right. Some of the biggest things that impact student performance are a student's motivation and self-regulation. That is why we have developed the multi-tiered system of support for behavior that gives kids personalized individual support with behavior, addresses bullying, and supports students who have adverse childhood experiences. Parental engagement is another one. We have improved communication with parents. We have developed a community school model that we can design for specifically at Beech Street. Class sizes which we have brought down and teacher quality. We have improved hiring and professional development. These are all things that will impact student performance and facilities is another one of them where we also want to move forward. Science shows that some of the things impacting students with facilities are safety, air quality and ventilation, natural light, temperature, noise, design for modern education and technology. By building a new school, not a renovation, we can plan for all of those things to improve them and maximize our students' performance. Now a renovation not only forces phased construction, which is disruptive to the students, but it also costs at least as much if not more while not giving us nearly the lifespan. If you all saw Phase 2,

we have to get through 20 more schools before we get to do this school again. So we need 100 years out of this school. We don't want the 1970's structure in 2110 or 2120. That is why we need to do this new now. Also, you don't, with a renovation, get the reduction in operational costs that will help this project pay for itself. The main point I want you to take away here is this is one part of an overall school improvement plan and it will impact thousands of students for generations in this city. Thank you.

David Todisco, 390 Orange Street, stated:

I work downtown and so does my partner. We bought our house this summer in Manchester because we believe in the vision that Manchester will be the greatest mid-sized city in the country. Education is a big part of that. This plan is a sound plan and I know that many of us agree here. I know that FAQ sheet made its way around so I hope folks have had their questions answered. I am just here to add my voice to many of the good words of support here today and to also represent a demographic of the city which is young people trying to start their life here and stay here. We have a lot of friends who are asking what the reasons are for them to stay here. Even if they do work downtown, they might be looking at other places in the area. Often times, schools come up and when we are in those conversations, we tell them that the city is dedicated to education. I know that our structures are a big part of that and I hope we move forward with this plan. Thank you very much for your time.

Bryce Kaw-uh, 639 N. Bay Street, stated:

I am here tonight to ask that you approve the land transfer agreement that will allow the rebuild of Beech Street Elementary School to finally proceed. As everyone knows, Mayor Ruais you caused the pause back in November by voting no in an unexpected tie-breaker vote. This Board was divided and you took the side of the status quo leading to months of uncertainty and confusion. Although I disagreed with your pause, the delay did give this Board more time to educate itself on this project. We all want our elected officials to make informed decisions so with two more months to ask questions and learn more, I hope that you all feel you have enough information to proceed. I would like to thank you, Mayor Ruais, for putting the land transfer agreement back on the agenda. Your collaboration behind-the-scenes since the original vote has helped us get to this point. I would also encourage you to vote in support of the project this time or

if you want to appear impartial perhaps you could get an alderman to flip their vote so that you are safe from having to break yet another tie. I know you care a great deal about optics after all, especially in advance of your upcoming announcement on January 30 that you will seek re-election. One alderman who might change their vote I think is Ward 1 alderman, Chris Morgan. As you know, Alderman Morgan voted no in November in an effort to stop the rebuild of Beech Street Elementary School. In the time since then, Mayor Ruais, I am sure you have noticed how Ward 1 has turned out strongly in favor of this project as evidenced by all the public testimony, emails, phone calls and texts. I am grateful to the residents of Ward 1 who are making their voices heard. In Ward 1, we believe in the value of public education. We strongly support our public schools. We understand that our public schools are there to serve everyone of all backgrounds and abilities and we believe that every child deserves the best possible education that we can provide. I would have thought that Alderman Morgan felt the same since he is a graduate of Manchester public schools and the son of public-school teachers. Hopefully, he has listened to his constituents and will vote differently tonight. If we want to make progress on your goal of making Manchester the best mid-sized city in the United States, Mayor Ruais, then we need to invest in our community and build up our school system so that it is the best it can be. At the end of the day, it comes down to what our city stands for and what our city values. What path will you choose? It is my hope that you will choose to support our students, invest in our community and in doing so help Manchester reach its full potential. Thank you.

Ken Tasse, Ward 6, stated:

I have a handout to submit to the aldermen. Thank you for allowing me to share during public comment. I am speaking here with concern for Item 36 on tonight's agenda which is a motion essentially to move forward with the demolition of Beech Street Elementary and build a new school on the park site for \$80 million plus other significant costs for the project. My concern is that the project by which this was approved was a one-sided approach to a capital project with a price tag of \$2.3 billion roughly that will have a negative tax and economic consequence for decades to come. Tonight, however, we are talking about Beech Street School which is a portion of the project. Again, an \$80 million project. Our student enrollment has declined from 14,300 students to less than 12,000 over the past 10 years and according to the NH

Department of Education 49% of our students are not proficient in reading, 56% are not proficient in math and 70% are not proficient in science. The school board that approved this project and the superintendent believe, along with some of you, that building new schools is going to make our kids smarter. Success that involves more than one party often requires compromise. The relationship between the teacher's union and the city requires compromise. A happy marriage requires compromise. One party asks for the moon and the other side pushes back and parties eventually settle on a happy medium. That is how things work in real life. I ask you tonight on Item 36 to roll the bond back and by the way I would like to make it clear that there is no one in this room that doesn't want wonderful facilities for our kids. Let's prove first over some agreed period of time that we are improving the grade average and performance of our students academically by some realistic metric like 5% a year over a three-year period and that we are increasing the enrollment of our students by actually making our city more attractive to bring families here to have their children study, work and settle in Manchester. Regarding rolling back the bond, there is work being done at the state house right now to change the language on the Municipal Finance Act, 33-8-F, to be a simple majority without a five-year waiting period. That should be ready, if you are familiar with the make-up of the state senate and legislature right now, sometime in February. Thank you very much and I ask you to vote no tonight.

Steven Kesselring, 652 Hackett Hill Road, stated:

I want to thank you for letting me ask these questions. I did send everyone an email and the email that I sent had some concerns about the construction. I did find out today that the Beech Street School is going to be under construction by a different construction company than the one that is currently listed as the one that is currently under bankruptcy. The question I have on that for you to check for me is if you can look up and see what construction company is doing the work because I can't find it listed on the long-term facilities plan from 12/5/23. It says the same company is listed doing the construction of those projects. So, I have heard a lot tonight about this FAQ so I want to talk through it really quick. The first line item on line 2 says there is up to \$1.4 million being projected for the park. Again, I am not telling anybody how to vote tonight but I want to point out some simple facts. This says \$1.4 million. Back in July 2023, it was estimated at \$4.2 million. So how does it go from \$4.2 to \$1.4? Again, my numbers

might be wrong but I am looking back at July 2023. I am going to keep going down. On line 11 it asks will adequacy aid disappear. Again, there is a funding formula that is very complex that the adequacy fund uses on the state level. You can spend probably the rest of your life looking at it and you will find out that there are some decreases coming to the City of Manchester. Whether that is covered by the school budget currently remains to be seen. As far as property taxes go and I have already said this to the mayor but I believe in a couple of years the tax rate will go up based on these numbers. Again, as a state representative for Ward 12, I have done a ton of research. The construction being done at Beech Street says it does not include the commissary which is estimated at \$5 million. I would argue that that \$5 million plus the previously estimate for the park means that you are looking at \$7-10 million more for the Beech Street School than is actually in there. The argument could be made that currently you don't really know what the cost is because if it is not actually completely altogether than you don't actually have a real budget to tell you if it is going to be covered under taxes. I would argue that...again as you keep going down you can see the modular classrooms. There is a lawsuit pending against the company listed that said they did the same exact thing that happened in Manchester where it started at \$17 million and then went to \$25.5 million. I would request that the BMA look into that too because you could be added to that lawsuit that is a class action. I have tons more and will follow-up with an email if you would like but I want to thank everybody.

Karen Soule, Ward 3, stated:

I want to thank the Board of Aldermen for submitting questions and to thank Amoskeag Industries for consenting to the construction of a new public elementary school building and related school facilities (the city school) to the City of Manchester because we all know that we do not own the schools; the city owns the schools. I want to talk about the final questions that have been asked about the use of Sheridan-Emmett Park, the replacement of the park amenities and the restoration of the existing Beech Street properties. The scope of the above is we are proposing to construct a new school at Sheridan-Emmett Park and abate and demolish the existing Beech Street School. During construction, and this question has come up quite a bit, the existing basketball court at Beech Street will be lengthened to match the size of the ones at Sheridan-Emmett Park. That will also include fencing. Based on what is located at Sheridan-

Emmett Park, new playground equipment will be installed at Stanton Park and if any of you know Stanton Park, it is going to significantly improve that park. It is in my ward and I have walked that park and sometimes it is not a pleasant place to be. Once Beech Street is completed, the new basketball courts will be constructed on the existing Beech Street parcel with fencing and lighting. The area of the existing Beech Street parcel will be set aside for limited parking because we all know that parking can be an issue. Lastly, the funding will be utilized for a new field to be constructed as well as the existing field will have loam, seed and irrigation because you need to take care of it if you put a new field in. Then there will be a 6' fence. We are working with DPW on this. All of this is included in the \$306 million project and I want to make sure everyone understands that. We are not asking for any money. We are just asking for Beech Street to be considered. Our students deserve equitable access to a quality education, which includes windows in their classrooms. Thirteen classrooms out of twenty-eight have no windows. In 14 classrooms, you can't open the windows. They deserve a cafeteria that is large enough to serve their students and the acoustics so that all students can eat in the cafeteria. We are all in this together and hope that if we truly believe in the future of the City of Manchester it begins with educating our future citizens in facilities that we are proud of. Once again, we are merely asking to move forward with the Beech Street School and I will say it again. We cannot afford to do nothing. Thank you.

Melissa Bartolomei, 136 Sagamore Street, stated:

I am a proud resident of Manchester. I chose to live here over 20 years ago so I chose to be here and I chose to raise my family here. I am the mother to two school-aged children in the district. I have taken time away from my family tonight to urge you aldermen to vote yes on moving the Beech Street School project forward. I encourage you please do not be short-sighted. Countless studies, including those from the Urban Institute and the National Association of Realtors and more studies than I can list in my three minutes of allotted time, report that families view access and quality of public education as the most influential factor in moving to a new city or town. Manchester has done an incredible job of attracting more young professionals to the city. Business in the millyard and downtown is booming. However, what happens when these young professionals decide to have families? We have already heard from some young

professionals talking about this same situation today. They decide to move elsewhere because they do not believe our educational facilities and experiences are adequate for our children. This begs the question what about our own children; the children who are already living here in Manchester? Don't they deserve high quality up-to-date school facilities as well? We know that Manchester has remarkable teachers but we are expecting them to deliver amazing, high-quality education in buildings literally crumbling around them. We cannot help Manchester grow and evolve if we do not provide safe and modern schools for all of our students. The Beech Street School project not only provides a state-of-the-art facility and high-quality educational opportunities to one of the neediest sections of our city but also provides opportunities for many other schools in our district to benefit as well. I am asking the aldermen to show their commitment to the children of Manchester by making a decision that ensure that all students have access to quality education in quality facilities. I urge you to move forward and I urge you to vote yes. Thank you for your time.

Joceline Champagne, 33 Hemlock Street, stated:

I am a lifelong resident of Manchester. I am here tonight to ask you to authorize the use of the land needed to build the new Beech Street School and approve moving forward with the Priority 1 plan for our school district's long-term facilities project. I am a parent of two district students. I have never been to one of your meetings before to speak. I have been to watch. My kids have sung here before you and helped say the pledge but I never felt that I needed to speak before. I felt that I needed to come tonight. I needed to come forward to ask you to move this plan forward. The school board did their homework. The money has been allocated and the work has started. Don't stop now. You can't stop now. This city is on the cusp of making our school district building something to be proud of, not something to be embarrassed of when you are with other people in your school buildings or when you know that the teachers there and the kids there are doing their best with what they have. You shouldn't be embarrassed to go to the bathroom in your school. You shouldn't be embarrassed because other families from Bedford and Bow are there and they are looking at your facility and can't believe that this is where the kids are going. We have dedicated teachers and kids who have so much potential. They deserve facilities that reflect that. Keeping this a place where people want to live, work and play requires a plan that includes families and children.

They want to work and play and stay but if you don't have a plan that includes good schools, they aren't going to stay. They are already leaving. They are leaving if they can. We don't want to lose more families and kids here if you truly believe they have potential and you believe they deserve the best. These new schools will keep families here. Some have stayed because they saw this move forward. Please don't stop now. One more thing, a comment was made earlier about some families not being able to be here. It is not that they don't want to be. Anyone with kids knows that right about now they are trying to get them in the bath and they are trying to get them fed and in bed. They are also not here because they trust you. They trust our representatives to do what is in the best interest of them and their families and everybody in the city. Thank you for the time to speak tonight. I ask you to invest in the schools and move this plan forward. Thank you.

Maddy August, 55 River Road, stated:

I am on the board of Granite State Organizing Project and I am here to talk about a different topic. I am speaking in favor of the new zoning ordinances. The Zoning Board has done an excellent job at modifying the existing ordinances to encourage density and walkability in the downtown areas and to see the lively and prosperous city downtown that we all want to see. I also want to thank the mayor for the work he has done on creating new affordable housing in the city. I think you have done a good job but I would also like to urge the mayor and Board of Aldermen to request that the developer at 516 Elm Street set aside 10% of the units for Section 8 housing. The Zoning Board has granted the developers variances so they could increase density, which is great. I am in favor of that because that increases affordability within the city. However, in return for the increased profitability that the developer is going to realize based on this increased density, I think that you should request that the developer set aside 10% of the units for Section 8 housing in order to provide more units at a truly affordable rate. Thank you for your time.

Kim Kesselring, 652 Hackett Hill Road, stated:

I am addressing you this evening to express my strong opposition to the proposed construction of Beech Street School and to urge you to vote against it. There are numerous concerns surrounding this project, particularly regarding the unclear costs

and the potential financial impact on our community. While we have been assured that this development will not result in increased taxes, I am skeptical that this will remain the case. In these challenging economic times, many families in our community are already struggling to make ends meet and any increase in taxes could push them further towards financial hardship. Moreover, we must recognize that a new building, while important, does not guarantee improved outcomes for our children. What truly makes a difference in education is the time, effort and resources dedicated to nurturing and supporting each student, not simply the physical infrastructure. I ask you to consider the long-term implications of this decision and to prioritize the well-being of our community. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Travis York, 138 Shaw Street, stated:

I am a property owner and business owner in town. I have been reading about the Beech Street School project and it has gotten me confused so I would love to speak afterwards with any of you if you would like. From my perspective, there are a lot of things about it that make a lot of sense and create a perfect scenario for this city to invest in our students and our schools. To be clear, I have only been watching from afar and have no personal vested interest in this. I am the Chair of the Rock on Foundation who paid for the basketball courts on the property and I can assure you that we are more than happy to have them wiped out in exchange for a new school in our community. The reason I felt compelled to speak is in my business environment there have been a number of lessons that I learned and as I re-read these articles over and over again, a lot of what I held as long held beliefs were jiving so I wanted to share a few of them. The first is know what you don't know and it seems like we recognize that we need some outside help to understand how to proceed with our school systems and how to properly invest in them and some people came forward that were subject matter experts that we agreed and paid for and they came forward with strong recommendations that it sounds like we all agreed with at one point in time. I also believe that if you are going to spend money, you are much better off to invest it in a long-term solution as opposed to fixing a short-term problem. As these things have come forward, waffling never does much. It seems like we followed a process and we got third party assistance and we paid for their advice and agreed with it and most importantly we leveraged our standing as a city and we found a way to pay for this

without actually impacting the local taxpayer. That is almost a too good to be true situation. Again, I re-read it over and over again because I kept seeing people say this was going to increase our taxes. Unless I am missing something, the way this is being funded seems like an opportunity too good to pass up for our city. Waffling on this isn't a good look for any of us. We really should be investing in our schools and investing in our students. A lot of us are putting time, energy and effort into attracting people to this community and attracting people to come work here, live here and play here. We want to be one of the best mid-sized cities that exists. Another business lesson I have is if you have a big, bold vision, you have to invest in your infrastructure and you have to build out a strong foundation. Schools, by every definition with every successful anywhere, fit that category. I would urge all of you to just look at the facts of the situation and how we got to this point and agree that if we are going to invest in housing and affordable housing and bringing a workforce here and cleaning up our city, then schools should be a logical thing to invest in as well because it will make our city better and it will carry forward all the great work we are doing with future generations and allow them to be successful. The last thing I will say is I live in Ward 1 and when you walk through the schools in Ward 1, they don't look like the schools you guys are talking about and that is not fair that I can send my kids to these great schools and other kids can't go to schools that look the same way.

Brittany Ping, 199 Putnam Street, stated:

The craziest thing happened in the past hour or two since I have been here; a thing I didn't think would happen happened because elections have consequences. Ross Ulbricht is free. He has been pardoned and he is going to be free for the first time in 10 years and it is such a big deal. This is something that has been a thing in my personal life and living out my values and paying attention to this man's struggle and talking to his mother and elections matter; they matter and a year ago this Board drastically changed. It was a significant shift. You were all given a direction and the direction was to be the checks and balances. We had these ballot measures as a city on and it said the aldermen are the checks and balances of the budget of this city and your job is a fiduciary responsibility to your constituents to say does this make sense; to overlook the emotional appeals and look out for my dollar. This has affected my tax dollars and it is part of the current school budget and to my knowledge that increased. That base

budget went up. What departments are you going to cut \$17 million a year from on the city side because when this bond comes through, you can't cut that? What \$17 million are you willing to cut out of the city's budget, the 35% or 38% or whatever it is now? I really appreciate the time that a lot of you have taken to speak with me about my concerns. I have been a vocal opponent of this radical spending agenda since it was first presented in 2020 when this Board looked radically different and I knew my three minutes were going to the ether and it was worth it to be here and live my values and talk to you. I would like to reaffirm that when this Board said no, I wasn't expecting it and I felt so much hope and effervescent joy. It is the same hope and effervescent joy I feel right now knowing that a man who committed no violent crimes...anyway that is a different thing but I feel that same hope. I felt that same hope two months ago when you voted no. I wasn't expecting it but I still came here and said my piece and I am here today because I don't expect this to be no. Wilson Street was closed quickly. It wasn't until July 2024 that the park was chosen for the first and hopefully only mega elementary school. This is 732 children that we are going to put in and spend \$81.5 million to show you that you value them. You don't want to displace them but you are going to displace 122 children that are currently placed at McDonough. You are going to tell them that their zip code has come to roost and they need to go back to their red-lined school because their location determines their educational outcomes. We sure hope that this shiny new school building is going to be enough to pull you from everything you have known for the past three years and put you back at Beech Street School. This FAQ packet is a dream. When I go and get estimates, I have to go to five different people. This is a dream. This is one estimate and one dream. If I have time, make Beech Street a magnet school. Let us show who really wants that education. Let it be an opportunity for every single family who values their education to choose Beech Street School.

Matt Drew, 198 Mast Road, stated:

I want to draw your attention to one specific question that was in the FAQ. How do we know that adequacy aid won't disappear and if it does, what are your plans to cover the bond? The answer that is provided, and I will read this verbatim, was "we have been advocating at the state level for additional adequacy as we know that Manchester has the highest diversity in the state, is the largest district in the state, and falls at the bottom

for per pupil funding. The translation of that that I understand is if the state funding goes away or is reduced, our plan is to ask the state for more funding. That is not a plan. That is a pipe dream and a wish. Things don't work that way. This project, and I am new at this, but it seems a lot like wanting to have a really nice car. Sure, it would be great to have this building and I am sure everybody here would love to have a beautiful building that kids could go to school in. The problem is there are two factors here that need to be balanced. One is investing in education. The other is the taxpayers of Manchester. We have to give kids a good education but we have to give them the best education that we can afford. One of the reasons people are leaving Manchester at this point is because Manchester is expensive. Our property taxes are high and if we go down this road and borrow a bunch of money, those property taxes are going to stay high because we will no longer have a choice. I urge you to vote no on this and rethink this entire project and try again. Thank you.

Joanna Brown, 246 Blevens Street, stated:

I urge you to vote no on this measure as well. I am a fiscal manager. There are some serious problems with this. Just because you say you are not going to raise real estate taxes, does not guarantee that you won't when things go wrong. In this current climate, you cannot rely on state funds for years down the road. What is going to happen when those state funds dry up? Even just a little bit dry up over time? Who is going to pay that bond back? The taxpayers and you can't tell me that is wrong. The adequacy. So we have a problem with literacy in our schools correct and we are getting state aid because of that to help raise our literacy. Now when you double the size of Beech Street, how do you expect to increase literacy? When you have a problem in a school, you focus in and reduce the class sizes. You don't double the size of a school, throw a Band-Aid on it and think that is going to increase literacy. Maybe you know that or maybe somebody knows that if you don't increase literacy, you are going to keep state funds. So, what is the ultimate goal of the school board? That is what I want to know. There are retired homeowners in Manchester that have spent their whole life paying off their house and now they are on a fixed budget and their taxes are going up every year and it is going to keep getting worse if you keep on this plan. You have to make really informed financial decision. You cannot guarantee that taxes will go up. You cannot guarantee that. Thank you.

Rich Girard, 283 Orange Street, stated:

There are many reasons I am here to ask you to decline the land transfer on tonight's agenda. They all have to do with numbers. In an email to this Board, the superintendent said the cost of Phase 1 was \$306 million. Those numbers don't square with the budgets for the current and prior fiscal years in which they spent \$20 million on this facilities plan. That \$40 million, \$20 million in each year, in addition to the \$290 million in bonds equals \$330 million. What is happening with that other \$24 million? In seeking to undermine the 2021 MGT Facilities Study, the superintendent seems to question the declining enrollment and the number of surplus seats. Both MGT and David Demographics presented compelling information that showed continued decline in enrollment through 2030. Since those studies started in the 2019 school year, enrollment has declined 12%; a reduction of 1,611 students. The annual decreases have closely tracked the projected ones. The continued decline in the number of school-aged children means that enrollment will continue to fall. This is not a Manchester issue. It is happening across our state and nation. The superintendent also made statements regarding the MGT study that simply aren't true. As you will see in the document the Clerk graciously forwarded on my behalf earlier today, MGT absolutely included so-called right-sizing of schools and consideration of so-called spaces for 21st century learning using district provided policies on class sizes and identified programmatic space needs. All facilities were inspected by MGT in person and all projected costs were based on what they actually found in the buildings. I have confirmed this with staff members who worked directly on this study. While MGT didn't recommend that every building be renovated, it did provide numbers to upgrade each buildings suitability, condition and technology. To get all of our buildings to a grade of at least 85 on a scale of 100 would cost around \$93 million. If costs associated with Hallsville, which was closed based on MGT's recommendation and the middle schools, which are under construction at a cost of more than 12 times the amount identified by MGT, the cost to renovate all remaining buildings in the city is just over \$71 million. More than \$10 million less than the cost of the project on your agenda. While these numbers will most likely need to be updated, not rebuilding Beech Street makes more than \$80 million available to complete the other upgrades and it can all be done in the next 3-5 years, not the next 30 as proposed. If Beech Street proceeds, there will be a

Phase 2 because the other 16 buildings, which touch all of your wards, also need help. The question is not if but how much more it will cost taxpayers. School spending has increased by more than the state aid in the past two budgets and the \$90 million we get from the state is a far cry from the \$235 million we are now spending on the schools. How much more will you allow them to layer on, especially when you just gave us the biggest tax hike we have seen since the Baines administration which, ironically, also gave us a massive building program that failed to improve the quality of education for which we are still paying over \$7 million annually. Please vote against this and mayor if it passes, I hope you will veto it. It would be some show of faith that you are trying to keep your promises to the taxpayers which you have failed at so far. Thank you.

Bradford Cook, 150 Heather Street, stated:

I will have lived at my current address for 50 years this May. My children went to the public schools in Manchester and got a great education. I was proud to serve on our school board and participate in the last major renovation of the schools under Mayor Baines but that was almost 30 years ago. I am here tonight as a former Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and as an employer in Manchester having worked at Sheehan, Phinney, Bass & Green for 52 years. We hire a lot of people. When I started, most of them wanted to live in Manchester. Today, we try to persuade them to live in Manchester and the first question they ask is how are the schools. Now I have a special reason to care about the schools, not that I haven't cared about them for the past 50 years but I have two little grandsons who want to go to Manchester schools and my son and his wife bought a house in Manchester because of their faith in Manchester. I urge you to support not only the Beech Street School but the program that was advanced by the school board after study. I would remind you that the business community, including our firm, are behind this project. The Chamber of Commerce sent you a letter on 12/14 supporting this plan. I was talking to one of our employees today and she said my husband and I are trying to figure out where to live and asked how were the schools. Then she said something very interesting. She said I understand the Board of Mayor and Aldermen are going to vote on a school plan tonight and I will be watching. We will all be watching. I urge you to support this plan because your city is watching you. Thank you very much.

John Avar, 81 A Street, stated:

Many of you know me but some of you don't so let me give you a little background. I spent 12 years on the Manchester Board of School Committee. During those 12 years I served on all but one of the standing committees. I was the chairman of the Building & Sites Committee for many years and when I wasn't the chair I was still on that committee for most of my time on the board. I served on most of the special committees that the school board had during those years, including the Special Committee on Redistricting and the Special Committee on the Manchester School District's Mission. I hosted more than a dozen coffee with the school board events, bringing elected officials together with constituents to discuss their concerns. I led the Look, Listen & Learn Tours guiding parents and elected officials through all of our schools to see the facilities and education in action. I visited more of our schools than most other past or present school board members. I know these buildings very, very well. I know firsthand that Beech Street School is a good, solid building. It is younger than I am and younger than most of you are. It does not need replacing. We just put millions into upgrading that school and putting walls up because it was an open concept building just like Parker Varney, Gossler Park and Highland Goffes Falls. They were all built at the same time. Do you support tearing all of those buildings down? Do you support putting \$80 million in all four locations? This city has declining enrollment like you heard a lot of people talk about tonight. We have known that for years. We knew it when I was on the redistricting committee. We have had this information in front of us for a long, long time. The recent decision to close two of our school buildings was great folly and did not need to be done in this city. We had the resources to do stuff with them. You look at what happened with the Ash Street School building when the school district walked away from that and what it looks like now. It is a gem for our city by the school district didn't see the value in this wonderful, beautiful building that we had. I have heard a lot of things tonight. I heard people say we need a 100-year building yet we are going to tear a 50-year-old building down. That doesn't make sense to me. People say it is crumbling. This is not a crumbling building. This is a solid structure. The taxpayers are going to be saddled with an additional debt service from this. Whether you admit it or not, this is going to come out of the taxpayer's pocket. When you have that kind of money coming out of the budget for the debt service on this, you are not going to have the money needed when we come back to teacher negotiations.

When they are looking for salary increases or we don't get a contract...we won't have the money to increase paraprofessional pay to something that is reasonable so we actually get paraprofessionals into our schools. We want money for supplies, technology and curriculum upgrades. The school board is going to have to come back to you and beg for more money and guess where that goes. Oh, the tax cap. We have some limitations there. I want to talk to you specifically Mayor. When you first ran for office, you were a nobody. You had no political experience and no street cred to speak of. You came to us and you asked us to give you a chance. You told us that you were a conservative and you would fight to restore sensibility and fiscal conservatism to the corner office. We gave you a chance and we trusted you. Up until now, you have done a very good job. You are doing some great things and I applaud you for the things you have done but now we hear that you are in favor of this boondoggle and you want to approve this \$80 million spending that is going to hurt the taxpayers. We just found out that our sewer bills are going to go up over 100% in four years. This guy says well it is only 19% but that is compounded every year for four years. This is on the eve of Donald J. Trump being sworn in as the 47th President of this country elected by a landslide. We saw a landslide in this city the last time we had elections and we have seen a landslide nationally. People have had enough. I am counting on you Mr. Mayor. Stick to your promise and don't betray the voters that supported you. Thank you.

Patricia Utley, 128 Bismark Street, stated:

I am speaking in favor of the Beech Street project tonight. Having moved to NH and chosen this to be my home for the rest of my life, I am very invested in the future of this city. I was a small business owner for seven years and economic development is a huge pillar of what I think is important. I believe in providing space for children to learn and to have the facilities they need to succeed so they can stay here. I know that is one of the biggest issues that we have in NH – the flight of our young people. I have never spoken in front of anyone to testify before but I will say that this was important enough for me to speak on this and I think it is really important that we also pay attention to the fact that there was a lot put into that FAQ. I heard that there was only one bid but as all of you know there were multiple bids and it was well thought out. I am speaking in favor of this. Thank you.

Mark McLean, 43 Forest Hill Way, stated:

I am currently serving my sixth term as state representative for Ward 8. I normally don't testify at these meetings; however, the magnitude of the Beech Street School project is such that it will have an impact on Manchester's finances for decades to come and I felt that I should make my thoughts known. Personally, I see this project as a want and not a need. If the city was overflowing with cash and there were no other pressing needs, it might be okay to indulge this want but this is not the case and I would urge you to vote no. I have been attending ward meetings for years and whether it was Aldermen Cataldo, Porter or our current Alderman Sapienza, I keep hearing the same concerns expressed. What are we doing about the opioid crisis? Is hub and spoke working better? What are we doing about crime? Where are we at with the bail law? What is going on with the homeless situation? Nowhere in these conversations did I hear folks clamoring to spend a large fortune on a new school; nowhere. The reality is that those that think that this project will be a rocket ship that will propel educational outcomes in this city into the stratosphere are kidding themselves. The make-up of the student population here in Manchester creates challenges that no new building alone is going to fix. The repayment of the bond is built on some sketchy assumptions. If the state alters the adequacy funding that it pays to the city, the taxpayers of this city could be on the hook for tens of millions of dollars. If you don't think that would ever happen, think again. The federal Covid money is drying up. We have to pay the Sununu school judgment and that is \$1 billion. Revenues are lean. The state is going to be keeping a careful eye on every single penny and we are already having discussions about that. If I were a betting man, the odds look like we are going to be carrying the bulk of this burden alone. If you add that financial commitment for this project with the \$700 million upgrade to our sewer system that we have already committed to, I hope you are going to come to the conclusion that the burden is just too great, doesn't take us in the right direction and we need to explore other alternatives. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Ryan Drohan, Porter Street, stated:

I am having the Clerk handout five questions I have for the BMA that still need to be answered. I also included the reasons why I am asking these questions and references. Question 1. What is the projected school enrollment for the next 25 years in five-year increments – 2030, 2035, 2040, 2045 and 2050? Public school enrollment is

down more than 20% compared to 20 years ago. By 2030, there will be more adults over the age of 65 than there are children. That is very dangerous for the age pyramid. State projections show the state's population at 1.38 million and is forecast to grow to 1.5 million in 2035, 1.51 million in 2040 and return to 1.5 million in 2050. Why is the focus not on improving the current student's education? Manchester has poorer performance and educational outcomes than the rest of the state. The report also found that Manchester students scored below the state average on 7th grade math proficiency with just 19% of 7th graders scoring as proficient or above compared to the state's 44%. How do we know adequacy aid won't disappear? If it does, what are your plans to cover the bond? School officials promise Beech Street School won't hike Manchester taxes. BOSC dodged the question. Their answer given in the Union Leader says "we have been advocating at the state level for additional adequacy because as we know, Manchester has the highest diversity rate in the state and is the largest district in the state and falls at the bottom of per pupil funding. Question 4. Why would anyone be inspired to move to Manchester to start a family or currently with children? Low education scores and high cost of living, combined with sewer costs going from \$338 million to over \$700 million and sewer rates going up 91% over five years. The median home price of \$514,000 statewide in 2024 was 9.4% higher than the prior year. State standard assessment test results also drew attention. The statistics overall were underwhelming with Manchester students coming in at roughly half the state average. This year's tax cap allowed for a 3.4% increase but the actual tax rate came in at 3.82%. City and school budgets for the next fiscal year could increase by 4.27%, the official tax cap number. Question 5. Where is the funding going to come from for the BOSC Phase 2 at \$1.5-\$2.5 billion? That was never addressed or discussed and needs to be answered. Funding for the \$1.5-\$2.5 billion Phase 2 cost was never discussed at the BOSC meeting in early December 2024. I work on Amherst Street in Nashua and drive by a school that was built in 1892 and is still in use. I don't believe you need to tear Beech Street down. Thank you.

Jessica Spillers, 73 Jobin Drive, stated:

I am the school board rep for Ward 8. I saw on tonight's agenda that the school district will be presenting a revised version of the Beech Street School project and I felt that it was important to come down and testify in support of continuing that project. On

Saturday, I gave birth to my son, Tucker. He is three days old today and the only one of my young children who might fully benefit from both Phases 1 and 2 of the long-term facilities plan. To put that into perspective, my oldest will be five in March. I understand your skepticism. When I was on the campaign trail, this was a hot button issue. Many, including myself, were confused as to how tearing down schools and closing them and spending millions on renovations and new schools and redistributing students was going to benefit anyone. I was concerned about the same things you are – overcrowding, test scores, curriculum and special education needs and yes taxes. I couldn't fathom how this project should seemingly take precedence when there were so many other high priority areas. What I learned though after doing my research, talking to administrators at the district and having questions answered by SMMA and the incumbent school board members was that the school board was already addressing all of those concerns and some of those needs were actually going to be addressed by completing this project. I met individually with Asst. Superintendent Doherty and Director of Student Services Millora where we discussed in depth the changes to curriculum development and evaluation, along with concerns around special education and IEP adherence. Those conversations, in combination with what I viewed online, changed my mind. I could see how all the puzzle pieces fit together. It assured me that not only was this a good investment now but that it was a thoughtful plan that will also benefit future generations without hindering anyone financially. We have kicked the can as a community for far too long and we are reaping those consequences in spades; not just in education. I am willing to put in the effort it takes to rebuild our city for the next generation. It shouldn't be their responsibility to fix our current problems. We should find the solutions now so they can focus on the problems of tomorrow. I will own these issues now even if my generation did not create them but will you? Reevalue your votes tonight, start back the Beech Street School project, be an advocate for the children of our community and end this cycle of negligence. Thank you.

Sarah Georges, 18 Blodget Street, stated:

I am for this new build of Beech Street School. Listening to both sides today, I have so many concerns about even being in Manchester. I love this place so much. I was born and raised right here and have been in the same place for 30 years and will never change but if I want to stay here and if I want to grow my kids here, I need to believe

that this place, the same place that raised me so lovely, will actually take care of my kids; that my kids will actually have a place to stay. They will have a great school with amazing teachers like those who came out today and who are actually invested in their future. It is not just the teachers or guidance counselors. It is literally everyone. It is the whole system. If you guys don't believe in it, how am I supposed to stay here? How am I supposed to raise my kids here? How am I supposed to allow my sister to stay here with her kids and put her kids in these public schools? If you guys can't even fix one building that needs to be fixed...I don't know if any of you have been inside Beech Street School but if you have, you will understand that that place needed to be fixed up a long time ago when I was in elementary school. That place is like...14 windows. Fourteen that kids have to look outside if I am correct. That means the remainder of those classrooms that don't have windows are just walls and a door. That sounds like the shoe. If you don't know what the shoe is, it is basically the hole. If you don't know what the hole is, it is called solitary confinement. It is that place where they send people in prison that is all the way downstairs where they stay by themselves and there is no one to talk to you. You are putting these kids in that same exact environment except they have their classmates and they have a lovely teacher. It is the same exact environment and they have to be there. You all don't have to be there. Shoot, half of these people over here don't have to be there either. You are so worried about tax dollars but what about the investment in these kids. It is important right? Children are our future. Well, give them a building where they can actually plan out their future. Give them a place where they can actually be kids and the teachers can actually be happy so they can educate our kids even better. To me, it is common sense. It seems to me like on this race of common sense and the people, common sense is losing. Thank you.

Glory Mukendi, 14 Pine Street, stated:

Immoculee Feza is an immigrant from Africa here raising her kids. She wanted to be here and testify but she had to go because one of her kids is sick. I am a youth mentor for a lot of students who work in the Manchester school district and also a parent of a student who attended summer school at Beech Street School. My son has a developmental disability and sensory issues and him being in a confined classroom with no windows and in a small cafeteria where he has been confined with a lot of kids in

there definitely does not help him with his education. A lot of us here probably have kids, grandkids, nieces and nephews and none of you would want them to go to school in an environment like that, especially if they have sensory issues or a developmental disability. It is nice to say no to such a great project because of course you guys can probably afford to be in an affluent neighborhood where you don't have to worry about that but some parents like us here can barely afford the housing situation and have to send our kids to Beech Street. I wholly support the continuation of this project. Not only will it benefit our children but it will also have a positive impact on our community. In short, a nurturing school environment is a safe foundation for children to thrive academically, socially and emotionally. I am eager to see this project come to fruition and enhance the educational experience for all students at Beech Street School. I am here to support the Beech Street School project. Thank you.

Kelly Newman stated:

I am the Principal at Beech Street School. I have had the privilege of spending my entire career here and for more than half of my life I have been part of this amazing community. Over the years, I have watched our school transform in ways big and small. During my first year of teaching PE in 2004, the gym floor tiles and ceiling tiles were replaced to remove asbestos from the building. In 2015, we saw even bigger changes with the addition of classroom walls and removing portable classrooms. Now most recently, the addition of modular classrooms and the significant increase in student enrollment, along with many wonderful new teachers and our assistant principal from Wilson Street School. While the growth and changes have presented challenges, particularly with the modular classrooms and the addition of so many new students, the building has undeniable positive energy. It is exciting to see the new students and teachers thriving in their learning environments and as we started this school year we felt a renewed sense of predictability and stability. Wilson Street had closed, we welcomed half their students and our 5th graders transitioned to middle school. The modular classrooms were fully decorated and ready to welcome our first grade students and our school community was coming together. Even though the school had grown, we knew this expansion was temporary. In the long run, it is part of a larger vision that would result in a new permanent school building; one that will provide enough space for all of our classrooms, support unified arts programs that won't require carts or shared

spaces and offer much needed resources like a proper cafeteria and library for the increased number of students. Our teachers have had the opportunity to share their thoughts on what is most important for the new building and I have been working with the design team to ensure that the new structure will not only meet those needs but also enhance our learning environment. All of that came to a standstill two months ago. The team at SMMA has been incredibly thoughtful throughout this process. They have designed the new building with our community in mind, ensuring that it complements the surrounding homes and doesn't act as a barrier. In fact, many of the elements of the design are inspired by Manchester's history such as the edge of the brook concept which mirrors the flow of the brook that runs below our site. The new building would be built on the current Sheridan-Emmett Park but this is part of a larger plan to improve the entire area. As part of the Priority 1 plan, the addition of a new play structure at Stanton Park would be an immediate improvement and temporary basketball courts on the Beech Street side would still provide the neighborhood with a place to play. Eventually, a redesigned park where the current school stands will be much more visible from both Beech and Maple Streets, creating a safer and more inviting space for our neighborhood children to play. When completed, the new park will restore the field to its original size and complement the nearby Sheehan-Basquil Park area which includes baseball fields, a mini soccer pitch and a splash pad. This transformation isn't just about building a new school. It is about creating a new learning center, a community space and a safer and more vibrant environment for everyone in our neighborhood. This project is more than just bricks and mortar. It is an investment in our students, families and future. Thank you for your time, and I hope your support.

Aimee Kereage, 22 Concord Street, stated:

I am the Director of Manchester Proud here speaking on behalf of our staff and the Champions Council. We strongly support the continued progress of the Beech Street School construction project and endorse the critical steps outlined in your upcoming deliberations. Manchester Proud is committed to ensuring every student in our city has access to a high-quality education. We believe the future of Manchester is directly tied to the success of our public schools, which play a vital role in fostering both economic and social growth. The community, including our local business sector, recognizes the importance of this project in developing a skilled workforce for future industries. The

Beech Street School is more than just a new building. It is an investment in our students, our community and the city's long-term prosperity. With modern learning spaces and smaller class sizes, this school will not only enhance education but also make Manchester a more attractive place for new families and businesses. We urge the Board to approve the land transfer and other items before you this evening to continue this important work. Thank you.

Nancy Troupakis, 128 Karatzas Avenue, stated:

I am here tonight to urge this Board to reject the proposed Beech Street School construction. While I understand the intention behind this initiative, I believe it is crucial to address the underlying issues affecting our current educational system before proceeding with such a significant investment. Recent data indicates that our students test scores are among the lowest in the state. This is troubling and suggests that there are fundamental problems with the quality of instruction that need immediate attention. Building a new facility does not address the root causes of our students' academic struggles. I respectfully ask that the School Board refrain from insisting that this project will not impact the taxpayers. The discretionary funds that the State of NH has historically provided is a privilege and shouldn't be considered as an offset to the taxpayers. We are appreciative when Manchester is awarded the state funds and we are also understanding when there is a shortfall. Transparency in the decision-making process is non-negotiable. The financial impact on our community deserves thorough analysis. With each presentation that the school board makes, the numbers change. There are still too many unknowns and SMMA has a conflict of interest doing the design and execution and overseeing of the project. The eight aldermen who stopped this process need to stick to their promise from two months ago. Thank you.

Lowell Matthews, 635 Coolidge Avenue, stated:

I come to you today not in my role as a professor but in my role as a resident. I come to support the Beech Street project and the reason for that is because during this particular time it is really interesting because we are living in a time where innovation actually costs. We have had testimony from teachers at Beech Street on the wonderful work they have been doing but imagine the wonderful work they can continue to do in a space designed for them. Imagine a space that engages our community, engages our

students, engages our parents and engages you. Imagine a space where you will actually be willing to go to and maybe hold a meeting. Maybe even show up in the space. As an educator, I have seen firsthand the impact that physical spaces have on our ability to learn. Even though we may not today be able to correlate the physical space to the improvement of academic performance, it cannot be denied that showing up to a space that is built for you increases who you are and your self-worth. Driving a new car makes a brother feel good. If I had an option between driving a car that is new versus one that is used, I want to choose the one that is new. Imagine the pride our students, our babies will have actually showing up to a school designed for them to learn and be who they are authentically. As an educator, I see how students transition through the educational system and by the time they get to me at the collegiate level, I can see the impact that not having the opportunity at the early development age has on their ability to succeed in the workplace. If we truly value the future of our youth and we truly value the future that this city is heading for, the vote is obvious. I can understand why you may be a little scared because we should have done this a lot sooner right. We should have been addressing the issues in our community a lot sooner. It comes down to a simple equation. One of the first equations we learned is $1=1$ so when we talk about equality and what is fair, that definition of equality that $1=1$ only happens when equity is provided. In order to ensure that all of our youth in this city are afforded an equal opportunity, we have to start with equity. Equity means investment in our community today. Thank you.

Victoria Sullivan, S. Beech Street, stated:

As I am listening to the testimony tonight, all I can think about is the story of the old lady who swallowed the fly. She swallowed the fly and then she had to swallow the spider to catch the fly and then the cat to catch the spider to catch the fly and this is what we are doing. We have a story about these state-of-the-art schools that were open concept that we had to change and that failed because that great idea didn't work for the kids and now, they are in solitary confinement it is described as? If we back up history a little bit, we turned half day kindergarten into full day kindergarten and we needed more teachers and more spaces. Then we took preschool and put that into elementary school and we needed more space so what did we do? We told the 5th graders you are out of here and we are putting you in middle school where you don't belong and now,

we are saying the middle schools need to be revamped because we can't accommodate that either. This is a disaster from beginning to end. This is poor planning from the district. There is no foresight here and I am sitting here listening and thinking we are doing the same thing and we are going to be doing it to the next generation of children. The children that these people are talking about right now are really the last people that will ever benefit from this. They will be paying for this when they are adults with their own children. They are going to be living in squalor because their families can't afford this. I don't want to hear anything about how this isn't raising taxes because it already has and it will continue to do so. Counting on the adequacy from the state? You guys need to understand that we have a Supreme Court ruling that came down and we may have to revamp everything we do with state funding. Not only that, but it is based on attendance and your attendance is dropping. So counting on that money is a fool's errand. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. You don't spend what you don't have. The bottom line is you are going to have to raise taxes and those will immediately raise the rents of the people that are the most vulnerable in our city – our elderly and people living on fixed incomes and the families that attend Beech Street School. If you really cared about these kids, I would be hearing about how you are having beat cops walk that neighborhood every single day forming bonds within that community. You would be talking about how you are going to force the deadbeat absentee landlords to actually invest in their properties. You would also be talking to the business owners around the city and telling them to invest in this neighborhood and revitalize it. All I am hearing is if you don't give these kids the biggest, shiniest building, we don't love them which is absolute bunk. We are a middle-class family and don't live in the biggest, shiniest house in the city but I can tell you we love our kids and they understand that we work hard for what we give them. The message you are sending to these children is if they don't get this shiny new school that their families can't afford and that they will end up paying for when they have children that they are not worth it and we don't love them and that is a horrible message to send. It is irresponsible and immoral. I can't believe I am still here having this conversation because I thought we settled this months ago. For all the people that say it is about the children, I have two bills in the Senate that I presented. One is for intra-district school choice so any child in this city could choose to go to any school in this city as long as there was capacity and the other is Universal Education Freedom Accounts. If you care about the children, you

will give them the ability to go to any school they want that serves their family's needs. I hope that this Board will send a letter in support of those two things if you really care about the children and you want what is best for them. Thank you.

Sue Corby, Elm Street, stated:

I have been here before supporting schools and I will be back again. Just to narrow this discussion down, we are talking about swapping a piece of land, a city park, for the current site of Beech Street School. We are not talking about the whole long-term facilities plan. That will go on in some form or other. That has been agreed on. The BOSCO unanimously accepted that plan so that is in progress. We need to find a way to support that and that is what I am here to talk about. I think since December when you voted against this swapping of land that you have done your homework and spoken with your constituents, parents, teachers, students, homeowners, business owners, taxpayers, everybody. I know that the people that represent me have done a lot of work and a lot of listening and responding to people and I thank you for that; all of you. It is a big job and I hope that some of you have changed our mind. I do believe that you have done your due diligence and that you have done what you could to come up with the best decision that you can make. There is just one point as an educator that I want to make and that is the point about buildings. As an educator, I think any educator knows that buildings are not the main ingredient in education nor is it even the main out of a group. It is dedicated, highly skilled teachers that are really the main thing that makes education work but where do dedicated, highly skilled teachers want to teach? They want to teach in buildings that support what they are doing and that allow them to do their best as teachers. That is what they want. They want competitive salaries and I believe that the school board and administration and city has taken care of that problem and salaries are now competitive. They want to work in a district where they feel supported and their representatives, their city fathers and mothers, demonstrate their commitment to education. I think that is where these dedicated, highly skilled teachers want to be. I hope you will keep that in mind and thank you again for everything you are doing.

Rehab Mahmond stated:

I am a parent of a child who attends Beech Street School. I heard about the project to build a new school. I believe this project will improve my child's learning environment and lead to his academic success. I fully support the continuation of this project as this is a good thing for our children and our neighbors. Thank you very much.

Arnold Mikolo stated:

I am here in my capacity as President of the Manchester NAACP. I am here today to strongly support the rebuilding of Beech Street Elementary School. I just want to say a little about the mission of the NAACP because I think it is relevant to what I am about to say. The NAACP aims to achieve equality, political rights and social inclusion. We focus on policies and practices that deal with human and civil rights by eliminating discrimination and accelerating the well-being in education and economic security for black people and all persons of color. Why am I supporting the rebuilding of Beech Street Elementary School tonight? I am here in strong support of the school because I believe a child's direct environment where they play, live and study significantly impacts their success. Over the last five years, I have been working in Beech Street Elementary School and also Ward 5 and I will say that Ward 5 is one of the most underserved ward not only in Manchester and not only in NH but in the entire United States of America. That is in contrast with where our state just placed fourth as the best place to live and where the quality of life is touted in the education quality. The census data covering this area consistently ranks it amongst the lowest in the nation across various metrics. This community bares significant environmental burdens that they didn't create. Over 72 languages are spoken in this diverse neighborhood but also it has the lowest income labels in the entire country. They have the highest rate of linguistic isolation and low life expectancy. If we hope to break this cycle of poverty, we need to start putting our students in better educational environments. Systemic change starts with a better classroom. Beech Street Elementary Schools needs a modern, healthy and safe environment. No more classrooms in the basement with no windows or outdated designs from the 1970's that are proven to hinder learning. The growing demand for educational space. Beech Street needs to expand to accommodate students from the recently closed Wilson Street School. The combined schools include many families with no income or from the native, immigrant and refugee communities. These families often lack the resources to provide additional educational support outside of school. That

makes it even more important that Beech Street meet these needs. The proposed swap with Sheridan-Emmett Park with the current Beech Street site will benefit both the park and the school. I want to end by giving you a quote from MLK since yesterday was MLK Day. "The richest nation on earth has never allocated enough resources to build sufficient schools to compensate adequately its teachers and surround them with the prestige our work justifies." I urge you to support the rebuilding of Beech Street Elementary School and invest in the future of our children and community because I believe our children are the leaders of tomorrow. Thank you very much.

Julie Cusano stated:

I am a kindergarten teacher at Beech Street Elementary, formerly a kindergarten teacher at Wilson Street School. I am here to speak in full support of the continuation of the Beech Street plan. This plan has already been meticulously planned for down to the dollar. It is important to look at the facts that we have been presented and not dream up a ton of "what if" scenarios. We will never accomplish anything if we are constantly on the offensive and we can't stop now. A lot of people tonight have said that this is a dream but it can be a reality for us and for our kids. The plan has already been set in motion. It has already started. Students are already in temporary modulars that are meant to be just that, temporary. Turning our back on what has already started makes this not come to fruition. It makes it fail. If you are not going to continue something, it is going to fail. Your vote and your voice will alter what happens next and it is significant for this city. Creating a new school will give us more capacity and more space for learning; a learning space that is appropriate and necessary for our students to thrive. That school will be filled with the most hardworking staff I have had the privilege of working alongside, along with the most resilient students that I have ever taught. I am in a unique position as a former Wilson teacher now a Beech Street teacher. I am speaking from personal, on the ground, lived experience. Hear me when I say that what we have right now at Beech Street is not enough. We are resilient and so are our children but they deserve more than just okay facilities. A new school will take away variables that have been against us all, Wilson and Beech Street teachers, for years. Mice, bats, windowless classrooms...many of these are a bare minimum ask. Children deserve to have classrooms free of rodents and full of natural light. I am still in a classroom five years later with no windows. When you vote tonight remember this. You

are not just saying yes to a faraway plan on paper or on some presentation. You are saying yes to our children. You are saying yes to our staff. You are saying yes to investing in the future of this city. When you vote yes tonight you are saying no more to mice crawling through our classrooms. You are saying no more to windowless classrooms. You are saying no more to classrooms that are over capacity and no more to basement offices. You are saying yes to investing in our children and to the future of this city. Please consider all that is before you. Thank you.

Will Infantine, 89 Windward Lane, stated:

I have lived in this city for 25 years. I am a product of public schools; NH public schools. I believe NH as a whole has the best public schools in the country. I chose to have my daughters be educated in Manchester public schools. Both have graduated Suma Cum Laude from their individual schools – the University of Rhode Island and Quinnipiac. I thank the teachers that taught them and the coaches every day for helping them become strong, educated, intelligent women. I do believe we need to spend money on public schools. We need to keep up with the rest of the state but I question this project. I don't question spending \$100, \$125 or \$150 million to upgrade our school but I question tearing down a building that as former school board member Avard said is younger than most of us. I wouldn't tear down the building at all. If you want to build a new one fine but why would you tear down the other one? Mr. Mayor, when you came to office, you came with a plan on how you were going to deal with homelessness and how you were going to deal with funding lower income housing. You had a plan and you stuck to the plan and you go people behind it and it has done very well. I am very pleased and very happy for you. This project doesn't have the same mechanism. We have questions that we don't have answers to. What are you going to do about a commissary? Well, we are going to determine that later. This is not a football draft where we are going to get a player to be named later. We have landscaping to be done and we have different numbers. What is going to happen in 18 months when someone comes back and says we need another \$10 million? What are you going to do then? The project has holes in it. I served in the Legislature for 18 years. Alderman and Senator Long knows full well as I do that nothing ever works as planned in Concord. You can't always guarantee that money is going to be there. It is a total misnomer to tell people that this is not going to affect the tax rates. We don't

know. I don't know any more than you do. I hope it doesn't cost the taxpayers money but we don't know that. There was another project in Manchester that was going to pay for itself that two of you on the Board here voted for. It was the baseball stadium. It wasn't going to cost any money. It was all going to be funded by the other projects. Did that happen? No, it didn't. The taxpayers have been paying for it. We need to fix the schools but this project is not complete. I don't like to kick the can down the road. We say that in the Legislature. We also say a bill is not ready for prime time. This project is not ready yet. It needs a few more tweaks and a few more numbers. You have always been transparent. We had to pull teeth to get this information out of the school board. That is not cool and that is not right. I don't want you to delay this but my thought is that it is good for us right now and it needs to be rethought. Thank you.

Mayor Ruais stated with the Board's indulgence, I would like to take up Item 36 ahead of the presentation so we can address it. Will representatives from SMMA and the school district please come up. Before we start, I just want to make a few quick comments. I did not support this project when it came forward in 2023. If I were Mayor, this is not how I would have chosen to spend the extra \$35 million in adequacy aid that the school district received. I would not have supported it if I were an alderman at the time. This was passed towards the end of 2023 before the new Board of Mayor and Aldermen had the opportunity to sit down. This is the situation I find myself in and I feel an obligation to talk about it because I voted no in November. Here is the position I find myself in. As was noted earlier, the Municipal Finance Act Section 33.8 clearly states that a vote to rescind this bond cannot take place within five years. It also cannot take place without 10 votes. I recognize that there is legislation that is potentially moving through the Legislature right now that would change the ability of this Board to rescind that bond but here is the challenge that we have. When Wilson school was closed, approximately 400 kids were placed in modular. Those kids are there until they get a permanent school. The challenge is that money is going to have to be spent on that so to rescind that bond would not allow us the opportunity to either renovate or construct a new school; whatever our position is going forward. Something has to be spent on this. So where do these 400 kids go? The estimate before us states it will cost \$83 million to renovate Beech Street School. That is more than the \$81.5 million to construct a new school. If you were to make renovations to McDonough and Beech and displace that

population into those two schools, it would cost \$108 million. To renovate Wilson would cost \$53 million but as has been pointed out, that would require us to take by eminent domain houses in that area. None of these are palatable options. With regarding quickly to the demolition of Beech Street, it is stated in the plan as presented that the school will be demolished but as we all know, the BOSC would have to deem that building surplus and bring it forward to the BMA. We are under no obligation to demolish that school. If the Board were to take a different path in two years when the school is built or make a different decision to not demolish the school, that is perfectly within our rights. Additionally, the last piece of this is any change of the plan would require it to go back through the BOSC and if were to spend additional dollars to either renovate McDonough and Beech or the Beech Street School, that would require that it come back to the BMA and we would have to approve a new bond. Presumably nobody wants to spend more money on this project and my understanding is that we would not want to be in a position to take houses by eminent domain. I think the best course of action we have before us is to move forward with it this evening. The one thing that I do have control over that this BMA has control over is Phase 2. As we saw when that presentation was made, this is going to be \$2 billion+ project. That we do have control over and that is not an item that I would support. There is not pathway to pay for that. It does not impact, at least that I have seen, the taxpayer and that is not something I would support. I would add one last thing to put into perspective. There are those here tonight that are supportive of this measure. Undoubtedly, they were upset when last year in my budget that was ultimately approved the school district's request by reduced by \$4.2 million. Undoubtedly this year, because we have another tough budget cycle, the school district is not going to get every dollar that they ask for in their request. Also, they are not going to get Phase 2 at least for the foreseeable future. That to me speaks to the fact that governing requires balance. We make difficult decisions and hard choices up here. There is a balance to what we do. I appreciate everybody coming out here tonight; I truly do. That is why I have done 13 town halls. I think it is important for us to hear from the public. With that, I would open it up to the Board for questions.

- 36.** Communication from David Saindon, Project Executive, LeftField, on behalf of the Manchester School District regarding the use of Sheridan-Emmett Park, the replacement of Sheridan-Emmett amenities, and the restoration of the existing Beech School property.

(Note: Mayor Ruais has requested that this item be brought back before the BMA. Attached please find an FAQ sheet that was submitted by the school district.)

Alderman Terrio stated I am on the Joint School Building Committee and enjoy working with you and appreciate your efforts and think you are honest. I do have two quick questions. I am questioning the renovation cost. You are saying it is going to cost more to renovate than to build a new school. I would envision adding a wing. Just quickly, how is it that it is going to cost more and the reason I am asking is I recently bought a house and the insurance company said Well if it burns down, it will be about \$500,000 but I am doing extensive work in the amount of \$50,000. I am rehabbing the house for 1/10 of the cost of a new building. How is it that a new building is going to be \$80 million but a renovation will be more when I would envision just adding an addition with say 20 classrooms with windows that aren't in the basement and aren't open concept? How is it that it is more for something like that? That is my first question.

Matt Rice, Project Architect, SMMA, answered there are two reasons primarily in terms of the additional costs associated with the renovation. The first is tied to this notion of right-sizing the building and the fact that both recreating and demolishing the existing windowless classroom space that is in the basement as well as in the center of the old open plan area will end up costing more. We would have to recreate those spaces that are insufficient and in the building right now, so the renovation will address the areas of the building that are good but we then have to recreate the missing pieces. In addition, we have to create the spaces that are not available in the current space right now in terms of unified art spaces that are dedicated and in terms of a cafeteria that is properly sized with correct acoustics. We have to address the shortcomings in the space right now by building essentially a larger addition and just sort of filling out what is there. We have to correct those things. The second piece of it is really the cost associated with the phasing and the fact that we would be dealing with an occupied renovation or that you would have to displace the students there. What that is going to do is increase the

time which increases the cost of the construction. It also increases the disruption and there is a cost to that as well. There is an actual fiscal cost to disruption in terms of either creating more modular classrooms to be able to accommodate whatever students are displaced or to create an entire sort of swing space environment. These things are incremental and something that we wouldn't have to address if there was brand-new construction that is free and clear of the existing one. We are not disrupting students and we are not disrupting teachers and you are not paying for those temporary accommodate costs that really aren't buying you anything. They are just allowing you to renovate the building in place.

Alderman Terrio asked just to clarify and make sure I understand you, you are envisioning a massive rehabilitation of the current building but what I would think and again I am educated in the building trades but not an expert is that if we left those rooms alone, the ones that are unacceptable and added an addition that is acceptable, it would seem to be not only cheaper but less disruptive because we are adding a building and then when it is done we would open it up to add on. I would save don't do the major rehabilitation on the rooms are unacceptable and just stop using them once the new addition is open. We wouldn't have to spend all of that money in the school.

Mr. Rice responded you would still need to build the addition larger to be able to accommodate those spaces that you can't recreate. There would be additional cost on that side of things. I think also when you are left with that facility, you are going to be left with essentially big storage rooms in the middle of the school. That wouldn't be a wonderful educational environment that you would end up with after spending a considerable amount of funds.

Alderman Terrio stated again I think you are honest and a good company and I am not disparaging your character or anything but how are you compensated because here is my concern. What is the compensation formula for your company?

Mr. Rice responded it is a percentage of the construction cost in terms of design fees and that is typical for the industry.

Alderman Terrio stated again I am not saying you are dishonest people because I have worked with you on many occasions and respect you and think you are honest but it is in your interest...for instance when I go to the dentist and instead of getting a filling he says you need a crown and I say no I want the filling and he says no you need the crown so you are going to get paid more the larger the budget of the project correct.

Mr. Rice answered correct but from an ethical standpoint we are trying to design the best project for the students and teachers of Manchester.

Alderman Terrio responded I am not saying you are unethical. I am just saying human nature being what it is, you are going to be compensated more generously the bigger the project.

Mr. Rice replied again our fee is tied to the construction cost.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked do you still stand by your claim that this project is not going to affect the taxpayers of the City of Manchester.

Jennifer Chmiel, Superintendent, responded yes. Karen and I have gone through a number of times looking at our adequacy funding. In order for that to happen, there would have to be a pretty sizable cut up at the state level. In addition, we have continued to look at models within our current budget with adequacy and general funds to troubleshoot what would rainy days look like if we had to modify our budget.

Alderman Levasseur asked Karen can you tell me because the aldermen level funded you last time if you had to use any money from anywhere else to pay for the current budget you are in.

Karen DeFrancis, Finance Officer, answered we did utilize one-time funds of \$1.2 million from our expendable trust and \$7.8 million from our surplus from the previous year.

Alderman Levasseur asked and if you get level-funded in the budget that is coming up, will you have to use money again from your trust funds or whatever.

Ms. DeFrancis responded I think it is too soon to tell. We did get our estimate for adequacy and it is higher than we expected but we are still in the process of building our budget so I wouldn't be able to answer that tonight.

Alderman Levasseur stated you are always worried about the state cutting you or not funding your request but this Board can do the same thing and if we don't give you what you request, you will have to take money from somewhere to pay for your current budget. Forget about buildings, you have to pay teacher salaries and all that other stuff, right? It is not just the state you have to worry about. It is a new Board that may come along that is even more conservative or more conservative than this one is that could say we don't want to fund you or we can take \$5 million away that could cause you guys to have to pay these bonds, right?

Ms. DeFrancis replied the aldermen do have the final appropriation authority.

Alderman Levasseur stated so shorting the school budget does have an effect just like the state will have an effect when they do it and they will do it. I just want to talk about the fact that this cake is baked. This is going to pass tonight one way or the other. My understanding is the votes are there. I just find it amazing how Mr. York came in here tonight and he talked about not being really educated on all the facts and not really knowing all the numbers but he really gave us the opinion that he thought we should spend \$82 million to build a new school. How interesting is it that this guy is getting Hallsville School for practically \$1 and what is he going to do with it? Is he tearing it down to build a brand-new building? No. He is renovating it. This building we are sitting in right now is 170 years old, not 50 like Beech. You guys are going to tear down that school and build another school. To demolish the current Beech Street School, I will give it a low price of \$50 million. That is \$134 million when you add it all up. You are going to be building one for \$82 million and tearing down one for \$50 million so that is going to cost us and we aren't going to see any money from that. The irony of having to come here and listen to Ward 1 always tell the rest of the city how we have to live

and how much money we have to spend...in four years, your sewer bill will be \$1,000 more than it is today. In four more years, your taxes will be a minimum of \$1,000 more than they are today. That will be \$2,000 more that you have to pay our wonderful government to live in Manchester. Ward 1 must have money coming off the trees up there because they don't care how much they spend or how many buildings we build. It is amazing that we are going to tear down a school and build a new one but the rest of the schools that are well over 100 years old are going to sit there like Bakersville...I was there I don't want to tell you how many years ago and all the other schools in this city that are going to be...the other two schools that are exactly the same build as Beech Street School. It is amazing to me that you can't innovate, you can't renovate and you can't educate. Three things that are not too good for the City of Manchester. You are not educating our kids well. You certainly can renovate but you don't want to renovate right? You can renovate. The original plan was to add the addition to McLaughlin. You could put a small addition at Beech Street School now. You could put a small addition over at McLaughlin and you would be able to separate those kids or you could put an addition somewhere else. Tearing down Beech Street School, a perfectly really good building, is absolutely insane. There are better opportunities that we have. If you don't want to tear down Wilson Street School because of an eminent domain or a couple of apartment buildings, I am sure in this market and in this economy the people who own those apartment buildings would be happy to get current market price for those plus it is for the common good and for the children so why wouldn't we just build another school at Wilson Street and keep that neighborhood school? Why are we stuffing 800 or 750 kids in a crooked lot and making it worse and going up three flights of stairs for kindergartners to 4th graders shoving it in shoehorn style instead of taking the school that we currently have and like Ross said put an addition on it. Put an addition over at McLaughlin for a lot less money but also not tearing down a young 50-year-old school. It is just amazing to me that anybody would come here with a straight face...it is always people from Ward 1 and it is always people who don't live here. It is always people who educate their kids in private schools telling us here in Manchester, 10 wards or 2 wards, 1 ward for sure telling all of us how we have to live our lives and how we have to just suck it up and pay more and more in taxes and more and more in sewer bills. Our cable bills will be higher in four years and we will have fewer channels. It just never ends. It is a boondoggle. It is funny. York comes in here today giving us this speech

and Brad Cook came in here tonight. Twenty years ago, he was sitting right there telling us what a great idea it was and how much money we had to spend, \$110 million back then, which we are still paying on now. He came here and told us, from Ward 1, how we had to expand the high schools. How has that worked out for us folks? Our high schools are half empty. These numbers I have here showing that we have a total of 3,000 kids in our high schools...3,448 kids in our high schools. Couldn't find any room to put any classes in there, right? Renovate and educate and improvise. You guys are just slow footed and stuck in your own minds and you don't want to change. You have dug your heels in the ground and you are making it a war between conservatives who don't want to shove these bills down people's throats and who don't want to worry about being booted out of their homes and who are very concerned about the effect on tenants who live in these apartment buildings where their sewer bills are going to go up and the landlords won't be eating that but passing it down to their tenants. They are passing down the tax increases to their tenants. For all of you out there, I am proud to drive a used car. You know why? Because it is cheaper, it runs fine and I don't care how it looks. It gets me from A to B.

Alderman Kantor stated I have a few questions. How many modulars do we have?

Superintendent Chmiel answered six set-ups.

Alderman Kantor asked so six modulars.

Superintendent Chmiel replied six locations are set-up with modulars.

Alderman Kantor asked how many modulars total.

David Saindon, Project Executive, LeftField, answered 72 units.

Alderman Kantor asked how much was the original amount that we were supposed to pay that was agreed upon.

Mr. Saindon stated I can tell you that the cost for the modulars was \$17.2 million but that did not include infrastructure. The total cost for the modulars is \$26.2 million. Of that, \$17.2 million is for the modular units. There are infrastructure costs associated with setting up the modulars.

Alderman Kantor stated that is very misleading and what we were supposed to be getting is not what we got.

Superintendent Chmiel stated we were pretty clear with what we were rolling out. We needed the modulars and then we needed to fit them up to be ready to roll them. You can't just roll in a modular and have them functioning without the set-up.

Alderman Kantor stated but still what was presented to the board was not what was delivered and we know that former Mayor Baines said that loud and clear. He said that is not what he agreed on.

Superintendent Chmiel responded I don't agree with you. What we put out there is what we got with the modular. The discrepancy in any modular set-up was with siding on the sides of the walls or no siding. That was the discrepancy that we found.

Alderman Kantor stated I am going to have to disagree because I heard him several times say he didn't sign up for those and it was a disgrace 10 years ago when they got rid of the modulars. You brought them back and said they were going to be state-of-the-art and now you are saying we are condemning the students, that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen are condemning the students to the modulars because we paused the Beech Street project.

Superintendent Chmiel replied that is not our language. What we have said is a plan from the get go. We were expecting the modulars to be a temporary classroom set-up. I will not speak for Mr. Baines and wrestle with the language that he used in that meeting compared to today. I know I have had conversations with him since and he has spoken at our board meetings in favor of the work that we are doing. The conditions of the modular classrooms that we have students in today far surpassed the

condition that we had them sitting in at Wilson Street School. We fought to make sure that students weren't sitting in that building any longer than we had to keep them there.

Alderman Kantor stated for me, education is essential and we talk about all of this equity, all kids matter. The fact that you broke this up into two phases is unacceptable. I am definitely not for this and I am actually speaking for the teachers and the principals and other administration officials who have not been able to speak up for themselves because they feel bullied and blacklisted. They know that this is a totally irresponsible way to spend money.

Superintendent Chmiel responded I can't speak to anonymous complaints from teachers or administrators but what I can say is we have had everybody actively involved. We have SMMA and LeftField out and about in our schools working with our staff so they can give feedback. Ideas are socialized back and forth. We are not excluding people. As far as equity in keeping the Wilson students in better conditions, that was the catalyst for breaking the plan in two parts. Do I wish that we had done it in one fall swoop? Absolutely. However, the conditions at Wilson presented as such that we needed to move much faster.

Alderman Kantor asked how much will the new Beech Street School cost to run.

Superintendent Chmiel asked as far as our utilities.

Alderman Kantor answered everything – the whole package. I would assume it is going to affect our taxes and the budget.

Superintendent Chmiel stated I am curious. Are you talking about staffing or are you talking about utilities?

Alderman Kantor responded everything; the whole nine yards.

Superintendent Chmiel stated we would be replicating what we have at Beech now with the assumption that we would be looking for some efficiencies in the utilities going forward because it would be a sound building.

Alderman Kantor asked so you are saying it wouldn't increase the cost.

Superintendent Chmiel answered I am saying that we moved staff because they go with the students. That 20:1 ratio. We would be relocating staff so that we could staff appropriately. We are moving bodies that we already have within the district.

Alderman Kantor asked so it is going to cost the same amount as it does now.

Superintendent Chmiel responded no it is going to cost more money because there are more bodies in it. However, if you go to the 20:1 ratio for staffing, you would have an equitable distribution of our staff.

Alderman Long stated first of all, I welcome Ward 1 to come here and testify any time they want. The last I knew they were part of this city. Second of all, I heard from people who are in favor from all different jobs, not just one or two wards. I have also heard people in opposition to this that are sending their kids elsewhere using the education funding, which is okay. They can do that; however, don't tell us how to run public schools when you are not part of them. You don't want to be part of them and that is your choice and I respect that. Second of all, I did some research. In 2024, taxes went up in Auburn 6.82%. Taxes went up in Bedford 6.82%. Taxes went up in Goffstown 8.38%. Taxes went up in Hookset 6.13%. Taxes went down in Litchfield .76%, however the year before they went up 10.04%. The City of Manchester taxes went up 3.4%. We are way below what other municipalities are charging for taxes and by the way I have had conversations with two cities on this list that because of their schools, they are increasing their taxes; because of their schools and the value they want to put into their schools. That is the reality.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated I think it is worth noting as one speaker did that all we are voting on tonight is the land swap. All of this conversation about the money has already

been decided. What this is is a delay tactic. Stop the project and do nothing is where we are going to end up. We will be here five years from now with no progress. All we are voting on tonight is the land swap. We are not voting to spend any money anywhere. We are voting on the land swap so the pre-approved project can move forward.

Alderman Long moved to: 1) approve the Partial Release of Deed by Amoskeag Industries and accept the related letter, dated January 14, 2025, describing the primary purpose and permitted ancillary activities on the new school lot; 2) authorize the change in use for Sheridan-Emmett Park from park use to school use; and 3) accept the scope expectations identified in the letter from LeftField, dated January 14, 2025, to be paid entirely from the existing \$306M bond for the Priority One Budget. **Alderman O'Neil** duly seconded the motion. Alderman Goonan requested a roll call vote. Aldermen Goonan, Long, Fajardo, T. Sapienza, O'Neil, Burkush, Barry, and Morgan voted yea. Aldermen Kantor, Levasseur, Terrio, E. Sapienza, Vincent and Thomas voted nay. The motion carried.

PRESENTATION

2. Summary of public input sessions regarding updated zoning ordinances from Jeff Belanger, Director of Planning & Community Development and representatives from UNH.

Jeff Belanger, Planning & Community Development Director, stated thank you for time on your agenda tonight. This presentation will be an update on the proposed rewrite of the Manchester zoning ordinance and it will be entirely informational so there won't be any action requested from the Board tonight. The last time I was in front of all of you to talk about the zoning ordinance was in June 2024. At that point, we were just on the cusp of publishing the first draft of the zoning ordinance and of beginning a months' long effort of public engagement to inform the citizens of Manchester about the proposed zoning ordinance and to get their feedback. That public engagement is now complete and I am here to report back to you on how it went. With me tonight are two people who were instrumental in making the public engagement a success. To my left is Tracy Kearns. She is the Assistant Director of the University of NH Survey Center. Tracy and her colleagues at the Survey Center worked with the Planning staff to create a survey

about zoning that could be taken on a phone, a computer or on paper and a total of nearly 1,500 people participated in that survey. Tracy will tell you more about the survey as part of this presentation. To my right is Scott Slattery. Scott is a Community & Economic Development Field Specialist with the University of NH Cooperative Extension. Scott and his colleagues worked closely with the Planning staff to host 12 community meetings across the city during the summer at which more than 1,000 people participated. Scott will also tell you more about those meetings and what we learned from them. Before Scott and Tracy start, I would like to just say a few words about the work the Planning staff did to inform the people in Manchester about the zoning ordinance and the opportunities to comment on it. On the screen is the cover of the proposed new zoning ordinance. As you can see in the bottom right, the first draft was published on June 21, 2024. That draft has been up on our website since and it is still there for anyone who wants to read it. On the same day we published the first draft, I gave an hour-long presentation about the zoning ordinance to walk through the document from beginning to end. Personally, I wasn't really sure if many people would be interested in a lengthy presentation about zoning but for months now it has been the most frequently watched recording on Manchester Public Television and no one is more surprised by that than me. Presumably, it speaks to the interest that people have on this topic. Just a few days later in early July, a letter from Mayor Ruais went to every household in the city, which is more than 56,000 in total. That letter did two important things. First, it informed people of the days, times and locations of the 12 community meetings. The goal was to hold a meeting in each ward of the city, some in the evenings and some on weekends, to inform people about the proposed zoning ordinance and most importantly to get input from people on what they thought about it. Second, the letter told people about a survey they could take to have input on the new zoning ordinance. People could take the survey by scanning the QR code in the letter or by going to the website or by filling it out on paper. The letter arrived in most people's mailboxes on July 8 and the survey was available for people to take on that same day. It was up and running for two months until September 8. That letter was probably the most effective thing we did to make people aware of the proposed zoning ordinance, the meetings and the survey but it was not the only thing we did. In addition to the letter, Mayor Ruais also recorded a radio announcement that ran on Manchester media group stations which are WZID, WFEA and Live Free Country. I thought about

trying to play the audio clip for this presentation but I figured I would just mess up the technology so instead I transcribed the text and that is up on the screen. As you can see, the message makes people aware of how they can participate in the survey and the community meetings and directs them to the zoning ordinance website. We also sent out Nixle alerts including for the publication of the zoning ordinance and for each of the 12 community meetings. There are approximately 12,000 people who subscribe to the city's Nixle alerts and they got them both on their computers and on their phones. We also put up announcements on the city's website and we had articles in the city's Economic Development Newsletter. We also took out a ¼ page ad in the Union Leader to tell people about the meetings and the survey and to direct them to the website. We also got a banner ad in Manchester Ink Link which ran for a month. While we are talking about Manchester Ink Link, I do want to thank Andy Sylvia for his great coverage of the new zoning ordinance. He was at that first presentation when the ordinance was published and he went to every community meeting that we held. He gave up a lot of his nights and weekends to do it and his coverage was always thorough and fair and we appreciate it because it created another way for people to find out what was going on. He even put in a running tally in his articles of how people voted on the topics during the meetings. To summarize, we did our best to publicize the proposed zoning ordinance and to encourage people to participate in telling us what they thought about it. The number of people who participated in both the meetings and the survey was higher than we expected. So, from the perspective of participation, we feel that this whole effort of public engagement was successful. I will now turn the presentation over to Tracy to tell us more about the survey and what we learned from it.

Tracy Kearns, UNH Survey Center, stated thank you Jeff for that introduction and for inviting me to present the results of the recent City of Manchester ordinance survey to the mayor and members of the Board. Jeff has done a great job describing all of the outreach that went into encouraging participate in the survey. I will focus on the development of the survey and the measures that we took to insure valid responses. In the summer of 2024, the UNH Survey Center worked with Jeff and his team at the Manchester Planning & Community Development Office to create a survey that was simple to understand and provided insight into how the public felt about principles and land use contained within the draft ordinance published in June. The iterative process

resulted in survey questions that could provide quantitative understanding of the public's views on a variety of topics. Once the survey was finalized, it was programmed into an online survey tool and tested. As Jeff mentioned, a letter was mailed to all households in Manchester. The letter included a unique ID that all members of a household could enter for security purposes and validation to take the survey. In addition to those security measures, fraud detection was used to identify responses that were likely to be fraudulent. Of all responses received, there were no responses identified as suspicious. The survey remained open for two months and a total of 1,499 responses were collected. When interpreting the results of surveys, it is really helpful to know some information about the types of people who responded. For this survey, nearly all respondents are Manchester residents, more than half report visiting businesses in Manchester regularly, and just under 1/3 work in Manchester. Nearly half are aged 55 and older. These respondents are slightly older than Manchester as a whole compared to Census data but overall age distribution is quite close. A majority have a college degree or more education, more than ¾ own their own home and more than half have lived in Manchester for at least 20 years. As mentioned earlier, the report is available online and has a comprehensive review of all of the topics covered in the survey. For this presentation, I am going to highlight just a handful of key findings. The first topic I am going to talk about is housing, which was one of the topics where the results were quite strong. Three-quarters of respondents believe the price of housing in Manchester is not very or not at all reasonable. Most rate the variety, quality and number of available housing units in Manchester as fair, poor or very poor. Eighty percent or more believe it is important for the cost of housing to come down, for there to be a variety of housing and for new housing to be built in Manchester. The next topic that I would like to highlight is development. Here we can see when asked about new development that respondents most often mentioned small retail and service, small residential, restaurants and entertainment as new development that they would like to see in Manchester. Few would like to see automobile, hotel or office development as you can see at the bottom. When asked about what building types would best fit well in their neighborhood, a majority said that duplexes, apartment houses, townhouses and cottage commercial buildings and small multi-family houses would fit well in their neighborhood or where they spend most time in the city for those who don't reside in the city. Few say that large multi-family apartments stacked flats. Looking at just two of

these building types – duplexes and mixed-use buildings, we broke out the responses by the ward in which the respondent resides. The majority of respondents across all wards think that duplexes will fit well in their neighborhood with Ward 1 and 6 being less likely to think so. There is less consistency and more division across wards on whether mixed use buildings will fit well in their neighborhood with Ward 3 and Ward 11 most likely to think they will fit very or somewhat well. Again, all of the data here is available in the report online. The last topic I am going to highlight here is parking. Almost everyone reports being able to always or most of the time find parking in a reasonable time close to their destination in their neighborhood. A vast majority almost always or most of the time are able to find parking close to shopping, work and school. More difficulty finding parking in a reasonable time was in the millyard and downtown but the majority always or most of the time can find some. When this question is broken out by ward, we can see that nearly all residents of wards 6, 1 and 9 always or most of the time can find parking in a reasonable time in their neighborhood while residents of wards 7, 5 and 11 are less likely to be able to find parking in a reasonable time but most are still able to do so. That was my last slide on the survey results.

Scott Slattery, UNH Cooperative Extension, stated thank you for your time tonight. I know it has been a long night and I will move rather quickly through my slides. As Jeff indicated, my name is Scott Slattery and I am a Community & Economic Development Field Specialist with UNH's Cooperative Extension. As you have heard from my colleague here tonight a lot of information about quantitative data, our role was more qualitative. Our role was more of a social science experiment where we were engaging one-on-one with residents. I will talk really quickly about how the engagement went. We began planning for this process back in February 2024 with a series of meetings with the Planning Department. Our meetings began in July and continued for more than 60 days. We had a ward meeting in every ward in the city and we concluded those meetings in September 2024 and are presenting our report here tonight. Like the survey data, our report is also available online. So, 12 ward meetings. We had 1,013 participants and that was not including the Planning staff, UNH personnel or elected officials and I want to say thank you to the mayor for coming to most of our meetings. I also saw members of the Board at most of the ward meetings so thank you very much. It is really important. We collected all of the comments and we collected the data. We

coded and catalogued them for each ward. Just purely observational, we noticed that most of our participants were over the age of 30. Why is this important? Well this is only the fourth time in the city's history that you have totally rewritten the zoning ordinance. Citizen and community input are critical for informed decision-making by elected officials such as this body. It gave opportunities for residents to review, comment, and discuss the proposed changes in the ordinance, as well as to measure the specific impacts on their neighborhoods. It created a forum for stakeholders to question, object to or support the changes as well as to offer alternative solutions to some of the proposed changes and possible compromises. It also provided an opportunity for elected officials to hear directly from their constituency. Our key observations. Many comments received support streamlining and making the process for permitting simpler. Residents indicated that they would like to see the city use innovative ways to use existing or vacant properties to address the housing shortage and affordability. A specific location, and I know this is not within the study's purview, that was cited in numerous wards was the Sununu Center property. Residents would also like to see as much conservation as possible, as well as to support recreation city-wide. Most comments supported mixed use developments but also indicated that housing density and multi-family developments be concentrated in the central business district. Housing, much like the survey center, was the most commented upon topic and specifically pro-housing and housing affordability receiving most of the comments. Neighborhood walkability and quality of life topics were cited in all 12 wards. This included neighborhood character, property maintenance and code standards. Some concerns cited were related to parking restrictions and requirements for development, infrastructure capacity and traffic which was also cited numerous times. Concerns about over development, homelessness, and allowed uses were also identified in all 12 wards. Community sentiment, and this is what really got to the heart of what we did. People love this community and they are proud to live in this community. They cited the vibrancy of downtown in all of the wards as a significant reason why people live here in Manchester. They talked about availability of amenities locally included the arena, Fisher Cat Stadium, and the millyard. Those were all identified as community assets that folks enjoy. Walking trails, local conservation areas, and proximity to other state and regional activities were also reasons to live here. In short, people love their community here in Manchester. We really want to thank the residents for coming out.

On a night like tonight when it is 1 degree, we were thinking about those meetings in the summer when we were all dying from the heat in those elementary schools so kind of the opposite. I really want to say thank you to the mayor and this Board for all of your support throughout this process as well as Jeff and his team and the hard-working folks in Planning & Community Development. I also want to thank the Manchester school district and the diocese for letting us use their meeting spaces. More information is available on the website. Again, I am Scott and would be happy to speak further with anybody.

Mr. Belanger stated I want to thank both Scott and Tracy for their work. All of the people from UNH went beyond the call of duty working with Planning staff on nights and weekends during the summer to engage with Manchester citizens and what Scott and Tracy have told you about tonight is just the tip of the iceberg. They and their colleagues wrote reports on the survey and community meetings which are lengthy and have all sorts of information in them. As you know, I have emailed that to the Board but anyone from the public is welcome to download copies that are on the city's website at [manchesternh.gov/land use code](http://manchesternh.gov/land-use-code). This is the front page of the website. There are resources tap on the right. If people click on that, they can find not only the reports but a library's worth of information about the proposed zoning ordinance including the ordinance itself, the zoning map, and summaries of each zoning district so people can have a sense of what is proposed for where they live. There are also proposed and current zoning maps for everywhere in the city. Now I want to close the presentation with a description of what is next. Now that we have gathered all of this information from the people of Manchester and we have the reports from UNH, the next step is to put that information to good use. The whole goal of the public engagement that we did throughout the summer was to get direction. The Planning Department wrote a first draft of the zoning ordinance based on the Master Plan that the city adopted in 2021. That was the right place for us to start and that is the process set out in state law but that was just a starting point. Master plans are, by their nature, aspirational documents that speak in generalities rather than in specifics but a zoning ordinance is different. It is quite specific and a legal document. We knew that after we finished the first draft, we were going to want to check in with people to find out what they liked about it and what they didn't so that we could get more specific direction on what to put in the final draft.

Now that we have these thousands of comments from the people in Manchester, we have more direction. The first step for the plan ahead is to analyze those comments and apply them to the draft of the zoning ordinance. We have already started doing that and are making edits to the first draft. Concurrent with that analysis, we are meeting with the Zoning Ordinance Steering Committee. As you know, this committee is comprised of 10 citizens, 6 of whom serve on Manchester's boards like the Planning Board, Zoning Board and this Board and the remaining 4 were selected by Mayor Ruais. The role of this committee is to be a working group of Manchester citizens who are focusing on the zoning ordinance and getting it to a finished form. The Planning staff and the Steering Committee have already been meeting to discuss the zoning ordinance and we now have more data that we can use to edit the document. When we have a good handle on what edits we think should be made to the first draft, I would like to offer to meet with each member of this Board. The goal of those meeting would be to discuss what your constituents said about your ward and what those comments might mean for the next draft of the zoning ordinance. As you may have noticed from one of Tracy's slides, we can break down all of the comments people submitted ward by ward so we can tell you what people in your ward had to say. It is my top priority with the zoning ordinance to ensure that it reflects the will of both the people of Manchester and of this Board as the legislative body of the city. A zoning ordinance is legislation and as legislation it is subject to the approval of this Board so we want to be sure that any new draft of the zoning ordinance aligns with your goals. When a second draft is ready, it will be published on the website and we will announce the publication. Just like with the publication of the first draft, I would plan to do a presentation in which I walk through the document to explain all the edits that were made since the first draft. I am not sure that I am going to get the same ratings as I got the first time, but I will give it a try. After the publication, there would be a period of public review and comment on the second draft. The minimum legal standard for a period of public review of a zoning ordinance is that the document needs to be available for 10 days prior to a public hearing. Ten days in my opinion is not nearly enough time for the public to review and comment on such an important document. Our plan is to allow for 60 days of review and comment. Really everything that we have done with public engagement up to this point has not been required. All of the meetings, the survey and partnering with UNH has all been beyond what the law requires but we have done it to ensure that the people of Manchester have

the opportunity to stay informed about what the zoning ordinance is doing and to participate in making the document what they want. After the period of public review and comment is done, we will make whatever additional edits to the document are necessary. I would like to make those edits in concert with all of you so you are aware of them prior to the document being finalized. After the edits are made and the document is finalized, it would go to a public hearing which is required by law. After the public hearing, it would be eligible for adoption by the Board. Thank you again for your time. I know that was a lot of information. I want to encourage anyone from the public who has questions about the proposed zoning ordinance to contact the Planning staff. You can email us specifically about the new zoning ordinance at luc@manchesternh.gov with luc standing for land use code. We would be happy to explain anything about the ordinance including how it affects certain properties. With that, Scott, Tracy and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Alderman O'Neil stated thank you Tracy and Scott for your work. Jeff I am not leaving you and your department out because I know you folks have done a great job. I am just curious. As an add-on to this could you take the discussions or votes that come up in the Planning Board or the ZBA and say these are some of the things we need to address? I am trying to come up with something like setbacks. I don't know if there is any way to summarize ZBA meetings or maybe site plan approvals at the Planning Board.

Mr. Belanger stated in a lot of ways we have already done that. We did an analysis of I think the last 5-7 years of ZBA decisions to look at every variance that was granted, the property, and what types of variances were granted. We looked at the percentages of different types of variances. That was baked into the first draft. That gave us a good barometer of the representatives of the people of Manchester who sit on the Zoning Board, what it is that they see as things that are slowing things down or things that aren't quite fitting in with the current zoning. That has been part of what we are doing and we will continue to do it.

Alderman O'Neil stated I think at first glance when I saw parking, I automatically thought of the downtown but we have had discussions here about parking and the number of units on a site in the past year, I think. It is parking throughout all 12 wards.

Mr. Belanger replied yes.

Alderman Vincent stated Tracy, Scott and Jeff thank you very much. I want to echo parking. Parking is always an issue and I know people tell you guys they find ways to do parking. Part of the way they do that is to hope that they don't get a ticket. Parking is a huge issue in Ward 11. I get calls on a constant basis, especially at this time of year when we can only park on one side of the street. If you drive around in Ward 11, and I encourage you to do it if you haven't yet. You will see on Cartier, Rimmon, Dubuque and all of those streets that there is not enough room. There is just not enough room for the people that live there to park. I have residents that are three blocks over and some even further. It is a constant struggle so I implore you to make sure that is a huge part of this ordinance. It is an issue in my ward and always has been. I can only vocalize it to the people doing what you are doing. I would like to say one more thing. The timeline that you had there, in a perfect world from start to finish what are we looking at? I don't want to tell you the year I retire because I am hoping it is before that. That is a lot of work and I was wondering what the timeline is that you envision.

Mr. Belanger responded it is difficult to put a firm timeframe on it. The Planning staff is working on this along with all of the other responsibilities that we have. I would expect a couple of months of analysis and working with the Steering Committee and getting this into a good shape. Then meeting with all of you for a few weeks or a month maybe after that. Then we have 60 days of public comment after that assuming we can get all of the edits done in a reasonable amount of time. After that, there may be additional edits. Ball park, I would say maybe summer but I would appreciate you not quoting me on that.

Alderman Vincent asked summer for draft one or two.

Mr. Belanger stated we finished draft one and are on draft two now. That is subject to change but in an ideal world that is how it would happen. I want to let you know that we are very aware of the parking issues in Ward 11. I have intentionally stayed late here and driven through your ward at night to go down the alleys and see what is going on. Ward 11, especially on the east side, has a lot of lots that were created before zoning ever existed and you know this. The triple-deckers there are 100+ years old so they are what we would now call sub-standard lots meaning they are below the size that could be developed today. In other words, there could be no further development of those with the new zoning ordinance either. That is baked in already and may provide some comfort. We heard loud and clear from the survey and from the ward meetings that people are concerned about traffic. We found ways already in the first draft to find ways to fit more cars onto existing lots so people can get off the streets. We are looking at it more because we heard that again and again.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated I saw from your survey results that you found similar things about parking in Ward 5. I appreciate you recognizing that and I appreciate all your hard work and transparency. I am sure you will be criticized for not being transparent but I don't know how much more you could possibly do. The idea that you are having a 60-day review period instead of 10 is wonderful. Thank you.

Alderman Fajardo stated as a member of the Steering Committee, I really want to shout out Butch and Kristen and the rest of your team. They are impressive. The information and the way they bring it down for us and make it digestible and workable is really awesome. Thanks to the whole team but especially to them.

Mayor Ruais stated thank you all so much. Jeff, you and I have talked about this but I think this is a generational opportunity for the city to set us up for success. I am very much looking forward to seeing that second draft and working with the BMA.

CONSENT AGENDA

Accept BMA Minutes

3. Minutes from the December 17 BMA & Finance meetings and the January 7 BMA meeting.

Approve Under Supervision of the Department of Highways

4. Pole Petition:
- 11-1784, Elm Street (1)

Approve Under Supervision of the Department of Highways, subject to funding

5. 50/50 Sidewalk Petitions
Residential:
- 155 Purdue Street
 - 284 Taylor Street
 - 1040 Ray Street
 - 1661 Belmont Street

Information to be Received and Filed

6. December OYS Report.
7. Communication from Xfinity regarding channel changes.

REFERRALS TO COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

8. Resolutions:

“Amending the FY2023 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of One Hundred Sixty-Six Thousand Six Hundred Ninety-Seven Dollars and Eighty-Three Cents (\$166,697.83) for the FY2023 CIP 211723 Opioid Litigation Settlement Trust.”

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Ten Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$10,500) for the FY2025 CIP 211925 The Manchester Youth Council and Youth Empowerment Groups.”

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) for the FY2025 CIP 212025 Endowment for Health - Homeless Healthcare Grant.”

“Amending the FY2022 and FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Ninety-Three Thousand Eight Hundred Twelve Dollars (\$93,812) for the FY2025 CIP 411725 EOC Upgrade - Impact Fees.”

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Two Hundred One Thousand Four Hundred Twenty-Six Dollars and Sixty-Eight Cents (\$201,426.68) for the FY2025 CIP

412025 SWAT/SOU Van.”

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Four Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety-Five Dollars (\$4,995) for the FY2025 CIP 412125 199th Police Cadre Grant.”

“Amending the FY2024 and FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Five Hundred Thirty-Two Thousand Three Hundred Twenty Dollars and Eighty-Nine Cents (\$532,320.89) for the FY2025 CIP 710925 Annual Street Reconstruction (CDBG).”

“Amending the FY2023 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Ten Million Seven Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$10,750,000) for the FY2023 CIP 711323 Amoskeag EB & Canal Ramp Design and Construction.”

“Amending the FY2024 and FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Three Hundred Fifty-Three Thousand Two Hundred Ninety-Three Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$353,293.50) for the FY2025 CIP 711325 Commercial 50/50 Sidewalk.”

“Amending the FY2021 and FY2024 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of One Hundred Fifty-One Thousand One Hundred Six Dollars (\$151,006) for the FY2021 CIP 712321 Commercial 50/50 Sidewalk.”

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) for the FY2025 CIP 712725SMART Grant Traffic Signal Project.”

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON BILLS ON SECOND READING

9. Recommending that Ordinance Amendment:

"Amending §92.25 Annual Fees of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Manchester to increase the annual fee for all existing Gamewell (wire) Master Fire Alarm Boxes."

ought to pass and be referred to the Committee on Accounts, Enrollment and Revenue Administration.
(Unanimous vote)

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

- 10.** Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$166,697.83 for CIP 211723 Opioid Litigation Settlement Trust be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
- 11.** Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$10,500 for CIP 211925 The Manchester Youth Council and Youth Empowerment Groups be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
- 12.** Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$50,000 for CIP 212025 Endowment for Health - Homeless Healthcare Grant be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
- 13.** Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorizations providing for the transfer and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$93,812 for CIP 411725 EOC Upgrade - Impact Fees be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
- 14.** Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$201,426.68 for CIP 412025 SWAT/SOU Van be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
- 15.** Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$4,995 for CIP 412125 199th Police Cadre Grant be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
- 16.** Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorizations providing for the transfer and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$532,320.89 for CIP 710925 Annual Street Reconstruction (CDBG) be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
- 17.** Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorizations providing for the transfer and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$10,750,000 for CIP 711323 Amoskeag EB & Canal Ramp Design and Construction be approved.
(Unanimous vote)

18. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorizations providing for the transfer and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$353,293.50 for CIP 711325 Commercial 50/50 Sidewalk be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
19. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorizations providing for the transfer and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$151,106 for CIP 712321 Commercial 50/50 Sidewalk be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
20. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$2,000,000 for CIP 712725 SMART Grant Traffic Signal Project be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
21. Recommending that the request from the Economic Development Director for the addition of a vehicle for the department's use be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
22. Recommending that the request from the Parks Projects Manager for timeframe extensions for CIP 510318 (6/30/30) and CIP 510720 (6/30/25) be approved.
(Unanimous vote)

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES/INSURANCE

23. Advising that the communication from the Manchester Employee's Contributory Retirement System regarding proposed changes has been received and filed.
(Unanimous vote)
24. Recommending that the request from the Economic Development Director for the following changes to the department's complement:
 - Add one (1) Economic Development Project Coordinator position, grade 17
 - Adopt the newly created job classification for the Economic Development Project Coordinator positionbe approved.
(Unanimous vote)
25. Recommending that the request from the Water Works Director for the following changes to the department's complement:
 - Add one (1) Financial Analyst I position, grade 19
 - Un-fund one (1) Accountant I position, grade 16be approved.
(Unanimous vote)

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, HEALTH AND TRAFFIC

26. Recommending that the following traffic regulation be approved:
HANDICAP PARKING ONLY
On Myrtle Street, north side, from a point 220 feet east of Pine Street to a point 25 feet further east
Alderman Long
(Unanimous vote)

JOINT SCHOOL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

27. Advising that the Manchester School District Priority I status and financial report for December 2024 submitted by LeftField has been accepted.
(Unanimous vote)

*HAVING READ THE CONSENT AGENDA, ON MOTION OF **ALDERMAN O'NEIL**,
DULY SECONDED BY **ALDERMAN LONG**, THE CONSENT AGENDA WAS
APPROVED.*

REGULAR BUSINESS

28. Nominations:
Planning Board
Brian Beaupre to move from an alternate to a regular member, term to expire May 1, 2026
Office of Youth Services Advisory Board
Katrina Ealy to succeed herself as a regular member, term to expire January 1, 2028
Karen Meteyer to succeed herself as a regular member, term to expire January 1, 2028
(Note: Pursuant to Rule 23 of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, this nomination will layover until the next meeting of the Board.)
29. Confirmation:
Board of Trustees of Trust Funds
Ryan Oldeman as a regular member, term to expire January 1, 2028

*On motion of **Alderman O'Neil**, duly seconded by **Alderman Long**, it was voted to confirm the nomination.*

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

Sharon Wickens, Finance Officer, stated the fiscal year 2025 general fund expenditure and revenue forecast as of January 21, 2025 based on department head estimates is as follows. The current projected general fund operating surplus for FY25 is \$200,000. The operating surplus is comprised of an expenditure deficit of \$506,000 and a revenue surplus of \$706,000. The expenditure deficit relates primarily to police overtime. There are currently 21 police officer vacancies. These vacancies lead to the backfilling of manpower in order to meet minimum staffing requirements, as well as comply with current contracts. This results in an increase in overtime hours. The expectation is that this expenditure deficit number will continue to improve before fiscal year end. The revenue surplus relates primarily to interest income and motor vehicle registrations. Health insurance claims through December continue to perform favorably against the budget. The forecasted surplus does include \$200,000 from the contingency account. There were 21 retirements through January 20 compared to 24 retirements at this same time a year ago. Severance paid through January 20 amounts to \$1,078,543 compared to \$941,813 a year ago. The severance reserve account is anticipated to have a balance of \$849,810 after all related entries have been posted. I have also attached departmental overtime reports as of January 10 and a summary by department of severance paid through January 20.

Alderman O'Neil stated the police vacancies are a snapshot at one particular time. They are sending officers as often as they can to the academy and making offers and they have officers coming back from the academy. That is a fluid number.

Ms. Wickens responded it is a fluid number. Unfortunately, as they make gains and have people coming in the door, they have people going out. Last month, there were 16 police officer vacancies. They have four more this month. This is just what they keep playing every month. Maybe the comp study will take care of some of this. That is the hope.

Alderman O'Neil asked Chief can you come up please. When it says vacancy...when you have officers pre-academy or at the academy, those positions are considered filled at that time correct?

Peter Marr, Chief of Police, answered correct. It is extremely fluid. It could be 21 today and...well actually it is going to be 22 tomorrow. We just a lost a guy tonight that is resigning.

Alderman O'Neil asked and there is no academy class for most of the fall. I shouldn't say that but I know this January class was the one you were targeting.

Chief Marr replied they did slow down their classes. They are going back to four a year. They were doubling up since Covid but it is something they couldn't sustain so we do have fewer classes now. We should have a larger number of officers going though.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked is it safe to say there is a problem with recruitment and retention.

Chief Marr responded yes that is safe to say.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked what is driving that. Anything in particular? Is it a variety of things?

Chief Marr answered I think it is a variety of things. I think it is all over the place. For some people it could be a negative outlook on law enforcement and the national narrative. For some it could be an extremely violent call that they went on or something graphic where they realized this job was not for them and they couldn't do 25 years of seeing that stuff. It really depends on the person and it is all over the map.

Alderman E. Sapienza stated Sharon did mention the comp study. I think it is going to have limited value but I get it.

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

Mayor Ruais called the meeting back to order.

33. Report(s) of the Committee on Finance.

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

“Amending the FY2023 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of One Hundred Sixty-Six Thousand Six Hundred Ninety-Seven Dollars and Eighty-Three Cents (\$166,697.83) for the FY2023 CIP 211723 Opioid Litigation Settlement Trust.”

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Ten Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$10,500) for the FY2025 CIP 211925 The Manchester Youth Council and Youth Empowerment Groups.”

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) for the FY2025 CIP 212025 Endowment for Health - Homeless Healthcare Grant.”

“Amending the FY2022 and FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Ninety-Three Thousand Eight Hundred Twelve Dollars (\$93,812) for the FY2025 CIP 411725 EOC Upgrade - Impact Fees.”

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Two Hundred One Thousand Four Hundred Twenty-Six Dollars and Sixty-Eight Cents (\$201,426.68) for the FY2025 CIP 412025 SWAT/SOU Van.”

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Four Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety-Five Dollars (\$4,995) for the FY2025 CIP 412125 199th Police Cadre Grant.”

“Amending the FY2024 and FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Five Hundred Thirty-Two Thousand Three Hundred Twenty Dollars and Eighty-Nine Cents (\$532,320.89) for the FY2025 CIP 710925 Annual Street Reconstruction (CDBG).”

“Amending the FY2023 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Ten Million Seven Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$10,750,000) for the FY2023 CIP 711323 Amoskeag EB & Canal Ramp Design and Construction.”

“Amending the FY2024 and FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Three Hundred Fifty-Three Thousand Two Hundred Ninety-Three Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$353,293.50) for the FY2025 CIP 711325 Commercial 50/50 Sidewalk.”

“Amending the FY2021 and FY2024 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of One Hundred Fifty-One Thousand One Hundred Six Dollars (\$151,006) for the FY2021 CIP 712321 Commercial 50/50 Sidewalk.”

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) for the FY2025 CIP 712725SMART Grant Traffic Signal Project.”

ought to pass and be Enrolled.

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

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

There were none.

35. Report(s) of the Special Committee on Alcohol, Other Drugs & Youth Services, if available.

There were none.

37. Resolutions:

“Amending the FY2023 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of One Hundred Sixty-Six Thousand Six Hundred Ninety-Seven Dollars and Eighty-Three Cents (\$166,697.83) for the FY2023 CIP 211723 Opioid Litigation Settlement Trust.”

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Ten Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$10,500) for the FY2025 CIP 211925 The Manchester Youth Council and Youth Empowerment Groups.”

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) for the FY2025 CIP 212025 Endowment for Health - Homeless Healthcare Grant.”

"Amending the FY2022 and FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Ninety-Three Thousand Eight Hundred Twelve Dollars (\$93,812) for the FY2025 CIP 411725 EOC Upgrade - Impact Fees."

"Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Two Hundred One Thousand Four Hundred Twenty-Six Dollars and Sixty-Eight Cents (\$201,426.68) for the FY2025 CIP 412025 SWAT/SOU Van."

"Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Four Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety-Five Dollars (\$4,995) for the FY2025 CIP 412125 199th Police Cadre Grant."

"Amending the FY2024 and FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Five Hundred Thirty-Two Thousand Three Hundred Twenty Dollars and Eighty-Nine Cents (\$532,320.89) for the FY2025 CIP 710925 Annual Street Reconstruction (CDBG)."

"Amending the FY2023 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Ten Million Seven Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$10,750,000) for the FY2023 CIP 711323 Amoskeag EB & Canal Ramp Design and Construction."

"Amending the FY2024 and FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Three Hundred Fifty-Three Thousand Two Hundred Ninety-Three Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$353,293.50) for the FY2025 CIP 711325 Commercial 50/50 Sidewalk."

"Amending the FY2021 and FY2024 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of One Hundred Fifty-One Thousand One Hundred Six Dollars (\$151,006) for the FY2021 CIP 712321 Commercial 50/50 Sidewalk."

"Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) for the FY2025 CIP 712725 SMART Grant Traffic Signal Project."

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

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Fajardo**, it was voted that the Resolutions be Enrolled.*

38. Ordinance:

“Amending Section 33.024, 33.025, & 33.026 (Economic Development Project Coordinator) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Manchester.”

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman T. Sapienza**, it was voted to Ordain.*

NEW BUSINESS

Alderman Vincent stated I want to give everyone a brief update on the city grant writer position. The interview process is underway. There are a couple of candidates that have been interviewed and a couple of more that are going to be interviewed. The goal is still to have the position start with an effective date of February1 pending any complications in the process. I feel confident that we will have somebody in that position February 1 and as we say boots on ground and ready to roll. Thank you for your patience and thank you for your support on the overall position.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated I want to congratulate a couple of Manchester’s native sons who recently coached Ohio State to the National Championship – Coaches Ryan Day and Chip Kelly. Congratulations to them.

TABLED ITEMS

- 39.** Report from the Committee on Community Improvement recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorizations providing for the transfer and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$400,000 for CIP 610625 80 Merrimack Street (Residence at Chestnut Phase II) be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
(Note: Tabled on September 4, 2024.)

This item remained on the table.

- 40.** Report from the Committee on Lands & Buildings recommending that the request from Alderman Morgan to name the soccer field at Sheridan-Emmett Park after Thamba Mbungu be approved.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Alderman Long who abstained)
(Note: Tabled on November 19, 2024.)

This item remained on the table.

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