

COMMITTEE ON JOINT SCHOOL BUILDINGS

March 11, 2025 at 5:00 PM

Chairman O'Connell called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: School Committee Members O'Connell, Soule, Turner
Alderman Kantor

Absent: Aldermen Terrio, O'Neil

Messrs.: D. Saindon, J. Soucy

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

David Saindon, Project Executive at LeftField, stated ongoing activities or activities that were completed within the last thirty days include: continued pre-construction maintenance for Group 1, as well as continued development of logistics for the G1 projects; continued development of all project schedules; programming meetings for Southside and Parkside, which were orchestrated by SMMA; continued development with the Priority I website, which I would say will hopefully be launched week one or two of April; we executed an amendment 1 for the Group 1 projects, it was a small amendment that covered exploratory work that has been recently done for Hillside and McLaughlin; we continued moving forward with the early release packages for the Group 1 projects including site work, steel, concrete, and windows; a Beech project work plan that SMMA is refining is ongoing, as well as the Beech survey for the culvert; SMMA is reengaging themselves of a redesign of the Beech Street project based on assumptions of the survey; and there has been continued communication with all stakeholders. As far as the 30-day look ahead, many of the items I just talked about will continue. We moved forward with the modular HVAC corrective work, continued pre-construction meetings for Group 1 and 2, and did exploratory work for the domestic water lines at Hillside and McLaughlin. Hopefully within the next two to three weeks we will have the awards for the Group 1 early release packages which include steel, concrete, windows, and site work. Collectively, those four packages total about \$9.7 million, and that is about 17% of the trade costs of those two projects. It is a sizeable initial chunk of awards or buyout. We will have continued refinement of the project schedules and continued progress of the construction documents for Hillside and McLaughlin. There will be continued programming meetings. We will have the launch of the Priority I website. We will be doing procurement of material testing services with a testing agency. We will finalize the Beech work plan and Consigli will be mobilizing for the Group 1 projects - Hillside and McLaughlin, on approximately April 1. It could be a few days before or after. I want to define mobilization. They are not going to be showing up with heavy equipment on April 1 but are going to mobilize their trailer. They will put up a fence. It is a soft mobilization. There will be continued communication with all stakeholders.

School Committee Member Soule asked regarding the P1 website, when you launch it can you bring it to this group or make sure the community knows how to access it and explain it to them. Is it going to be translated into other languages? How will that

happen? The community needs to hear it. I keep seeing this, and I am not technology literate. For those of us who aren't, they need to be able to access it.

Mr. Saindon stated when it is ready to be launched, we will communicate with the Manchester School District to understand their chosen vehicle on how they can inform the district or the public. I can't comment how they will do that. As far as being able to interchange languages, I know that there is a way to do it. I don't know how to do that but it can be looked into.

School Committee Member Soule stated our communications director is here and I am sure they do this all the time. It is important that the community knows that, particularly the Beech Street community where they speak multiple languages; it is important for them to hear that.

Chairman O'Connell stated our communications director is actively involved in this development. We will be hearing news on this in the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Saindon stated since we are talking about the website, I should have indicated that Consigli will be rolling out two websites that they will manage. It is a very light website. It will be one website for Hillside and one website for McLaughlin where anyone can log on on Fridays for conversation at 12PM. There will be bullets with a high level update of what is going to happen that following week. There will be one for Hillside and one for McLaughlin. It is strictly just a website that I have utilized on other projects where anyone can log into it, but it is helpful for the neighborhood so they understand what is happening the following week. Just as an FYI, that will be rolled out within the next couple of weeks as well. At our meeting next month, I can login and show you visually the websites. For people to get an update on the Consigli websites, they have to log on every Friday. They won't get an email notification. They need to log on.

School Committee Member Soule stated questions have come up about when the groundbreaking for Beech Street will be. Do you have any idea?

Mr. Saindon answered no, I don't.

School Committee Member Soule stated that came from that particular ward and I said I would ask the question.

Mr. Saindon stated there have been discussions about a groundbreaking for each project site. There will be one for Hillside and one for McLaughlin. Probably in the month of May there will be a groundbreaking. Even though a contractor mobilizes in April, the groundbreaking doesn't have to take place. I like the CM to get acclimated and put up a fence. We are targeting one for Hillside and one for McLaughlin in May. Honestly, Beech has not even come on the radar yet, but there will be a groundbreaking for Beech.

School Committee Member Soule stated the people in that community want to hear that and have an understanding. They also probably have students at McLaughlin and/or Hillside, too.

Mr. Saindon stated we are in the process of doing some cleanup in the modulares regarding HVAC. At Beech, you will see the design has progressed forward about 20%. Programming is moving forward. The CM has been procured and we just need to execute the contract. For McLaughlin and Hillside, programming is done, the design is essentially done, the procurement is complete with Consigli, and you will see the bidding at 25% for both schools. That is representational of the steel, concrete, and windows. As far as Parkside and Southside, those are trailing along as what was originally projected in the schedule. Attached is a budget that I report every month. It is part of the package. This is the overall rollup of the budgets for all six projects. Within the report is a detailed budget for each of the six projects. This invoice log is different than the invoice log that was forwarded to you as part of your package. What was forwarded to you in your package doesn't include this because it wasn't finalized. This is technically not approved yet; it will be approved tomorrow. For transparency, I wanted to provide it as part of the slide deck. It will be approved tomorrow. Finance approval will be on the 20th and checks will be issued on the 21st. I wanted to provide a visual and chronological history of Hillside and McLaughlin's 75% estimate evolution and the end result. Going from left to right, you will see the Hillside and McLaughlin budget within the \$306 million project. Those two projects collectively are \$72.9 million. When the initial DD estimates came in, they were raw estimates. While they are important, they are raw estimates. You can see that it was over budget considerably. Then there was a period of project team review and scope clarification because when an estimate is done a lot of assumptions are made. Those assumptions were clarified and once that happened you can see that it was \$2.8 million over. Then there were buyout savings that were anticipated, because in parallel to these estimates being done Consigli was going out into the marketplace for steel, concrete, earthwork, and windows. While those buyouts are not solidified yet, we are anticipating that there will be savings of about \$1.1 million. Then we had an approval of value engineering that occurred two or three weeks ago that equated to about \$2.3 million. Long story short, we have these two projects back on budget. Technically, it is \$100,000 over budget. However, I did some percentages and that \$100,000 over budget when you are speaking about \$72.9 million, it is 0.14%. If you look at \$100,000 forecasted over budget within the \$306 million, it is 0.03%. We are going to be doing buyout for 17% within the next few weeks. I wanted to provide an update for transparency purposes.

Chairman O'Connell stated this issue came up at the Board of School Committee meeting last night. I gave a layman's response about the process by which you get estimates which are just estimates, and then they become more real and eventually you put something out to bid. If you are doing work on your house and you're building a new kitchen, you say you think it will be this but until the day you actually go and have the guy quote the price for the new floor you don't have the actual price. The other thing to note is the \$100,000 within contingency. We are working through the project. The \$306 million budget is not at risk. This doesn't mean the project is going to come in over budget.

Mr. Saindon stated that is a good point. We still have contingencies within the \$306 million. If I wanted to do fuzzy math, I could say we are taking \$100,000 from contingency and everything is on budget. I would rather report it. To me, when you are speaking about \$73 million, if you're targeting \$100,000 over budget but you still have 80% of the project to bid, in the grand scheme of things you are on budget.

Alderman Kantor stated as a small business owner I still don't understand how you don't specifically ask for what you want and then get the bid, instead of just having a big budget and then figuring it out. To me, it is very confusing.

Mr. Saindon replied I am sorry but I don't understand your question.

Alderman Kantor stated my question is, when you came up with the \$306 million you didn't have a specific design. You didn't know exactly what you wanted, whether it was tile floor or linoleum which is a huge difference between linoleum versus tile versus marble. Do you see what I am talking about as a homeowner and as a small business owner?

Mr. Saindon stated I do. The \$306 million was developed before LeftField got on board. I wanted to identify that, and it is identified within the first few sentences of every monthly report. We were not part of the development of the \$306 million. I will comment, and Ms. Soucy may want to comment, but prior to us getting on board there was an analysis done. There was a conceptual understanding and budgeting and programming, and understanding of what the square footages would be with the additions and what the renovations would be. It was not to a finite detail, but it is very common in the industry to do a conceptual analysis to develop your budget and then you continue to refine the scope always looking at that budget number that you need to hit. When the \$306 million was budgeted, not every decision, like flooring as an example, was decided upon. It is very common in the industry to do a conceptual design and come up with numbers and then manage the project to hit that number.

Alderman Kantor asked with the Beech Street property and the new community health center, is that included in the \$306 million.

Mr. Saindon stated I can't comment on the community health center. I will defer to Ms. Soucy if she knows anything about that.

Jen Soucy, Project Architect at SMMA, stated there is a community piece to it but whether it is labelled as a community health center I'm not sure.

Chairman O'Connell stated I don't think it would be called a community health center.

Alderman Kantor stated you know what I am talking about.

Chairman O'Connell responded I do. A couple of our schools are designated as community schools. That is how that school operates today. It is going to duplicate what is there today, but it is not like there is a school building opening and there is an entrance to the left for healthcare and people go there for healthcare. It is just a community school, and part of what it does is it looks after the health of the students. We have in the Manchester School District 65 nurses. Half of those are in schools and half are working one-on-one with students or whatever the programming might be. It turns out that in America nowadays, we have a lot of students who are medically vulnerable who need management during the day; students who require a nurse to be with them all hours of the day. A lot of that is going on in all of our schools. It is a

community school that is meant to be a community asset. Certainly, the idea is that people in the Beech Street area and in ward five will have access to a general area and would be able to use this building for community meetings and community events. That is a version of what we have today. Our problem today is we have schools that don't lend themselves to that. When you think about it from an investment point of view, we have gyms and cafeterias that are empty for 65% of the day and for 80% of the week. That is not a smart use of real estate. The idea in building these schools is that they be assets to the community, so that you don't end up with these schools having rooms sitting there empty. The idea is to duplicate what is at Beech Street today. There is nothing I am aware of that is new happening at Beech Street. Nothing new is happening that is being introduced.

Alderman Kantor asked what about additional cost.

Chairman O'Connell replied no. As far as cost is concerned and as far as staffing and programming, there is nothing new. What we are doing is duplicating what is in Beech Street today.

School Committee Member Soule stated being in the community school initiative, if you go to Beech Street, the community space is very small. It is assuring that the new building has enough space for the community and also assuring that our medical services and our nurses' offices are sufficient to meet the needs of students and have private spaces if need be. We need to assure that happens because when most of our schools were built the spacing was small for the nurses. There are no private spaces. This is assuring that we will have those spaces for our students and their families.

Alderman Kantor asked so there is no additional cost.

Chairman O'Connell answered no. There is no additional programming. It all starts from programming first. That was the original scope. I don't know about an analogy for small business, but maybe if you were remodeling your business tomorrow you would say how many stations and how many people am I going to have. Currently I have four, would it be better if I had six? Do they need more room or less? You start there on the back end. The problem is with a large project like this you can't do it on the back of an envelope. There are teams of people working on narrowing down these designs, scoping them out and looking at what is needed. There were meetings that have gone on between this team and many others who are not here, with principals and educators of all types – languages, math, science – in every building what do they need? How many students do we have? How many are we projected to have? What are their needs likely to be? What is the future going to look like? That is a whole process. If you were to do the method of narrowing everything down and then getting the budget, you'd have to get a budget for \$5 or \$10 million to spend on doing all the planning to get it down to the level of granite or concrete, and then you'd be sitting there asking what is my budget going to be. All I can say is what David said; this is the normal method by which you would design a set of buildings like this. The process is ongoing. At our meeting last night, as packages are sent out it is like when you sell your house. When you sell your house, people put it on the market and your realtor says I think it is worth \$500,000. It is worth whatever somebody is willing to pay for it. The best estimates of how much timber will cost can be as good or bad as you want them to be; they are only real when the

person says I will sell you timber for X amount. That is the point in which we are getting to. The good news is our numbers have been pretty good. What has come back is that we are seeing the numbers come in where they were expected to be but they have been honed down over time. The world doesn't stop either. We are in a dynamic environment. This building has gone on over three years. We have built-in estimates for certain escalations and costs over the three years because what an apple costs today won't cost the same in three years. All of that has to fit within the projects of the \$306 million. All of this is to make sure we bring this project in purposefully and get value for the taxpayers and have it be on time and under budget. I appreciate your comments because that is exactly the work we are going to assure we get. There will be groundbreakings in the first week of April. For the first time, people will see cranes and earthwork and things moving and men and women with hard-hats doing work. It will get a little more exciting. The first week of April is when we expect to see projects begin. The groundbreaking may happen in May, which is a different thing. I was referring to if you go to McLaughlin in the first, second, or third week of April, I expect to see fences going up, trailers, workers arriving, and somebody is moving the first piece of earth. I hope that helps and thank you for the input.

Mr. Saindon stated I want to provide a conceptual and condensed schedule. Within the monthly report there is probably anywhere from three to four pages of 500 line items that make up a schedule for any particular project. I joke that it is like giving someone a phone book. I wanted to provide just a high-level schedule for Group 1 – April 1 there will be mobilization. You can see the addition for Hillside will be about sixteen months. There will be exterior site work, landscaping, and then the way Consigli is tackling the renovation portion of Hillside there will be three summer sessions. For McLaughlin, same concept but less duration. The addition is about twelve months. It is a significantly smaller addition. There will be two summer sessions. That is Group 1. Group 2 there is a possible early start date TBD. Southside and Parkside's projects are not as far developed. We need to have more communication with Harvey to find out what is the most cost-effective timing to start those projects. Being conservative, I am showing spring of next year. An addition of fifteen months, maybe sixteen, depending on when they mobilize. This is based on them mobilizing May 1, not April. They are tackling the renovation work once the addition is completed. That will act as swing space. Same concept for Parkside, but obviously slightly different because it is a smaller addition. These are some high-level schedules. I can update these from month to month to make it more granular once certain things are solidified. For Beech, same thing. I have possible early start, but being conservative they would mobilize in spring of next year. The duration of the new Beech school is essentially 24 months. It could be a shorter duration. You have FFE and tech, occupancy, abatement/demo, and the Beech Street – the existing quadrant – site restoration. That would happen in 2028. As the Group 2 construction manager Harvey gets more acclimated to the project and looking at the Beech Street work plan and the deliverables from SMMA, the schedule will adjust accordingly.

Chairman O'Connell stated when you look at the Beech Street site restoration work, that happens substantially through 2028. That will be done in coordination with the Department of Public Works. This is the piece that delivers whatever will be where the current Beech Street School is. There are decisions there that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen will be involved in, and then the Department of Public Works.

Alderman Kantor asked looking at the timeline, May 2025 to 2028, is that what it is.

Mr. Saindon replied for Beech it is May 2026.

Alderman Kantor asked so you are not starting before May 2026.

Mr. Saindon replied possibly. It could be fall of this year, but that is not a guarantee.

Alderman Kantor asked do you have plans, since it will take two-plus years, on where the kids are going to play.

Mr. Saindon stated that is not delineated here, but that would be part of the agreement that was done with the BMA where basketball courts will be incorporated and so forth. That is out of the scope; I don't have it mapped out here.

Chairman O'Connell stated let's take the basketball courts as an example. Before anything is taken from where it is now, there will be something else in place. That is the agreement; there will be no loss of time. Ultimately, the city through DPW, will drive a lot of this about exactly where they would like to see something. DPW is at all meetings on a weekly basis and is deeply involved in this. They are very aware of everything. Your point is a good one. The idea is not to do construction and then after two years say ok here is the stuff you need. That work will happen, or part of it, prior to the construction of the actual building.

Alderman Kantor responded thank you. I am just concerned that the kids get to play.

Mr. Saindon stated that would fall under an early enabling. As Harvey mobilizes, whatever has to be implemented so there is no loss or significant loss of play, that would be implemented first before they tear down or commandeer the existing basketball court.

Chairman O'Connell stated I don't want to get wrapped around the axle on this topic, but when I talk about the city deciding where it will live up to and meet the work that was outlined to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and what was in the FAQs, when you look at the basketball courts, and I don't know who is equipped in this room to talk about it in great detail, but I know for the existing basketball courts there was talk about enhancing those and making those full-sized. The city shouldn't go and build four basketball courts where only two are needed just because we are going to. There is some question about that. I know there is an understanding between the district and the city about how it is going to work. People are very cognizant about the idea that kids would not be disenfranchised.

Alderman Kantor stated it is so important, movement and playing, because it keeps kids healthy and it keeps the community healthy, and then we have less sickness.

Chairman O'Connell stated I think we can all unite on that topic. Keeping healthy kids and having movement and exercise and fresh air, those are all good things. And these buildings are delivering some of that when you see some of the outdoor learning spaces

that are included in these schools. Kids will actually get to go outside during part of the day; it is a big thing.

School Committee Member Turner stated when we were talking about the community school, one of the big points of a community school is that the classrooms are secured from the community. The community will have access to the gym, cafeteria, auditorium, lecture spaces, etc. It will be accessible to the community. Currently our schools, in Hillside for example, if you go there to watch a basketball game the building is also accessible to the community in ways that it shouldn't be. Crafting a community school with the intention for it to be a community school allows the opportunity for the community to gain all that access that Chairman O'Connell is talking about in times when our students aren't there for classes. The community can use that space without compromising the security of the classrooms and the teachers' space.

Mr. Saindon stated there have been very robust discussions and steering of the design for Beech. The term I used in the industry is a civic wing, and then an academic wing. Not that they are wings but civic and academic, even to the point where there can be a separate entrance for the gym. We understand the gym is heavily used on the weekends. I have been part of many meetings where very detailed discussions about security and safety and not having the school open to the public in off hours. If they come in, they are in a certain quadrant of the building.

School Committee Member Turner stated to reiterate what you are saying, I would eat my hat if I found anyone on the Board of School Committee that was not in favor of having play space for the students. I would not worry in the least about that. I can't imagine that I would have to eat my hat on that. We are all pulling on the same rope there.

Chairman O'Connell stated there is a lot more that could be said just when we talk about security. A lot of the buildings, not so much Beech Street because I think Beech Street is an example of a place where you go to one entrance to get in and get out. One of the challenges in Manchester is security. We have buildings that are difficult to secure. They were built in a time when there weren't threats that we have today. They have become difficult or expensive to secure. You can put electronics in place, but sometimes you have to put people in place. It constricts what we are able to do and what programming we can have. One of the things that happens in these five buildings, the four middle schools and Beech Street, is they are being designed with an eye towards 21st Century security and the actual threats that exist today. Thank you for your continued work. As I have said, these are exciting times for our community and for the City of Manchester. I am confident we will deliver these projects on time and under budget. It will be kudos to everybody in the room.

2. Monthly status and financial report for February 2025 submitted by LeftField.

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

*There being no further business, on motion of **School Committee Member Soule**, duly seconded by **School Committee Member Turner**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

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

Clerk of Committee