

BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN

April 1, 2025 at 7:00 PM

Mayor Ruais called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Morgan, Long, Fajardo, T. Sapienza, Kantor, Levasseur,
Terrio, E. Sapienza, Burkush, Barry, Vincent, Thomas

Absent: Aldermen Goonan, O'Neil

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.

Mackenzie Verdiner, 539 Silver Street, stated:

After reading the Ink Link and the Union Leader, I wanted to express my concerns for the school funding. I am a youth organizer with the Granite State Organizing Project so I am in the schools and with high schoolers a lot, twice a week. The stories they tell me are drastic and appalling. The kids are chewing on spoiled milk. The paint is falling off the walls in their schools. There are constant bussing issues. The kids are telling me that their books are literally falling apart in their hands and from my understanding, the school board asked for about \$13 million and what was proposed is \$2 million. I understand that the schools are funded from different resources but I just wish the students were on the list of city priorities along with Fire and Police. In fact, I think that our students should be our top priority considering that the smarter our kids are, the smarter our adults will be. An investment in our schools will strengthen our

communities and I just really hope that the Board of Aldermen recognize that. Thank you.

Jessica Spillers, 73 Jobin Drive, stated:

I am the school board rep for Ward 8. I am here to talk about the school budget and to express my disdain and frustration with what has been proposed by our mayor. This is the same issue as what we had with Phase I of the long-term facilities plan. Our mayor had plenty of opportunities to express concern and ask questions but he didn't. In fact, in the meeting where we approved the superintendent's budget, he voted in favor. Then later he comes along and proposes a budget that cuts that budget by \$9.5 million. Just like with the land transfer, he says one thing and does another. \$9.5 million is the cut. Magic math and circuitous explanation isn't going to change that. The \$6.5 million that repeatedly gets brought into play is for school lunches. It wasn't a handout from the DOE because they had extra money lying around. That money had quite literally already been eaten the year before. We need to stop including it in these discussions. I can't do a whole lot more as a school board member at this point other than advocate and urge all of you to do the same. You are all one vote. Just because the mayor has proposed this budget doesn't mean you have to agree to it. You can negotiate and fight on behalf of our students and our educators. The aldermen are the checks and balance on the mayor's power. The city and I expect you to do your job.

Brittany Ping, 199 Putnam Street, stated:

I wear a lot of hats and I am coming to you as a property manager. I have been working in affordable housing. I work with lots of people under the area median income. I have properties that are parts of those agreements where we agree to do that for a specific period of time. I am super familiar with all of this fun stuff and I know that Jay talked to you time and time and time again and I have talked to this Board time and time again. There is one thing that has decreased the affordability of our apartments over the past four years and that was the property reassessments in 2021. In September 2021, the first BMA meeting after those assessor letters dropped, this Board, which was not all of you and I do understand but they were shocked and said it was crazy and asked why the property values went up so much and said people were calling them and freaking out. I am here right now to tell you if it looks like four years ago, right now your house

sales for the next 12 months are the basis for our reassessment which is a requirement every five years. So for the duplex I owner occupy, that is going to be about \$700,000. I sold my multi-family home after I did not increase rents after the reassessments. I owner occupied a three-family for seven years and I had to sell it because I didn't increase my rents because I thought I am a good landlord and I don't need to do it. Well guess what? I couldn't afford it anymore. Nobody on this Board voted. It is not a thing that you guys have control over. It is the market. It was a 15.16% increase overnight. Your mortgage companies don't like that. Your insurance companies don't like that. I would love to speak to any of you in detail about what insurance companies are doing right now about rebuild cost on multi-family homes. My office is connected to a Queen Victorian. Insurance just came back and said that property is now worth \$2 million. It is a four-family on the west side. This is peak workforce housing. This is what is coming down the line. So when you look at the mayor's budget and you say oh my gosh how dare you, how dare you is correct. That is not enough. We are going to suffer with these reassessments. Once again we are going to see a shift from commercial to residential and it is going to be unbearable. We have a chance to say enough is enough and Jay I know I have talked to you up, down, back and sideways. This is a big deal. You don't have to vote for it but you need to be aware because your multi-families are going for \$700,000, \$800,000 and \$900,000 for a three-family. What is the rent on that? \$3,000 per unit. You don't vote on that. It is done by the market. It affects everything. Please when you are looking at the budget say how is this going to affect our renters and you have to start at zero and walk yourself down. Thank you.

Rick Blais, 735 Chestnut Street, stated:

Tonight I want to talk to you about taking a stance against the two-year term we have talked about. I know it has been floating all over the place lately but really look at placing that question on changing the city's charter on the ballot so the voters can vote on it rather than the aldermen. This mindset of we have always done it this way...I have run many businesses over my lifetime and that is the kiss of death for anything. There needs to be change and there needs to be innovation. If you don't have it, it is going to kill our growth. Other cities in our state have adopted four year terms in other areas and if you look at their downtowns they are vitalized and clean and homeless free and a place you want to go to. I think Manchester can get there very easily. Longer terms are

going to allow you leaders to focus on real solutions rather than short-term politics going from one election cycle to another. It would provide stability to tackle critical issues like downtown revitalization, housing, school projects; all things that go into an election cycle, get stopped and then picked up by a new Board and sometimes Mayor and it is back to ground zero again. I think a four-year term would be healthy for the city and the voters. Let's be honest. Voters are tired of political gridlock. All of you guys are doing a wonderful job but in politics you know, every one of you here, that it is a cycle. When you get two years, you figure things out in a month or two and then you get to work and make some good decisions and then all of the sudden that first year is done and you have to go into election mode otherwise you won't get the funding you need. To me, it only makes sense to give the voters the chance to vote on this and look at the outcome because what we have been doing hasn't been working as a city. Housing crisis. For the past 20 years we have known about it. NH Housing Finance does a tremendous job on that. For over 20 years I have gone to their annual meeting and they have shown the problems down the road. This isn't a secret. This isn't something we didn't know 10, 15 or 20 years ago. We knew it was coming. Those who know me know that I have been talking about it for that long. Elm Street revitalization remains unfinished. We are making inroads. It is cleaner now and a little bit better but I walked here tonight and I am looking at holes in the sidewalk on Elm Street. This is the Queen City. It is one thing if it is in my neighborhood and I trip and fall but to trip and fall on Elm Street makes no sense. What I am looking for is for you guys to vote in the positive and pass this so we can get a vote on it tonight to put it on the next ballot in November so we can go from two-year to four-year terms and let the voters vote on changing the charter to make that happen. Thank you very much and I do appreciate all you guys do to make the city a better place.

Gavin Telfer, 98 Sagamore Street, stated:

I am here to state that as a concerned Manchester resident and parent of children in the public schools, I reject the \$9.5 million cut to the school district budget recently proposed by the mayor. Like many of my fellow citizens, I visited this building a number of times over the last few months to reiterate a common theme. Who we are as a city is reflected in the value that we place on education. We cannot be a great city if we don't value the education of our young people. The opportunity for kids to have a good

education is an essential service. One of many essential services we should support? Certainly, but an essential service. These cuts will have a year's long negative impact on the quality of education and supports our students will receive. Make no mistake. Our children will pay the price for these decisions. Mayor Ruais I urge you to go back to the drawing board and reconsider the full amount approved by the Board of School Committee. Please listen to the 14 elected school board members who were voted in to be voices for our schools. You have a great opportunity not to view the support for our kids' education as one of every dwindling scarcity but instead as a chance to provide an abundance of support to our children. Thank you.

Rich Girard, 283 Orange Street, stated:

What is election mode? You heard about election mode. As somebody who served in two-year offices like all of you, I consider election mode being that time when we are most closely working with and speaking to our constituents. I think it is probably a good idea in this city and this state to have two-year elections so that you can continue to always have to speak to your constituents in the event that a course correction is needed. I think a comment made by Alderman Long on this question of whether or not the election scheme in Manchester should be changed illustrates my point: "I have noticed throughout the years I have been here that votes are different when it is an election year and that is not in the best interest of the city in my opinion. Like this year is an election year and I will notice that votes are going to be different. They would vote differently if it was not an election year and I think that is an issue." The question is why would a member of this Board, august as it is, vote any differently in an election year than they would in a non-election year? In fact, I think we can probably look back at tax cap override history and see that they tend to happen in the off years right. It is because you don't want to face your constituents off a fresh vote on the budget three months before an election. So two years is about accountability and while I appreciate the comments by Mr. Blais who is a long-time friend and someone who has been active in this city for a long time doing good work, I don't see where four year terms are going to allow any greater traction for the things that need to happen here in this city. I am actually agnostic on the question as to whether or not it should go to the ballot.

Alderman Fajardo said that she thinks two years are important but she is not going to stand in the way of the voters having their say. If we were to follow that logic, there are

a couple of things I would like this Board to consider putting on the ballot as well. One of them would be restoring partisan elections. I don't have time to present the research that I have done on this but one thing that non-partisan elections in this city have done is immensely strengthen incumbency. The number of incumbents running for reelection who are defeated in this city since non-partisan elections went into effect...the last time I looked there were about 240 races and I evaluated there were fewer than 5 incumbents that got knocked out of office. That was from the time they went to non-partisan to the 2015 elections. That tells you about the power of incumbency in a non-partisan system. People should know what party somebody stands with whether you think it is right or wrong. It is a critical piece of voter information and it allows the parties to rally their troops. The other thing I would like to see this Board put on the ballot is whether or not the Manchester School District should again be a department. A law was passed back in 2003 that enabled the city to do that after the voters said in a charter amendment that they wanted the district to be a department. There was a legal issue with that and I will take my last few seconds here to read the one sentence law that passed that I think you should use to put the question on the ballot and that is "the City of Manchester, NH may incorporate the school district as a department of the city and the mayor shall have control over the form and procedures for preparation and adoption of the school department budget." Imagine if this Board or the mayor had some oversight over the form and preparation of the school department budget? Music to my ears folks. I served in that system and it worked pretty well.

Glenn RJ Ouellette, 112 Auburn Street, stated:

I have been living there almost 25 years right here in the downtown and the downtown definitely concerns me. The downtown is the center of our city. In the last five or so years I have seen so much destruction in the downtown. In the last few weeks I see that you are redoing the sidewalks. They need to be done but are we going to rebeautify the area that was destroyed at the park on both sides of the street? We do have problems. We do have problems with people that commit crimes but if we did a better job at lighting the streets...this downtown here in Manchester is very dark compared to many other downtowns. Today when I passed by the hotel across from Veteran's Park, I noticed that all of the lighting that was there that made it so bright in that area blocked that broken window. The window was sealed and there was less

chance of crime because when the police drive by they can see right through the park. It is gone. Now Your Honor according to your new budget, you want to put lights on the trees that would benefit our community and our businesses. It would look cleaner, brighter and more like a downtown that has life. Why did we remove those because you are only going to have to put them back up and that costs money? I hope that the lighting that you have here in front of City Hall does not go away either. Food. The federal government is thinking about taking away \$1 billion nationally for school lunch. We have a large amount of students that use free school lunch. When you do your budget, are you going to consider that? A student who does not eat is not very smart. The last thing I want to say is that for the last four months there have been blocks of streets with no lights at all. The streetlight by the Salvation Army...all the lights on that block have been off for four months. It is time we turn them back on. We pay for those lights. Why does it take so much time? There are so many lights throughout this city that are not on. Please do something to fix that to keep the city safe. Thank you.

Ryan Drohan, Porter Street, stated:

During the February 6, 2024 BMA meeting, the Board approved applying for the grant for 12 firefighters. Alderman Levasseur asked the Fire Chief to get this on record that the 12 firefighters would replace, through attrition and retirement, pretty much a 1:1 by the end of the grant and not cost the city taxpayers any money. Why does the mayor's budget allocate \$200,000 a year? That is a complete about face. If this is approved, that says to all of the department heads it is okay to say one thing to the public on record and then do an about face, aka lie. That shows the rotten corruption from the top down at City Hall.

Sue Corby, 2094 Elm Street, stated:

I am here once again to advocate for the schools for a sound and fair budget. The budget you have presented, the cuts in that budget are just way too far for our schools. I ask you and the rest of the Board of Aldermen to return to the drawing board and find a budget that adequately funds our schools. I know that there has been a lot of opposition to the long-term facilities plan, especially to rebuilding Beech Street School but given that, we are not going to correct that by underfunding the schools now. Yes, bricks and mortar many of you have said don't make a school system, but you have to

fund the teachers in the school system and you have to fund the books and you have to fund the programs that are needed. That is going to be even more severe with the federal cuts that seem to be coming. So, in the end, people will simply say okay you got your building but you haven't improved anything and the education still is not good because we are not funding that education within that building. This \$9.5 million cut is way too much. I am not advocating to go over the tax cap. We have a tax cap for a reason. I know that doesn't mean we have to spend up to it but the school side will have inflation costs that the rest of the city has and that is what the tax cap is supposed to do; keep the spending at an inflationary level, at least as I understand it. The residents of Manchester have voted on a school board member in each ward and that board has unanimously supported the long-term facilities plan and this current budget. If the taxpayers, the people in this city don't like what the schools are doing, they can vote out the school board members in their district and say to them your plans are far too expensive and vote somebody else in. That doesn't seem to be happening. The school board has functioned well together. I think it is well thought of and doing a great job and I think we need to continue to support the schools. I know it is a tough position for a mayor to be in and I respect that and I thank you for all you can do and ask all of you to get back to the drawing board on this.

Julie Turner, Ray Street, stated:

I am here tonight to comment on the recently revealed FY26 proposed budget. As a parent of three students in the Manchester school district and a taxpayer, I reject any cuts to the unanimously approved proposed Board of School Committee budget. This budget cut of \$9.5 million will stymie the advances we are making in our schools. It is a critical time in our city to double down on our efforts to support our students, staff, teachers, administrators, nurses, bus drivers and facilities. As the mayor stated just last year, a child's success is not solely determined by the confines of the classroom but it is deeply impacted by the external forces that we can help address. I could not agree more. In order for Manchester to help our students succeed, we need the full appropriation so that we are not just simply educating our children but are providing those essential services that our families depend on. This \$9.5 million cut does, in fact, cross that red line and will negatively impact the long-term health of our district. Mr. Mayor, during your budget presentation you mentioned that the Manchester residents

deserve robust foundational components like police to answer calls, fire to respond quickly to emergencies and DPW to keep our streets paved and trash collected. Are fully funded public schools not foundational components? I would say so but you did not add that to your list. You also mentioned in your proposal that it is important our city employees receive market competitive pay that would fill vacancies and attract and retain employees. I could not agree more. Is the same not true for the Manchester public schools? Does a \$9.5 million cut help us attract and retain the best teachers? Does it tell our teaching staff that things are looking good for the next round of contract negotiations? Does it tell potential new hires that our district wants to recruit and retain the best? No, it does not. It has them dusting off their resumes and applying to surrounding towns. If Manchester truly is the hottest housing market in the U.S. and one of the best cities in which to live, then why wouldn't we fully invest in our public schools? Why would we give people any reason to pause and consider living in a surrounding town because we under invested in our public schools. As the Chair of the School Board, what do you suggest we cut? Perhaps a savings could be found if we cut the \$6.5 million from textbooks, supplies and equipment or maybe we stop paying for our city services to the tune of \$9.7 million? Forego paying our utilities and save \$3.4 million? As you know, we cannot patch this huge hole using our expendable trusts. Those trusts are earmarked for explicit use like health care and special education and are to be used as one-time funds, not to pay out in salaries and benefits. Nor can those funds be used in upcoming teacher negotiations. Those are in case of extraordinary expenses like a special education who is added to our roster that has a need for a one-on-one nurse or paraprofessional, special transportation and equipment or all of the above. I ask you tonight to please reconsider the devastating cut to our school district. When you give our Manchester students a tour of your office and tell them that the sky is the limit, I want them to know that you mean it.

Debbie Howe, 390 Ray Street, stated:

I have two children that have gone to Manchester schools. I am beyond disappointed in the mayor's proposed budget eliminating \$9.5 million in funding for the school district. I urge you all to go back to the drawing board. The budget presented and approved unanimously by the School Board, including the mayor, was tax cap compliant and allows the district to continue the important work of improving student outcomes in our

district. Last year's tax cap compliant proposed school district budget was cut by \$4.2 million. To cut another \$9 million this year is short-changing our students over time and eliminating the tax cap revenue that the district so heavily relies upon. The students in our district deserve better than this. Thank you for your consideration.

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

There are a number of things to talk about so I will try to be brief. There is a proposal for you tonight that would extend the terms of aldermen and the mayor and right now, as you well know, you serve two-year terms. Under the proposal, you would serve four-year terms. I strongly advise against this. At the local level, four years is a really long time. Politicians need to be held accountable to voters and right now every two years the voters have a chance to change course if they see fit or to say the course. I think the people deserve to have a say every two years and at the end of the day, increasing the length of your terms would take away the peoples' voice. Onto the budget. I didn't hear anything about the Manchester Animal Shelter in the mayor's budget address last Thursday. When the aldermen present their alternative budget, I hope they can take into account certain revenues that the mayor cannot consider in his initial budget proposal. I would really encourage the aldermen to consider adding a line item to support the Manchester Animal Shelter's great work. To be honest, it would be a win-win. People love puppies and kittens and you would get to go on record supporting puppies and kittens in an election year. I think we vote different in election years so we will see if that is true. Last but not least, I wanted to talk about the school budget. In your budget proposal, Mayor Ruais, you said you were reducing the school board's tax cap compliant budget by a whopping \$9.5 million. I noticed that in your address you didn't specify why you chose to provide less funding for our schools than requested, nor did you specify which programs or line items you think are worth cutting in the school budget. So, Mayor Ruais, what after school activities or educational programs do you want to cut? Are you expecting the school district to just figure it out based on what they had planned? Do you want them to figure it out on their own? You do serve on the School Board so hopefully you can have some ideas, bring them to the table and take responsibility for this planning that is really important. I agree that we have to balance things but if you are going to try to balance things, instead of just looking at the top line and cutting and letting everyone else figure it out, I would say get your hands dirty and

do the work. Maybe the answers will be in your budget book once it is released. The last thing I will say is this. To implement broad budget cuts without a detailed plan is fiscally conservative but it is not fiscally responsible in my opinion. Thanks for your time.

Dan Mason, 1053 S. Beech Street, stated:

I come to you tonight as a homeowner for 18 years and a father of two sons, one a 7th grader at Southside Middle School and a four-year-old who will be going to Highland Gaffes Falls soon enough. The reason I come to you tonight is about the school budget. I would urge you to accept the school budget as proposed by the school committee. My 7th grader really enjoys his time at Southside and takes advantage of a lot of the extracurricular activities that the school offers including band, track and soccer. I know that when schools are not adequately funded, some of the first things to go are the extracurriculars that the students really enjoy and enhances their learning. I would hate to see those things taken away from my son and the other students. The other issue I want to bring up is about bussing. To begin the school year, my 7th grader's bus time was 6:55 AM. After a couple of months, some issues caused a change with a consolidation of routes and now he gets picked up at 6:25 AM. He is not the first student on the bus. That means he has to get up between 5 AM and 5:30 AM just to get to school on time. I would say that is not putting our students in a position to succeed at school or giving the enough time to sleep. Again, with insufficient funding, I worry about busing getting even worse. I would encourage you to accept the school committee's proposed budget and also to use your power as the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the state's largest city to encourage the state to provide more education funding for us. As we know, the funding comes from a variety of sources. Local funding comes from property taxes so that is on the backs of all of us specifically but funding from the state comes from a lot of resources including the lottery, and business taxes so getting more money from the state would really help out the city and help out our students and make it better for all of us. Thank you. I appreciate your time.

Chris Potter, 470 Silver Street, stated:

I also sit on the School Board representing Ward 7. I want to share some good news about the district's success. Class sizes are down and despite the 6:25 AM departure,

transit is becoming more reliable. Our facilities are improving. We are providing attendance and behavior supports for our students and as a result, proficiency is up in reading and math and graduation rates are up. At the same time though, our costs are going up. We have COLAs the same as you do. Our SROs are 5% up. Utilities, supplies, insurance all are up 3% or more. Salaries is where costs are really blowing up for us this year. That is in large part because we took over 40 nurses off the city side onto the school side. We also brought our transit in-house and behavior techs in-house. Even though that is making the salary line item go way up, we are actually saving money on those because they used to be contracted services. We are looking for savings too. Transit saves a bunch of money. We did a staff reorg at the district level that is saving over \$200,000. I want to say that you proposed a 1.94% tax cap number if I remember correct. If you give us that 1.94%, we could make cuts that would make it work. It wouldn't be pretty but we could do it. It would mean deferring maintenance so no new playgrounds and no paving of parking lots. We could close vacant positions that have been sitting open. We could end some of our Covid recovery programs. It wouldn't be good, but we can do it. If you actually cut the school district budget by \$9.5 million, it is going to get a lot worse. You cut the easy stuff first. If you get to \$9.5 million, it is going to be really painful. We are talking about lay-offs. We are talking about buying out our most veteran teachers to get them to retire early and extending the bussing radius from 1.4 miles so that now if you live 1.6 or 1.7 miles away you have to walk. We are talking about cutting extracurriculars. As a result, proficiency rates are going to go down and don't look at us. Graduation rates are going to go down. This budget is not what is best for our students. This budget is politically expedient but throws our kids under the bus. I just hope that there are eight of you here who support our kids.

Christine Seibert, 96 Eve Street, stated:

I am a state representative for Ward 1. I was just coming up here tonight to first reiterate about the schools. Yes, we need to fully fund our schools. As a taxpayer who actually does not have children in the schools, I expect my tax money to go to fully fund our public schools so our children can get a good education and that we have oversight over them. There are a lot of other programs going forward in the state where there is literally no oversight on where my money goes and that is a huge problem and I am not

sure how that will work for everybody politically on the doors come this summer unless you just straight out lie about it. I also came out about the requested \$750,000 tax break for the Brady Sullivan project. I just wanted to add in that first of all the units don't seem to be that affordable and that is an incentive we should be leaving on the table for those particular projects. Second of all, I would just like to say that we have other projects such as the infrastructure one in regards to the sewer which needs to be done by the way. That is something that we do not need to apologize for because we are literally dumping crap into the river and it is backing up into people's homes which is disgusting and unhealthy and not okay. With those things on the table, companies like that and they do wonderful work but anything that is creating those projects adds more stress to the infrastructure over time. It is obvious that everyone has to pay their fair share when it comes to that so it seems appropriate that at this time that is not really a viable option. Thank you.

Ken Tasse, Ward 6, stated:

There are three things I would like to address. Two very briefly and one is panhandling in our city. This is really out of my concern and I am sure it is a concern of others and that is not simply that people are panhandling or begging on corners in our city but that the safety of those individuals, regardless of what brought them to that point in their lives...I sat at a red light recently at a busy intersection where a car had run over a stop sign across the median because someone was not looking and all we need to have in this city is one of these individuals who are out there asking for money on street corners have an encounter with an out of control vehicle during an ice storm or what have you. My second item is that I would like to voice my support against the increase in the term of the aldermen. My third item is regarding the school budget. It has been mentioned tonight and someone quoted those who had opposed the long-term facilities plan saying that brick and mortar doesn't make a school system so we need to fund the education. It was also requested of this Board to go back to the drawing board and revise the budget cut. It was also mentioned tonight that if you support our kids you should vote against this budget cut. I would say to those people and to anyone that was on the school board during the vote for Phase I and Phase II of the long-term facilities plan and anyone who supported that initiative, that they have relinquished their credibility in this argument. They certainly have the right to say what they want to say and have the

opinion and views that they have but moving 20% of Phase I would equate to \$60 million; 20% of the combined Phase I and II would equate to I believe \$200 million. Where could that money have been better spent if it had been thought out during the deliberations to vote by those 14 people in the last school board who voted for both of those? I support these cuts. We all want the kids to have everything that they need but I think that they should go back to the drawing board and find another way to move some of the money that has been earmarked for those school projects. Even 10% is \$100 million. Find another way to spend that money that benefits the kids and the teachers and improves the performance of our schools. Thank you.

*On motion of **Alderman E. Sapienza**, duly seconded by **Alderman Barry**, it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.*

CONSENT AGENDA

Accept BMA Minutes

2. Minutes from the March 4 BMA and March 18 BMA & Finance meetings.

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

3. 50/50 Sidewalk Petitions

Residential:

- 10 Lamonte Street
- 43 Medford Street

Commercial:

- 826 Beech Street

4. Green Streets Tree Canopy Program

- 190 Oak Hill Ave (1) Private Property
- 354 Paquette Ave (1) Private Property
- 195 W. Haven Rd (2) Private Property

Ratify & Confirm Phone Poll

5. Authorize the City Clerk to schedule a public hearing on April 1, 2025, at 6:30PM for a Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive Application, RSA 79-E, for the property at 1555 Elm Street.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTS, ENROLLMENT AND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

6. Advising that the Finance Department reports:
 - Accounts receivable over 90 days
 - Aging report
 - Outstanding receivableshave been accepted.
(Unanimous vote)
7. Advising that the Monthly Financial Report (unaudited) for the first eight months of fiscal year 2025 has been accepted.
(Unanimous vote)
8. Advising that the update on the Revolving Loan Fund has been accepted.
(Unanimous vote)
9. Recommending that Ordinance Amendments:

"Amending Chapter 52: Sewers of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Manchester by amending Section 52.160 Sewer Rental Charges to increase the user charges in the City of Manchester."

"An Ordinance repealing Sections 32.025 through 32.035 relating to the Arts Commission and replacing Sections 32.025 through 32.035."

ought to pass and be Enrolled.
(Unanimous vote)

COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS

10. Recommending that the request from the Information Systems Department for approval of the Administrative Password Policy, Departmental Network Security Policy, General Network Security Policy, Password Construction Guidelines, Scada System Access Policy, and Security Breach Incident Response Procedure be approved.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Alderman Thomas who was absent)

COMMITTEE ON LANDS AND BUILDINGS

12. Recommending that the request from Fuss & O'Neil for approval of an agreement to allow encroachment into the city's right-of-way on Merrimack Street (Tax Map 73, Lots 30A and 31) be approved.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Aldermen Thomas and Goonan who were absent)

*HAVING READ THE CONSENT AGENDA, ON MOTION OF **ALDERMAN E. SAPIENZA**, DULY SECONDED BY **ALDERMAN BURKUSH**, THE CONSENT AGENDA WAS APPROVED.*

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS

- 11.** Advising that it has no recommendation regarding possible amendments to the City Charter related to municipal elections.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Alderman Thomas who was absent)

Mayor Ruais stated this is the terms for municipal elections that we were talking about. The item that I want to speak to is the moving of the primary date. As I am sure folks saw, up in Concord recently there was a vote of 337-1 to move the primary date for the state from September to the second week in June. I think for logistical purposes and for the City Clerk's Office to have to conduct an election with only 45-50 days between September and November and for candidates, it makes more sense to have a longer general election than a short period of time to turn around after a primary. I would propose that we align with the state and move our primary from September to June and put that question forward to the city.

Alderman Long stated we are not sure where that is going to land. I know the Senate voted to start in 2026 and the House voted to start in 2027. I don't know if it would be premature to do that. I know that the Secretary of State liked August. I think the June date is going to stick but I am not sure what year it is going to start. I hope it starts in 2027 and not next year. We also have to consider the Clerk's budget because there will be three elections because June is the end of our fiscal year and there will be an election then.

Matthew Normand, City Clerk, stated that was part of the reason we had spoken about potentially moving to a June election. We are not adding elections but we are going to add elections to a fiscal year, particularly in 2028 when we have the Presidential. We will have four elections if we do nothing today. It is about a \$450,000 line just for elections in our budget, which is nearly half our budget. I think it is something prudent to consider. As Alderman Long said, it is undecided. Where that is going to fall and

whether it is going to be 2026 or 2027, I know that House Bill 481 had a pretty strong show of support for calendar year 2027 being the effective date which would give us some time if the Board wanted to think about it. I would also tell you it is a lengthy process to do a Charter amendment. If the Board wanted to pursue something like that, we could come back to the Board or Committee on Administration with some language on what it would look like and then take a vote. This Board has until June 3 to make a decision on whether to go forward with the ballot initiative so there is time to discuss this.

Mayor Ruais stated my suggestion would be to refer just this item of moving the municipal primary and maybe the Clerk could work up some language for the Administration Committee.

City Clerk Normand replied I can work with the Solicitor and come back with some proposed language for moving the municipal primary to June.

*On motion of **Alderman Levasseur**, duly seconded by **Alderman E. Sapienza**, it was voted to refer the proposed charter amendment regarding moving the municipal primary election date to the Committee on Administration/Information Systems.*

***Alderman Long** moved to send to the voters the question of four-year terms for mayor and at-large aldermen.*

Mayor Ruais asked are you referring to all 14 members.

Alderman Long replied no I am referring to the mayor and at-large positions. I would like to have the Clerk start the process because he has to check with the AG and the Secretary of State. I would like to have him start the process for getting that question to the voters.

There was no second to the motion.

REGULAR BUSINESS

- 13.** Communication from Randall Nielsen advising the Board of his resignation as a member of the Arts Commission.

*On motion of **Alderman Fajardo**, duly seconded by **Alderman Long**, it was voted to accept the resignation with regret.*

- 14.** Confirmation:

Senior Services Commission

Adam Langlois to fill a vacancy as a regular member, term to expire
January 1, 2028

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

- 15.** Application for a Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive, RSA 79-E, for 1555 Elm Street.

***Alderman Long** moved to approve for a period of five years. **Alderman Terrio** duly seconded the motion. Mayor Ruais called for a vote. The motion carried with Alderman Fajardo duly recorded in opposition.*

- 16.** Amendment to the lease agreement between 39 Beech St, LLC and the City of Manchester for use of the building located at 39 Beech Street until August 31, 2025.

***Alderman Burkush** moved to approve the amendment. **Alderman Barry** duly seconded the motion.*

Alderman Vincent stated I am going to approve this measure because I get where we are getting the money. I just want it to be known, and I have said this many times before, 39 Beech is a crutch that we continue to lay on and I just feel there has to be a time when we have to figure this out because we are going to be talking about this...we are not going to talk about it in July, we are going to talk about it in August and it is going to put us on the spot to make a decision and that is not fair to the taxpayers or to

us as aldermen. I do ask that the mayor try to work this into discussion long before we have to make a last-minute decision.

Mayor Ruais stated I fully appreciate where you are coming from and I know we have had conversations about this offline. What I tried to talk about in my budget address was that I think we have taken a number of really important steps both on the law enforcement side and addressing the drivers and on the transitional housing and housing side. I chose the words carefully about over the next 12 months or 9 months that I believe we see an end to this need for emergency sheltering. I just said I don't think we are there yet but I do see an end to it. Chief Cashin has talked about it as well when we had our non-public meeting. I hear your frustration. I may have said it to you earlier today but if I can do one thing as mayor it will be that when I turn this office over to whomever comes after me, if 80% of their day is not consumed by homelessness that to me would be a massive win. I feel your frustration. I live with it and I appreciate your comments.

Alderman Kantor asked is this going to be a low barrier or high barrier shelter.

Mayor Ruais answered as I mentioned at one of the previous meetings, because the dollars are coming from the state which are coming from the feds, I don't have any control over the barrier. What I do have control over is like with the \$250,000 we took from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund for 231 Merrimack Street and that transitional housing. We do have control over that and that is high barrier. I agree. I want a higher barrier. I, as Mayor, do not have control over the shelter because we are using federal dollars. I can't change that law or rule as Mayor.

Alderman Kantor stated I have a few things to say about that. The low barrier shelters do not help our community. It was created under Mayor Craig and Mayor Ruais you continued this when you promised that you would make it a high barrier shelter. That didn't happen. Later on, you said we were going to get out of the shelter business and that didn't happen either. I am furious because at the beginning of this when we talked about it, we said build it and they will come. So, guess what? They have come. People from out-of-state and from different cities and they come here to Manchester

and it is a burden on us; we taxpayers. That is not okay. I am not for a low barrier shelter at all never mind that it puts people in harm's way. There are sex offenders allowed to stay there and people using drugs are allowed to stay there. We all know that this is a problem. Never mind the first responders and how they feel. They are tired of it. They are tired of it and I am not for this at all. It has not helped anyone in our community. They really should have better options and we need to hold people accountable. I am a big no.

Mayor Ruais responded a number of things on that. I don't recall saying that I was going to raise the barrier because I don't have the authority to do it so I wouldn't have promised I was going to do something that I don't have the authority to do. The challenge that I have talked about with respect to the shelter right now is that there are individuals in there that are on 24/7 oxygen that have severe physical limitations and disabilities who are over the age of 65 and what I said in my budget address was there are those that are homeless who have no interest in not being homeless. There are those that are breaking the law which is why we transferred \$500,000 to the Police Department for hotspot patrols and why this Board really advocated on behalf of bail reform. It is why we were the first city in the United States to ban camping. I agree that we can't have any tolerance or any perception that we would allow people to break the law but there are people that need help. I think that having that shelter in place for the time being like I just said and seeing an end to it at some point...as of right now if that were to shut down, we would have 20 or 30 individuals with significant physical limitations that are in wheelchairs or on oxygen that I don't want to just put out onto the street. I agree with you that I don't want this to be a long-term thing.

Alderman Kantor replied I understand that but it should be a high barrier shelter.

Mayor Ruais stated if I could change that I would but I can't.

Alderman Long stated I have served under four mayors and there has always been a low barrier. It wasn't former Mayor Craig who started that. Again, her hands were tied like the mayor said his are. The money that comes to the shelter so that it is not coming from our general fund requires that it be a low barrier shelter so you have no choice. As

far as saying that it has never helped anybody in our community, I totally disagree. There are tons of people who have been helped. First of all, the people that the mayor just mentioned. It is helping them. Also, I know people who have been in there who have gotten out and been on their own. I know people who have used substances that have stopped and got out on their own. So there have been people in our community who have been helped.

Alderman Kantor responded I know what you are talking about but the thing is they also didn't feel safe. A lot of people didn't feel safe and that is a problem as well. We are just allowing it and it is back on the taxpayer. Look at DPW and how much they had to pick up as far as trash and everything.

Alderman Barry stated just to reiterate what Alderman Long said, he is right. It wasn't Mayor Craig and it wasn't Mayor Gatsas and it wasn't Mayor Guinta; it wasn't anyone that has to do with our homeless situation. It is federal funding. When we receive federal funding, our hands are tied no matter who is mayor. That is the way it goes and if you don't want federal funding then we can't help these people.

Alderman Kantor replied it could have gone to 1269.

Alderman Barry stated we are on the right track. We have talked before about Hope for NH taking over and dealing with this. I think we are in good hands.

Alderman Levasseur stated the only thing I am concerned about is we are going back now because I think the last time it ended was November and no one wanted to close it because of the winter coming. That was a wise decision on this Board's part because we had a very rough winter but now, we are going until September and we are going to shut it down in September and the cold weather starts pretty quick in October. I just think we are chasing our own tail on this. What really appalls me in all of this is the amount of rent that the building owner is getting. I think they have increased it to \$30,000/month for 40 people. I just don't understand. We could spend that \$30,000/month on some of the projects you have put in place now that are getting built or redone whereas we are just blowing \$150,000 on rent for the next five months.

Couldn't we put that to better use to get the ones on oxygen especially that we have talked about for a couple of years into some sort of stable housing?

Mayor Ruais responded this is a constant frustration and we have had this conversation. Chief Cashin can speak to when the city was initially looking for a building to take over to do this kind of work, I don't want to put words in the Chief's mouth but he said they looked at 90 different buildings and for a variety of reasons like maybe it was near a school or in a residential area...there were a number of conditions and limitations and this was the building that was chosen because it was the perfect mix of what we needed at that time. Now we are over a barrel when it comes to this spot because they understand that this is the only real option that the city has. I can assure you that once a week I talk to Chief Cashin and ask if there is another opportunity or another place we could look at and how do we get out from under this rent. The challenge is that anywhere, and I have had this conversation with Aldermen Burkush and Terrio because it is on the baseline of both of your wards, but anywhere something like this goes, you are going to have people that object to it and rightfully so. I totally appreciate that. The challenge is if we start trying to move it around, I just think we are going to wind up with the same kind of problems. I agree with you. Would I love not to spend \$30,000/month in rent?

Alderman E. Sapienza asked when does this amendment take us to.

Mayor Ruais answered the end of August. To Alderman Barry's point, the comment that I made on Thursday night during my budget address was what we have not had before was case managers. What we have not had are those individuals who can go in there and say okay you are John Smith let's get you hooked up to this, this and this and let's get you into housing and into treatment and out of this position. There are people in there, Jake's team with ECEL. I think they do really phenomenal work. There are only three of them in there at any given time and because they are looking over anywhere between 40-60 individuals, they don't always have the time to help shepherd that person through the process and get them out of there. Thank you, Aldermen Thomas and Barry, and everybody that worked on the Hope for NH Recovery project because now we have that case manager in place. The idea is that we can connect

those people to services and long-term help and get them out of there. If you remember, at the end of last year when we were talking about the shelter, we had looked at the results and the information coming out of Beech Street and over 35 people had gotten into housing, I think 12 people had gotten employed and 7 people got into detox and recovery services. So even prior to a case manager being there, there were some successes coming out of there. Now hopefully with the addition of a case manager from Hope and the mobile crisis unit we can do even more much more quickly.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked do we have a plan in place for September 1.

Mayor Ruais replied the conversation that I had in my budget address last year was that I wanted to find someone to take that over. Those conversations are still happening. I am still working on that. It is difficult because there is not a lot of funding that comes in for sheltering. What I am saying is if we can use that case manager and we can double-down to try and get the individuals out of there and make it smaller then perhaps we could look at somewhere else to go where the overhead would be much less.

Alderman Kantor stated sometimes we have to say no to federal funds because it cripples our community and that is what it has been doing. There are plenty of churches and other people that can help out if we come together as a community. We don't have to accept this money. That is where I stand.

Mayor Ruais called for a vote on the motion to approve the amendment. The motion carried with Alderman Kantor being duly recorded in opposition.

- 17.** Professional Services Agreement for Management, Staffing and Operation of the Shelter and Engagement Center at 39 Beech Street between East Coast Evolution and the City of Manchester until August 31, 2025.

Mayor Ruais stated this is for the professional services agreement. The prior item was for the rent.

Alderman Burkush moved to approve. **Alderman Long** duly seconded the motion. Mayor Ruais called for a vote. The motion carried with Alderman Kantor being duly recorded in opposition.

18. Report(s) of the Special Committee on Baseball/Civic Center, if available.

There were none.

19. Report(s) of the Committee on Human Resources/Insurance, if available.

There were none.

20. Report(s) of the Committee on Community Improvement, if available.

The Committee on Community Improvement respectfully recommends, after due and careful consideration, that the request from the Fire Chief for an updated Certificate of Authority for a previously awarded FY22 Homeland Security grant be approved.

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

The Committee on Community Improvement respectfully recommends, after due and careful consideration, that the request from the Fire Chief to accept two additional years of grant funding totaling \$512,000 for the department's Community Response Unit be approved.

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

The Committee on Community Improvement respectfully recommends, after due and careful consideration, that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$500,000 for CIP C160060025 State of NH 39 Beech Street Shelter Operations be approved and referred to the Committee on Finance.

Alderman Burkush moved to accept the report and adopt its recommendation.

Alderman Long duly seconded the motion. Mayor Ruais called for a vote. The motion carried with Aldermen Kantor and Levasseur duly recorded in opposition.,

21. Report(s) of the Committee on Public Safety, Health & Traffic, if available.

There were none.

22. Ordinances:

“An Ordinance repealing Sections 32.025 through 32.035 relating to the Arts Commission and replacing Sections 32.025 through 32.035.”

“Amending Chapter 52: Sewers of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Manchester by amending Section 52.160 Sewer Rental Charges to increase the user charges in the City of Manchester.”

*On motion of **Alderman Terrio**, duly seconded by **Alderman Barry**, it was voted to waive the reading by titles only.*

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

NEW BUSINESS

Alderman Kantor stated I have a couple of things. I would like to ask for a portrait of Frederick Douglass to be placed outside the Chambers. He is the only person out there for the black history of Manchester and I would like to ask for a portrait of him. There are lots of portraits out there and there is not one of him so I think it would be a beautiful thing. There is a beautiful plaque but I think a beautiful portrait would be really ideal.

Mayor Ruais asked would this be something that we could potentially work with the Arts Commission on. We would want to identify funding. I am all about looking into this.

Alderman Kantor stated we could see if someone wants to donate a portrait.

Mayor Ruais asked how would you like to proceed. Would you like to do research in one of the committees?

Alderman Kantor stated I would just like to ask the Board if they would welcome a portrait of Frederick Douglass.

Alderman Morgan stated I don't know anything about it. I would love to support it. I think it should go to a committee to vet it out.

Mayor Ruais stated okay and we could identify a location within City Hall that would work.

*On motion of **Alderman Levasseur**, duly seconded by **Alderman Kantor**, it was voted to refer the item to the CIP Committee.*

Alderman Kantor asked when will you release the budget books with the line item details.

Sharon Wickens, Finance Director, responded the departments have been told to try to get everything in by the end of this week. Then we reconcile it and put it out. I already had one department tell me that they won't get everything in until at least Tuesday of next week. I would say Wednesday or Thursday of next week I should be able to release it.

Alderman Kantor asked out of the \$7 million that you put into the budget, how much is union contracts and how much is the compensation study. Did you break that down?

Mayor Ruais answered I asked Director Wickens and Director Drabik what they thought their best estimate was for how much the compensation study would cost and the number they landed on was roughly \$7 million.

Alderman Kantor asked is that in combination with the union contracts.

Mayor Ruais answered that would be salary, benefits, merits, etc. That would be \$7 million to implement the compensation study and take folks to market rate.

Alderman Vincent stated I wanted to let the Board know that I met with the new Parking Manager, Ms. Faye Morrison. I look forward to what comes to the table. She had a lot

of great ideas that are going to save the city some money. We have a bright future and we are looking good.

Alderman Long stated we are being asked to vote for the Burkina Faso flag raising. They want to do that at 11 AM on Thursday and they have the flag.

Alderman Terrio stated I don't have a problem with this. I do have two concerns though. One is that everybody and their brother is going to ask us to do this. That is my first concern. My second concern is I looked at Nashua and they have been sued because they don't want to fly flags and people say no you have to and then they get sued.

Mayor Ruais asked could the Clerk speak to this because I know we have had some conversations about it.

City Clerk Normand stated the city has a flag policy that expressly states which flags are acceptable. The reason this is before the Board right now is because it is a government recognized by the United States which is in your policy for accepting flags. It is very strict. It is not a forum for political display. There is a strict list and you have it in front of you.

Alderman Terrio stated I did see the list but can Emily tell us why Nashua got in trouble and why they were sued.

Emily Rice, Solicitor, answered I am not exactly sure but I don't think they had a flag policy specifying what was and was not a public forum which is a pretty important piece of the Constitutional analysis.

Alderman Long moved to approve the raising of the Burkina Faso Flag at City Hall on April 3. ***Alderman Fajardo*** duly seconded the motion. Mayor Ruais called for a vote. The motion carried with Alderman E. Sapienza being duly recorded in opposition.

Alderman Morgan stated I want to acknowledge the Hockey East Tournament this past weekend. It was very successful with over 14,000 people attending. SNHU Arena did a

great job and it is something to be proud of. Manchester was on national TV and it was great for the hockey community. I just wanted to give them a shout out.

Mayor Ruais stated it is my privilege to announce that following the impending departure of the current Airport Director, Ted Kitchens, I am naming Tom Malafronte as the Acting Airport Director at the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport. Just for some background, Tom has been with the airport for 35 years serving in seven different roles, most recently as the Deputy Director since 2015. His other managerial responsibilities have included manager of airport operations and facilities, assistant director of air service development, marketing and public relations. As Deputy Director, Tom has overseen the day-to-day administrative and operational functions, including the direct supervision of four assistant directors. He is also involved with the oversight of the airport's various contractual agreements which include law enforcement, aircraft rescue, firefighting, security, environmental, insurance and other professional services. Tom is truly an aviation professional with broad knowledge of the industry and I am confident he is the right person to lead MHT at this time. There is no action needed. This is just for informational purposes. Congratulations Tom, and thank you for being here this evening.

TABLED ITEMS

- 23.** 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.

- 24.** 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 Vincent**, duly seconded by **Alderman E. Sapienza**, 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