

SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
July 22, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Mayor Ruais called the meeting to order.

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

A moment of silence was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

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

Absent: Alderman Morgan

1. ***Alderman Terrio*** moved to enter into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(d) for consideration of property acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community.
Alderman Vincent duly seconded the motion.

Alderman E. Sapienza stated I am not sure why we are going into non-public for this. If I'm not mistaken, we have talked about this in public before. Can we get some clarification, please?

Mayor Ruais stated the guidance I received from Planning, the Solicitor, and the Clerk, was that these are items for Pearl Street lot that need to be discussed in non-public.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked we are only discussing the Pearl Street lot in non-public.

Mayor Ruais stated as of now, yes.

The motion carried on a unanimous roll call vote with the exception of Alderman Morgan who was absent.

Mayor Ruais called the meeting back to order.

2. Update regarding the Pearl Street lot development project.

Alderman Long asked can this project come in under \$21 million. The garage, if there are three levels?

Peter Flotz, Lansing Melbourne Group, stated yes. I think it was around \$20,000,300 was approximately where we were.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated welcome back to Manchester. How soon do you think you can start on this?

Mr. Flotz stated September or October. They are ready, and they need to be first. The sitework can begin; it is paperwork at this point.

Alderman Barry stated you've done quite a few properties in Manchester. Can you explain to some of the newer members of the Board what you've done; maybe name a few of the projects.

Mr. Flotz stated the last garage we did was the Langer Mill by the baseball stadium. We bought the mill, and we put SNHU in there and built a 1,700-car garage there in about ten or eleven months. They were in a hurry then. The Tru Hotel is ours. That has a garage that we are partners on. You guys own the ground floor; we own the top floor. We've been extremely pleased. Everybody knows I have a love affair with Manchester; I'm back here over and over again. We just finished a project in Nashua; we're breaking ground in Derry on a garage that is going to cost a lot more than yours, almost 50% more. Their garage is three levels, it holds 300 cars, and it is \$24 million. It's a tough site; it is on the rail-trail.

Mayor Ruais recessed the meeting to return to non-public session.

Mayor Ruais called the meeting back to order.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman T. Sapienza**, it was voted to authorize the Mayor and city staff to negotiate an amended contract with Neighborworks/Peter Flotz/LMG to build a three-level garage at the Pearl Street lot site, not to exceed \$21 million, with Alderman O'Neil being duly recorded as abstaining.*

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman T. Sapienza**, it was voted to seal the minutes of the non-public session so that the proposed actions and decisions reached in non-public session are not rendered ineffective.*

Mayor Ruais stated as we've discussed in previous iterations before the Board regarding the individuals that are currently housed at the engagement center or shelter, I wanted to provide an update on the census on the individuals that are there. As you can see, 39 Beech Street has a forty-shelter capacity. That has been funded with state and federal dollars that are set to run out on August 31. The latest census regarding the individuals that are there that have medical conditions, 14 individuals are medically compromised. They are exceptionally vulnerable. That number fluctuates between ten and twenty. As of right now, 21 individuals have chronic health conditions, 20 with a physical disability, 13% are over the age of 65. Eight people utilize wheelchairs; two with leg amputations. One is utilizing a walker. Two are on oxygen. The funding that was approved in April runs out at the end of August, in September, in 41 days. Where do we go from here? What are the next steps that we have? The second piece to the shelter is the engagement center. That is open seven days a week from 9AM to 5PM. It services 40 to 50 unique individuals daily. Last year, we talked about this, but we started the routine resource fairs which are held on Thursdays from 10AM to 12PM. Other entities and organizations are there during the week in addition to the regular fair that is held on Thursdays. I sent out a press release on this two weeks ago. This covers the results from the engagement center from June 2024 when we started releasing

those monthly totals until the end of June this year. So roughly twelve months. In the last twelve months through the engagement center, 55 individuals have found housing, 47 vital documents have been procured, 38 have gotten into detox through the engagement center, 17 have been employed. Through the initiative to end veterans' homelessness, 53 veterans have found housing as well. Over 100 individuals have been taken off of our streets as a result of these actions. Specifically, through our engagement center, 55 have been housed. The other piece is the winter warming station. During the winter, when it got really cold on the worst night there were between 70 and 100 people that went to the engagement center daily to stay warm. That's what we talked about last year when we appropriated money to keep it open. The emphasis behind the warming station is fatality prevention. There needs to be someplace where people can go when it is cold. Chief Cashin has talked about it, and we can go into further detail about it. There are no alternative locations for winter warming currently in the City of Manchester. If this funding were to run out on September 1, we do not have a winter warming location for this year. That means 70 to 100 individuals that utilize that will not have a place to go when it gets cold. It is at this point I want to talk about potential buildings and locations that we can go to, which will get into conversations regarding leases. It is appropriate to enter into non-public at this point.

Alderman T. Sapienza asked is the warming station during the day.

Mayor Ruais stated 24 hours.

Alderman O'Neil stated those numbers are great. Is there any way of tracking some of this data?

Mayor Ruais stated I can talk to Jake and his team to get any additional information that we may need.

Alderman O'Neil stated it would be good to know. We believe that the 55 who were housed are still housed?

Mayor Ruais stated I am sure there have been individuals that left the housing, but 55 is the number we know that have been housed. I can get further information.

Alderman O'Neil stated it's hard to track detox. They won't have a 100% success rate. Who is providing the housing? Who is providing jobs? That information would be great.

Alderman E. Sapienza stated the important fact here is at the end of August the federal and state funding stops. If we were to continue the status quo, the City of Manchester would be picking up that tab.

Mayor Ruais stated that is not correct. That's part of the conversation that I want to have regarding the lease and our next opportunities.

Alderman E. Sapienza stated the fact is, at the end of August, state and federal funding stops.

Alderman Vincent stated if you go back to the slide regarding medical issues, that is a lot of issues. How many people at the shelter are qualified to take care of these people with these medical issues?

Mayor Ruais stated I reached out to the State of New Hampshire and asked for a list of all the medical respite and nursing homes, and acute care facilities; there are 74 in the state. Not a single bed is available, with 8 to 12 month wait lists.

Alderman Vincent stated that is a lot of people that don't belong there.

Mayor Ruais stated that is correct. Unfortunately, the capacity does not exist right now for a medical facility to take care of them.

Alderman Vincent stated we are letting them sit there and not be healthy. Are there any medical services provided by qualified medical individuals at the shelter?

Mayor Ruais stated yes. The staff that is there, work to get them the appropriate medical care. Healthcare for the Homeless goes there. They also work to get them into a facility. The challenge is because the waitlist is so long. That number fluctuates. Right now, it is 14, at times it is 10, and at times it is higher, particularly in the winter when it is cold. The intent is not to house them, the intent is to get them to the appropriate level with medical services.

Alderman Vincent stated right. I am concerned about people there with serious chronic health conditions when there are people in there that may not help that situation. These people are festering in there. What can we do to be better about getting these people help? I am very concerned about the medical issues. Some people just want a warm bed; I get that. But these individuals with medical issues need it more.

Mayor Ruais stated there is very little in the intermediary between being at the hospital for a chronic health condition and ready to be released, there is no intermediate respite care and they end up in our shelters because of that.

Alderman Barry stated September 1, if it comes to that and we close the shelter, the burden is going to be put on the City of Manchester Welfare Department. They will have to put them into hotels.

Mayor Ruais stated yes. What does that plan B look like if there is no funding after August 31? That is something that Director Michaud and Chief Cashin will talk about.

Alderman Fajardo asked between the veterans and the individuals who moved into housing through the engagement center, there were approximately 100 people that have gone from unhoused to housed.

Mayor Ruais stated I added the veterans' portion to show what we as a city have done over the last twelve months, 55 were specifically through the engagement center. They weren't veterans. Through the veteran's initiative I launched, we housed an additional 53.

Alderman Fajardo asked in about twelve months.

Mayor Ruais stated yes. The 55 that were housed, we started reporting those totals in June 2024. The veterans' numbers are from September until now.

Alderman Fajardo stated that is great. Do we have any sense of how many individuals have joined our unhoused population?

Mayor Ruais stated that annual point in time count is not something I control. That is collected and then released. I don't know when that is going to be released.

Alderman Fajardo stated it is usually counted in January. Could Owen or Jake provide any data? I am trying to get a sense of how we are looking overall.

Mayor Ruais stated when that number comes out, that will be the indication.

Alderman Kantor asked do you plan on it being a low-barrier shelter. That affects the neighborhood. The lawlessness that goes on over there is not good for the vulnerable people that are in the shelter. The drug use that is going on outside allegedly is a big problem. Business owners have reached out to me and they are fed up.

Mayor Ruais stated I want to talk about that piece with the buildings. That has to do with leases and contracts, and it is a big piece of the conversation.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked when we say that at the end of August the funding ends, and then the Welfare Department has responsibility for these folks, is the department legally responsible to provide permanent services?

Mayor Ruais stated yes, we are required to shelter an individual that is in need within the city.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked for thirty years. My understanding is it is temporary.

Charleen Michaud, Welfare Director, stated there is no time limit to RSA 165, as long as they continue to be eligible, then we need to provide assistance.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked what do you mean by eligibility. As long as they have the need?

Director Michaud stated yes, as long as they have a need.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked the city is on the hook indefinitely.

Director Michaud stated yes as long as they have a need and they comply with our requirements. If they do not comply with our requirements, they are suspended for one week before given an opportunity to come back into compliance and we begin assistance again.

Alderman Kantor stated it is not just Manchester's responsibility. It is other towns that need to take care of their people as well. The burden shouldn't just be on Manchester. I know you do an exceptional job and it is hard.

Director Michaud stated this is a statewide responsibility. Other communities are seeing the same problems we are. Keene, which is a magnet in the southwest corner, in FY24 they spent \$1.2 million in general assistance funds. We spent \$622,000 that same year. They are one-fifth of our size, and yet because of how they chose to handle the homeless situation, which was different by using hotels instead of opening a shelter, they paid out twice the amount of assistance than we did.

Alderman Kantor stated some people need to stay in their own hometowns and their welfare system should take care of them. Right?

Director Michaud stated we are responsible for anybody who is homeless here in Manchester, and people have a right to move about.

Alderman Kantor asked so anyone can come here.

Director Michaud stated anyone can come here and if they abandoned their residence in another community, in most circumstances they are the responsibility of Manchester. To the extent to which I can go back to that other town and hold them responsible, we do.

Mayor Ruais stated we have done that. WMUR interviewed me last year when an individual was shipped here from Lincoln and dropped off at Families in Transition. That person made their way over to Beech Street and WMUR called me and asked me for a comment. That individual shipped back. We can absolutely do that. To answer your question, yes, other communities should be dealing with this in their own towns and not making Manchester the first resort when something like this occurs.

Alderman Terrio asked Alderman Long, I thought the law was changed so that the Welfare Departments in the sending towns have to send us money for several months.

Alderman Long stated yes there is a timeframe to that.

Director Michaud stated it was a change to the residency part of RSA 165. Should a municipality move a homeless person into the City of Manchester and put them in a Manchester hotel, it used to be that that would become our responsibility. Now, when a municipality does that, they continue to maintain their residency in that other town and continue to be the responsibility of that town. That was something we worked on to change in the law as we were coming out of COVID. So many homeless individuals were put in hotels through a federal program in Manchester. It was a concern and we were able to change that law.

Alderman Long asked is there a timeframe attached to that.

Director Michaud stated however long they were in that hotel, they would continue to maintain their residency in that town. If they leave of their own volition, there are different circumstances. For the most part, they maintain their residency there while they are in a hotel or a correctional facility, a hospital, a treatment center. All of those circumstances they continue to be a resident of that other community. Shelters are included in that.

Alderman Terrio stated that is only if a municipality drops them off; most people are coming in on their own.

Director Michaud stated when they come in on their own, then that is usually ours. If I find that in those particular circumstances I have reason to go back to that town and ask them to continue to support, I do.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated thank you for all your hard work. I know all these subtleties you are dealing with. I know you work hard on it every day. You got a tough hand dealt to you by the state laws. We are lucky to have you. Thank you for your hard work.

Director Michaud stated I appreciate it, but I will say that my employees who are Welfare Specialists have a much harder job than I do. I did that job for 24 years. It is incredibly difficult.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked what if the city didn't provide catastrophic care for people.

Mayor Ruais stated we will be sued for not following state statute. I'd imagine ten individuals would say we went to Welfare and I am eligible for funding as a result of RSA 165, and the city is not providing me with that. We would get sued.

Alderman E. Sapienza stated maybe we ought to explore that possibility. Let them sue.

Alderman Terrio stated at the federal level they have passed an unfunded mandate law. Does the state have an unfunded mandate law that we have to pay for certain things but if they don't fund them, then they are shifting the burden? Does the state have an unfunded mandate?

Mayor Ruais stated I can look into that.

Emily Rice, City Solicitor, stated there is a provision in the New Hampshire constitution that prevents unfunded mandates.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated that is the New Hampshire advantage.

Solicitor Rice stated I believe that the mandate in the statute that the Welfare Director is talking about predates the adoption of that constitutional amendment.

Alderman Terrio stated so although it is an unfunded mandate, since the law was enacted after the welfare law was enacted it is not covered. Is that true?

Solicitor Rice stated yes. Also, I don't know whether or not the premise of your question is correct. I don't know the extent to which there are funds from sources other than the city that assist in funding some of the services. I don't know whether or not the premise is correct, but if it is, then yes. I don't believe it is subject to the law.

Alderman Long stated the State of New Hampshire had an increase in homelessness by 53%. The national average is 12%. It was \$13 million that was put in the budget. It should have been a lot more than that. That is why we are feeling the pinch.

Alderman Barry moved to enter into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(d) for consideration of property acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community. **Alderman O'Neil** duly seconded the motion. The motion carried on a unanimous roll call vote with the exception of Alderman Morgan who was absent.

Mayor Ruais called the meeting back to order.

On motion of **Alderman Barry**, duly seconded by **Alderman O'Neil**, it was voted to seal the minutes of the non-public session so that the proposed actions and decisions reached in non-public session are not rendered ineffective.

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