

BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN

October 21, 2025 at 7:00 PM

Mayor Ruais called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

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

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.

Gary Hunter, 84 McCarthy Street: First off, thank you for this continuing opportunity for citizens to speak. I think it's absolutely fabulous. We watch you on television, and we're always impressed with your patience. I'm here tonight to report on Thursday's meeting on the pending sale of the Youth Development Center, which we were kind enough to have a mayor that produced it, along with the Executive Councilor, Mr. Steven, and it was attended by about 150 citizens, most of them probably from ward one. From the sounds of things, there were five huge concerns that were detailed and acknowledged. I want to share them with you tonight. There's a more extensive piece of paper before you. I'll give you the Reader's Digest version here. Zoning was number one. Residents were solidly against the impending BMA vote to change the zoning from the most restrictive residential zoning to a sales favorable mixed use zone. Every single district surrounding YDC and YDC itself is currently zoned R-1A. Ward one residents want a residential neighborhood, not a business or multifamily zone that would dramatically increase traffic, bring visitors or urban density to ward one. Many citizens said the R-1 zoning was a major factor in purchasing a home in ward one. Last year's Planning Department zoning survey was broadly condemned for paying very little attention to the residents of ward one in trying to

decide what is best for the city. Their voices were strong on this. The second great concern was the River Road traffic itself, the already dangerous volume and speed of traffic along River Road, the only access to YDC where there is a very narrow right of way, just two narrow lanes and one sidewalk. The many walkers along River Road are already endangered. And that's before we add, say, 40 new homes for an R1 zone or as proposed, the urban density of multi-families, stores, and businesses involved in the proposed M1H zoning before you this month. I'd like you to imagine the trucks, visiting shoppers, etc., that would result from trying to get our kids into the schools. I invite you to read the brief I provided you, and I ask these three considerations from the BMA. First, revise the proposed zoning for ward one and send it back to the present R1A zone; two, seek for the city the right of first refusal by filing a bill in the upcoming legislative session that amends the terms of sale through our city legislative caucus, and finally, create a fundraising campaign that matches private donations with city funds to purchase the YDC property and then do due diligence in creating its ultimate usage.

Richard Irving, Ward 2: Mr. Mayor, you have done a good job in your first term promoting affordable housing, anti-drug initiatives, cleaning up the downtown, and helping the homeless population with mental health, employment, and housing. Unfortunately, more work needs to be done in our city. In two weeks from today, citizens like myself will go to the polls to vote for your second term as mayor, and I do hope you win to make Manchester a better place to live, work, learn, and play.

Troy Micklon, Ward 9: While talking with residents at their doors, on the phone, or through social media conversations, one of the biggest issues that keeps coming up again and again is homelessness and how it's negatively impacting the residents of ward nine, regardless of how the city is working to address the problem. People want accountability built into our efforts. Many that I've spoken with have suggested that if someone is receiving assistance and is able to work, they should be expected to contribute in some way, whether it's working through cleanup projects, beautification efforts, or other community work. Recently, I had a brief conversation with Mayor Ruais about this, and he told me about a program out of Albuquerque, New Mexico, called There's a Better Way and it's succeeding program called A Better Way Forward. It's a model that offers day work opportunities for people who are experiencing homelessness, paying them fairly

for work like street cleanups and landscaping, while also connecting them to job placement, mental health services and housing services. It's an approach that provides both dignity and direction, helping people rebuild their lives while improving the community around them. They are strongly supported because it combines compassion with responsibility. Here in Manchester, we have various efforts to help people in need, but what is missing is that structured, work-based pathway that helps those who are able to work, take an active role in their recovery and strengthening our neighborhoods. And unfortunately, despite the growing concern from residents, I'm not aware of any current alderman's proposal or initiatives to address this issue or to explore programs like that that promote both accountability and opportunity by developing a similar initiative here, one that promotes personal responsibility while giving people a genuine opportunity to earn honest money, build employment history, and begin rebuilding their lives. We can show that our city is truly guided by values and focus on outcomes that make a real difference. As you know by now, I love handouts, so I've prepared one that includes some key points and statistics about this program, along with a copy of the City of Albuquerque's resolution that helped establish this program.

Bryce Kaw-uh, 639 N. Bay Street: As many of you know, and as Gary mentioned before me last Thursday, there was a public info session about the future of the Sununu Youth Services Center property, otherwise known as the YDC. There were a lot of folks there. There's been a lot of news coverage since then, and I was glad to be able to attend the public hearing or the public engagement meeting myself at that meeting. I didn't take the microphone to speak, though, because I was there to listen. Tonight, though, I would like to address the board on this topic. So, all of us in Manchester have a vested interest in the future of this massive 157-acre property, especially those of us who live near that parcel in the north end. The state has made it clear that they will sell the property. They will put out an RFP, and the state may voluntarily give the city an opportunity to match, or the city might not, or the state might not. But regardless of what the state does, I want to say something critically important. To my knowledge, there's nothing to stop the city from making an offer of its own. There's no reason to think that we lack the vision here in Manchester, or the capability as a city to handle this better than the state. Manchester has a history of being on the cutting edge, and we could seize control over our own destiny as a city by banding together and putting in a valid offer for this property. My dream

scenario would be that we do make an offer. Some of the funding could come from designating the area as a tax increment financing district, known as a TIF district for short. This is an incredibly powerful tool in the city planning toolbox. It would basically allow us to make infrastructure improvements like fixing River Road, preserving green spaces, and extending sewer and water service, all while paying for itself over time through increased property values. It's been proven to succeed in other places, and I think it could work here too. The city could create a master plan for the property in collaboration with local residents and stakeholders, then subdivide parcels as needed. Some could be kept for the city as infrastructure and parkland. Some could be sold to responsible developers for senior housing or starter homes for young families, or affordable housing for teachers and veterans, and so forth. I'm sure a wide range of our community's nonprofits would be interested in helping out, and proceeds from the sales could help recoup the cost of acquisition. So, Manchester can choose its own future, but only if its leaders have the vision and the motivation required. So, I would respectfully request that this topic be referred to the appropriate committee. Perhaps the Lands and Buildings Committee for future discussion. This is too important to sit passively by while the state does whatever it wants. Let's make sure Manchester's future is shaped by the people of Manchester, not by the politicians and bureaucrats of Concord

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Information to be Received and Filed

2. Communication from Faye Morrison, Parking Manager, advising the Board that the division issued Requests for Proposals to replace existing on-street parking infrastructure, with MacKay Meters submitting the winning bid.

REFERRALS TO COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

3. Resolutions:

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Twenty-Four Thousand Eight Hundred Seventy-Four Dollars (\$24,874) for the FY2025 CIP 211525 Volunteer NH

Engagement Project Grant”

“Amending the FY2021 and FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount Thirty-Eight Thousand Ninety-Seven Dollars and Seventy-Six Cents (\$38,097.76) for the following FY2021 and FY2025 projects: CIP 611921- 298 Hanover St. Renovations; CIP 210725 – CBDO Special Activities; CIP 610025 Concentrated Code Enforcement 1; and CIP 610125 Concentrated Code Enforcement 2.”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Ninety Thousand Dollars (\$90,000) for the FY2026 CIP C160060526 39 Beech St Programs.”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000) for the FY2026 CIP C180060926 Boys to Men Program Office of Youth Services.”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Three Thousand Four Hundred Sixty-Nine Dollars (\$3,469) for the FY2026 CIP C330040926 Card Reader Access System to MPD NIBIN Machine Room.”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Ninety-Three Thousand Dollars (\$93,000) for the FY2026 CIP C330041026 Manchester Police Department FY26 STOP Violence Against Women.”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Two Thousand Six Hundred Eighty-Five Dollars (\$2,685) for the FY2026 CIP C330041126 FY26 MPD C.A.R Training(s).”

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS

4. Recommending that the request from the Director of Information Services to enter into a contract with CivicPlus for Acquia Optimize, a website governance and accessibility platform, be approved.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Alderman Thomas who was absent)

COMMITTEE ON BILLS ON SECOND READING

5. Recommending that the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Manchester ought to pass, be referred to a Public Hearing to be scheduled by the City Clerk, and be referred to the Committee on Accounts, Enrollment and Revenue Administration.
(Unanimous vote)

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

6. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$24,874 for CIP 211525 Volunteer NH Engagement Project Grant be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
7. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$38,097.76 for the following projects:
 - CIP 611921 298 Hanover St. Renovations;
 - CIP 210725 CBDO Special Activities
 - CIP 610025 Concentrated Code Enforcement 1
 - CIP 610125 Concentrated Code Enforcement 2be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
8. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$90,000 for CIP C160060526 39 Beech St Programs be approved.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Alderman Kantor who was opposed)
9. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$1,000 for CIP C180060926 Boys to Men Program Office of Youth Services be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
10. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$3,469 for CIP C330040926 Card Reader Access System to MPD NIBIN Machine Room be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
11. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$93,000 for CIP C330041026 Manchester Police Department FY26 STOP Violence Against Women be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
12. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$2,685 for CIP C330041126 FY26 MPD C.A.R. Training(s) be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
13. Recommending that the request from the MPD Grant Coordinator to extend the completion date for CIP 411324 STOP School Violence Grant to September 30,

2027, be approved.
(Unanimous vote)

14. Recommending that the request from the Chief Highway Engineer to extend various CIP projects be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
15. Recommending that the request from the Fire Chief to apply for a Firehouse Subs grant in the amount of \$30,000 to purchase technical rescue suits be approved.
(Unanimous vote)

*On motion of **Alderman Terrio**, duly seconded by **Alderman E. Sapienza**, it was voted to approve the consent agenda.*

16. Recommending that the request for approval of the following projects:
 - Manchester Skate Park at Lally Sullivan Complex on Harvell Street: \$2.5 million
 - Al Lemire Field Lighting Replacement at Derryfield Park: \$400,000
 - Pony League Baseball Field Lighting Replacement: \$250,000
 - Livingston Park Field Lighting Improvement: \$150,000

be approved, and further that these projects be funded through bond.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Aldermen Terrio and Kantor who voted in opposition to the Livingston Park project)

Alderman Terrio requested item 16 be removed from the consent agenda.

Alderman Terrio: In this proposal, there's \$3.3 million of new bonding. I don't think this is the time to do it. We're at or actually above our recommended maximum bonding. She's talking to the bond company. It hasn't affected our bond rating yet, but we're already above what's been recommended. So, this will hurt us. Also, department head Sharon Wickens wants to bond a substantial amount of money. I believe it's \$31 million next year, so I just don't think that this is a good idea at this time.

Mayor Ruais: I know Alderman Barry and Alderman O'Neil have been working on this. So, if you gentlemen want to have the opportunity to reply.

Alderman Barry: I have been working on this for quite some time. I know when I first ran for alderman in 2013 and when I was elected, I met with quite a few people. One of the things that I that I heard early on is the fact that the west side is the forgotten side. So, with that in mind, I tried to make it a point to make sure that I know in ward ten I've done really well in getting roads and road constructions and all that. One of the things that we lack on the west side is recreational space and recreational areas. One of the lieutenants, I think now he may be a captain, is a skateboard enthusiast. He approached me and we sat down and we talked about skateboard parks, something that we don't have. We have a very small one in Rock Rimmon. He wanted one that is larger. There are so many cities: Concord, Nashua, Salem, Dover, Portsmouth, Bedford even has one, Derry has one. Manchester doesn't. The largest city in the state, and we don't have a skateboard park. It's not just a skateboard park, but it also involves BMX bikes. We need recreational space for the kids. We need them to get outdoors. The west side is lacking that. The rest of the city has quite a bit. When he approached me, we didn't. I told him that we needed to find a space for it. We did. We found a space right behind Dairy Queen. I've spent a lot of time on this. We've had six meetings. We had a subcommittee that met, consisting of Katie Waldo, Mark Gomez, and other people from the city and other engineers and stuff that were working on it. Then we had three public meetings with the people. Most of them were from the west side. They all attended it, along with myself, Alderman Vincent, Alderman Thomas, and Alderman O'Neil. We attended these meetings, and they were important meetings. There were about 100 people at these meetings, and they were all in favor of it. For this board, some of the people on this board, that try to stall, it's not good. I just think it's way too important for our kids. We finally have the opportunity to give the kids something, especially on the West Side. For us not to do it, shame on us.

Alderman O'Neil: This is to replace a skateboard park that once existed on Maple Street that was taken away, and it was never replaced. This is an opportunity to create something in West Manchester, but this is a park for the whole city. There's been a lot of effort. It's been done right, through some subcommittees and informal meetings with the residents. The residents really like this. The residents over in southwest Manchester want activity in these parks because there's nothing there now. The field lights are failing. They've been failing for a while. Poles are leaning. The lighting at Derryfield needs to be replaced. The baseball field is also used for football for 7 or 8 months a year. Lighting

there needs to be replaced. It might be the oldest on a large baseball field in the city and it doesn't do it justice. We want to get people down there using that field. We need to put up lights. There are no lights on the main entrance side of Livingston and that's where the basketball courts are going and that's where these lights popped up. The big driver in this is the skateboard park. I think we made a commitment; previous boards made a commitment that they were going to build a skateboard park and never did. It's the right thing to do. It's ready to go. Parks needs to get it in the queue with the contractors. Otherwise, we're going to lose a whole other season. So, I hope my colleagues will support this.

Mayor Ruais: I'm just going to confirm one thing with the clerk. We are not approving the bond tonight. This still has to go through CIP and go through the actual process. So, we're not approving a bond tonight. This is just to send it to CIP, correct?

Matthew Normand, City Clerk: That's correct.

Alderman T. Sapienza: This board was elected for two years. That ends in December. Putting things off for the next board is a very dangerous idea. We should either advance it or kill it. We should do our job. It's our job to vote on this.

Alderman Kantor: This was already at CIP, and when I asked some questions, I got shut down. I wasn't allowed to speak on this. Alderman Morgan refused to let me speak and refused to let Alderman Terrio speak. What is this? I'm all for parks. I'm all for the children, but this is being slammed down our throats. Mark Gomez gave me this great information all about the parks that were going to be created up to this year, and it's not even on the agenda. So, we don't even know how to take care of our own parks. We're allowing all the needles to be around, and we're just going to rush this through without thinking about it. You guys may have thought about it, but we need to be smart about this. For me not to be allowed to speak with Alderman Morgan is just unacceptable. I'm really disappointed how this is being pushed through. Does it really cost \$2.5 million to create this park? Where are the bids, and how do we bid? I do know that there's a problem with the bidding process, because I have some people that are concerned with it and they're being short changed with the bidding process for other things having to do with the schools. So, I am

all for the children. I am all for play. Motion movement is so important for children, but this is being pushed; this is crazy. We should have a whole presentation and a complete buy in from the whole city because every park matters. Where did Hunt Pool go? We just shoved down a mega \$80 million school that's going to take away a beautiful park. This is insanity. I'm really disappointed.

Mayor Ruais: Director Gomez is here. If you have any questions, you're welcome to ask the director.

Alderman Barry: As far as being pushed through, if we just brought this up a month ago, I can understand it. I would agree with you. This same board, you, everyone, all of us, in June 2024, we agreed to \$100,000 for the study. You were here, I was here. It's not being pushed through. In 2024 we were talking about this, and we gave \$100,000 to Mr. Gomez and his staff to look into it.

Alderman Kantor: Well, it's not on the paper.

Alderman Barry: You voted for it.

Alderman Kantor: Yeah, the study. Now you want me to approve it?

Alderman Barry: We met, the steering committee. People knew about this. Alderman O'Neil showed up at these meetings. How did people show up if no one knew about it? We all knew about it. You could have shown up to the meetings. It's not just a west side thing. This is for the whole city of Manchester, but it's going to be on the west side.

Alderman Levasseur: A study for \$100,000, and then a price tag of \$2.5 million. There's a big difference there. I don't know how much it would cost to do South Willow Street, but boy, that is one hell of a mess. What really bothers me about this is you're asking for Livingston Field lighting improvement. We put the money through for \$300,000 in the budget. I don't understand. I do think I understand why none of this has been put through in the budget that was just passed, because it would have put the tax rate over the tax cap. So, when you bifurcate something and you allocate \$300,000 for a basketball court

in Livingston, and then you come back six months later and we owe, and now it's time to hopefully get the lights for it for \$150,000. It's not a good look, number one. Number two, it's \$3.3 million that we're adding to our bonding. When I say this, please don't take it personal, but the mayor had made it a plan from the beginning to not get ourselves into all kinds of debt with bonding. He wanted to keep that number low.

Mayor Ruais: The first year it was 10% below.

Alderman Levasseur: We're blowing through all these numbers now while our roads are falling apart. If you talk to anybody in this city, the number one concern is roads. And we're going to build a skateboard park? That's not a priority in the city. I'm not against it, but we saw what happened to the one on the east side. I mean, it was destroyed with graffiti. I agree, if I was going to put a priority in place, it was going to be for children and it was going to be for the people of the city, it would have been a pool at Hunt's. It's amazing how that thing just went empty for four years and has been sitting there with no pool for all those inner-city kids. Talk about an equity issue. I'm okay with the lighting part of this. I'm not happy about getting the lighting through at this point, but I can understand why we need lighting for baseball fields. I know why Alderman Burkush has worked really hard to help get some of this lighting in here for Pony League parks and stuff. Can I ask if we are over capacity or at capacity on bonding? I know you can tell us if you think we're at capacity.

Sharon Wickens, Finance Director: Well, I met with the rating agency just recently a little over a week ago, and we got our rating and we were able to maintain our rating. But from the report, I will just read where it says the downside scenario. We could consider a lower rating if debt and liabilities were to increase more than expected, pressuring the city's overall operating budget and flexibility. I will say, to piggyback on something that you said, Alderman Levasseur, the mayor has worked very hard to keep that debt number down. We talk about where we think that's going to be. He kept it down quite a bit the first year that he was in office, the second year it went up a little bit more, but only because he threw money at roads because it was bad. He probably bonded a total of \$13.2 million, and I'm thinking \$5 million of it went to roads off of bonding.

Mayor Ruais: It was \$7 million total.

S. Wickens: Right.

Alderman Levasseur: Highway told us what they needed for a number. They told us they needed \$12 million and they could have done a much better job on the roads that we have. I don't want to be a stick in the mud. I'm okay with the lighting, but I just think the \$2.5 million for a, and I'm not picking on West side, I know you think I am, but I'm not, I just think that this is not a good choice when our roads are so horrible. It's going to be 4 or 5 more months out; all the potholes are going to be coming back at us. If we're going to bond money, we should bond it for what's in the best interest of the city as a whole. I mean, we are taking care of certain small projects for individual parks, putting in lighting, and I think that's a good use of money. But a skate park for 2.5 million? Why is it \$2.5 million? Does everything cost ten times more than it did two years ago? It's a ridiculous price and it's not a good priority for this board at this time.

Mayor Ruais: If I remember correctly from our conversation during the budget time period, \$1 million in bonding is \$80,000 on the tax rate, correct?

S. Wickens: I mean, that's true. The rates have gone up. So that could change a little bit.

Mayor Ruais: \$90,000 or \$100,000?

S. Wickens: It could be.

Mayor Ruais: Adding \$2.5 million earlier this year would not have overridden the tax cap.

S. Wickens: Well, it won't override the tax cap initially. We don't go out to bond as soon as we approve the bond.

Mayor Ruais: We wouldn't have overridden the tax cap.

S. Wickens: Eventually we will. I mean, our debt is elevated. The rates are up. I'm seeing a difficult 2027; it's just inevitable. Rates are where they are.

Alderman Fajardo: I agree with you, Alderman Levasseur. I do think that we had the opportunity to realize more revenue, but we chose to stay well below the tax cap. Now we're in a position where we have to hit one important thing against another important thing in a conversation related to bonding. I understand the draw to stay below the tax cap, but in a time where there are so many needs in the city, we are legally allowed by our charter to realize a certain amount of revenue. We left it on the table, and I didn't get a check. No one's getting a check. It's just money unspent. In a situation like this, we have to have conversations about essentially tradeoffs that we're going to make between important infrastructure, maintenance, and things that are good for our community. I hope this board and anybody listening will take into consideration next time we're in a budget season that it's not expedient to stay below the tax cap when there are so many needs. It is not a long-term strong investment in the city when we choose to do this. I want to support this park because we should have these kinds of things in our city. I also think it's unfortunate that DPW was underfunded by millions of dollars in this last budget. So here we are.

Alderman Kantor: Mark, I'd spoken to you because I love parks. We need to fund DPW more. We have the needle crisis and all the encampments that are being picked up, and that's a burden. That comes off of their top. So once again, it's a burden. I went through this because when I first became alderman, Alderman Stewart and Alderman Sharonov had a plan for a dog park in ward six, and then you couldn't find the money. I want to bring that to your attention. How about the dog park on the west side? How did that work out? How much money did we spend for that?

Mark Gomez, Chief of Parks, Recreation & Cemetery: The one on the west side, no city money is spent on that. There's basically a management contract with a nonprofit group known as the Manchester Dog Park Association. We interface with them on a somewhat infrequent basis to try to make sure that they are fulfilling their contract and promoting the dog park and maintaining the dog park to the standards that are outlined in that agreement. But there's no cost. The way that was set up was it would always be run by a

non-profit organization. It is city land that the dog park sits on, but there's a non-profit organization that runs it through a contract.

Alderman Kantor: That's pretty much what you wanted to happen in ward six.

M. Gomez: I think in order to turn part of Youngsville Park off of County Road into a dog park, there would need to be some initial seed monies put into it. Likely those seed monies would have to come from the city long term in terms of management of the park. We don't currently have the staffing levels to maintain a dog park, which can be a fairly labor-intensive venture. We were always looking to have a nonprofit set up to help manage the park, raise funds for the park, and make improvements to the park over the long term.

Alderman Kantor: Well, last I heard, it's really pretty hard to utilize the dog park over there which is really kind of sad when it is city property. You gave me this great list with how much money is supposed to be spent on all the parks. I had asked, and this park that you're proposing for \$2.5 million is not on the sheet.

M. Gomez: I don't have that table in front of me. Where we currently are with the Wolf Park renovation that's being discussed is we had an allocation, I think was two years ago, to develop a master plan for the park which we did through a series of community meetings. And then this year there was an allocation. I apologize if it's not on there, but this year, there was an allocation of \$500,000 in order to develop the design and construction specs for basically implementation of the master plan. The idea is to phase in the improvements to the park over time with allocations each year. To do so, the main elements of the improvements are upgrading the softball field, which I understand at one time was kind of the premier softball field in New Hampshire and has been allowed to degrade over time. Installation of a skateboard park, a really great skateboard park, would be a destination park for not only folks in Manchester, but for folks outside of Manchester. And then six new pickleball courts; we might have gotten eight. I'm trying to remember if we were able to squeeze in 8 or 6, but new pickleball courts, which as many of you know, is a very fast-growing sport and in much demand.

Alderman Kantor: So, is that your responsibility to take care of this new proposed park?

M. Gomez: It's an existing park. We do do maintenance there now. We would be responsible for the maintenance in the future as well.

Alderman Kantor: What are the plans for Hunt's Pool?

M. Gomez: We just finished demolition of Hunt's Pool and the associated bathhouse. We have a few punch-list items that we're working through, but that's basically complete. That is the first step towards having a replacement pool at some point. The challenge with that has always been the funding. It's an extremely expensive undertaking. We're probably looking at something north of \$5 million in order to put a new pool in, as well as a new bathhouse for that pool.

Alderman Kantor: I asked you to do this because I just wanted to see the fairness or lack of fairness across the city. Ward one is getting a lot of things done. Where are some of the other things for ward five and ward six? We need a master plan in front of everyone.

Alderman Levasseur: It's going on two years now since the bonding for the schools. I'm not sure if the number is correct, but it was around \$360 million. Are we still at that number or has the number grown or shrunk? Have they made any changes to what it's going to cost for the Beech Street School to be built?

S. Wickens: There's significant changes, down. The school district issued a bank note for one year for almost \$25 million. When they were looking at the plan, we're going to be going back out with a sale next week for \$74 million towards this. What that will do is it will pay off what they took before, and it will buy them enough money to make it through another year before the big amount of money has to be bonded in that timeframe. By waiting, they've been able to use cash because remember, the cash is still coming in every year from the state and they're putting it to it. So, the whole cost of this project is now down to \$231 million.

Alderman Levasseur: They're not going to try to recapture that cash?

S. Wickens: That's not the plan. The plan is, and we've been talking with the financial advisor, and we told the rating agencies we would be looking to bond about \$231 million, because, again, they've been taking that cash every year because we didn't go right out to bond and they've been dumping it on the cost.

Alderman Levasseur: Is that equalized by the increase in the interest rate than it was two years ago? In other words, is the \$231 million as expensive as \$270 million because of interest rates?

S. Wickens: The interest rates were going up at that point. I think that the thought is within a year they may come down a little bit. So, we may actually be in a little bit of a better position when we go to issue the \$231 million.

Alderman Terrio: Can you break down the total costs with interest on the \$3.3 and the \$2.5 million bond?

S. Wickens: The total amount is \$3.3 million. You could look at that principal and interest, on 20 year money that would be about \$300,000 roughly.

Alderman Terrio: Total all in would be \$3.6 million.

S. Wickens: With the interest.

Alderman Terrio: So, when we pay it off at the end of the term, it would be \$3.6 million total.

S. Wickens: Well, that's the interest for a year.

Alderman Terrio: What would be the total cost of the bond over the life of the bond?

S. Wickens: I think that the \$2.5 million will be a 20-year bond, but the lighting isn't going to make it, it's going to be the useful life. So, probably \$10 to \$15 million.

Alderman Terrio: The \$2.5 million would be over 20 years, right?

S. Wickens: The \$2.5 million would be over 20 years. That's about \$225,000.

Alderman Terrio: Per year?

S. Wickens: In interest, but not totally because you're paying it down. You're probably looking at about \$3 million in interest.

Alderman Terrio: At the end of the day, this is going to cost us about \$5.5 million just for the skate park.

S. Wickens: It could; we don't know what the interest rates are. We don't know what the compounding interest is. I can't answer that right now.

Mayor Ruais: I think we could probably get a better answer when it goes back to CIP. In the next month or so we could come up with a better estimate, I'm hoping.

S. Wickens: I will ask the financial advisor to prepare a preliminary thing for each one of these so that you'll be able to see what each piece of these bullets would cost over the life of the bond.

Alderman Vincent: I don't look at this as a project for the west side or for the ward. I look at this as a project for the city. When we start looking at things based on wards, I think it gets lost and convoluted. We shouldn't be looking at this in such a way. This is good for the city, this is good for the people, and I think this is long overdue. I understand it's money and this is what we do. This is why it's going to go to CIP. This is why it's going to get worked. I feel that everybody has certainly had their say. I think we definitely went off tangent quite a bit. But the point is, it's good for the city and that's the end state.

Alderman Vincent moved to approve. Alderman Barry duly seconded the motion.

Alderman Levasseur: The one on the east side was done with donations, correct? The first skateboard park on Maple Street.

M. Gomez: I don't know the source of the funds for the skate park on Maple Street. The one skateboard feature in Rock Rimmon Park on the west side was funded with CIP monies.

Alderman Levasseur: Before we go further, I have a parliamentary question. I want to make sure I understand this properly. This came out of CIP. It is now at the full board. If this was passed tonight, why would it be going back to CIP?

M. Normand: The Finance Department needs to put the bond resolution together, and the Planning Department puts the budget authorizations together.

Alderman Levasseur: So, it would go back to the CIP committee?

M. Normand: Yes; just like every other bond resolution.

Alderman Levasseur: So, we're voting on something and we don't have the bond.

M. Normand: You're voting to authorize the project to go forward.

Alderman E. Sapienza requested a roll call vote. Aldermen E. Sapienza, Kantor, Levasseur, and Terrio voted nay. Aldermen Burkush, Barry, Vincent, Thomas, Goonan, Long, Fajardo, T. Sapienza, and O'Neil voted yea. Alderman Morgan was absent. The motion carried.

Alderman Levasseur: When is this going to go back to CIP?

Mayor Ruais: The November 18th meeting.

Alderman Levasseur: November 18th, and then it'll go to the committee and come up that night?

Mayor Ruais: I don't know that it needs to come up that night as long as it's considered prior to the end of the year. It would come up in the December meeting.

REGULAR BUSINESS

17. Nominations:

Personnel Appeals Board

Adam Schmidt to fill a vacancy as a regular member, term to expire March 1, 2028

Samantha Piatt to fill a vacancy as a regular member, term to expire March 1, 2028

Mayor Ruais: My understanding is there's a potential pending matter, so I'm asking if we could suspend the rules and approve this tonight.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Goonan**, it was voted to suspend the rules and confirm the nominations as presented.*

18. Confirmations:

Office of Youth Services Advisory Board

Jerold White to fill a vacancy as a regular member, term to expire January 1, 2026

Harsh Saini to fill a vacancy as a regular member, term to expire January 1, 2027

Arts Commission

Shana Hawrylchak to fill a vacancy as a regular member, term to expire December 1, 2026

Police Commission

Martha Edgar to succeed Gene Brown as a regular member, term to expire September 15, 2028

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

19. Communication from Mayor Ruais requesting the following:

- Permission to apply for \$500,000 of CDBG-CV funding and to authorize the Mayor to effectuate the potential CDBG contract;
- Adoption of the City's Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan;
- Adoption of the City's Community Development Plan

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman T. Sapienza**, it was voted to grant permission to apply for \$500,000 of CDBG-CV funding and to authorize the*

*Mayor to effectuate the potential CDBG contract; adopt the City's Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan; adopt the City's Community Development Plan, with **Alderman Levasseur** being duly recorded in opposition.*

- 20.** Communication from the Board of School Committee advising that it has voted to authorize the School District to return Henry Wilson Elementary School to the City of Manchester.

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

Alderman Levasseur: I'm wondering if we could jump really quick through this one, since we learned a lesson from Hallsville School. Can we just make an addendum that we're going to take this, but I would like to see this get on the market ASAP without restrictions.

Alderman Long: I'd like to move this to Lands and Buildings.

Alderman Levasseur: That sounds good. We'll move this to Lands and Buildings. We could suspend the rules and just get a real estate agent on it now.

Alderman Terrio: No restrictions? They can do anything with it?

Alderman Levasseur: Anybody can make a proposal. We are the final arbiters of the proposal. We went through this with Hallsville. It took us four years to get it finally gone. Why wait?

Alderman Long: We'll get the final evaluations here.

Mayor Ruais: Because it's our property, we would ultimately make the determination. Remember we had that non-public meeting where we talked about a number of different proposals that came before us.

Alderman Levasseur: It's a perfect spot for some affordable housing.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Levasseur**, it was voted to identify a realtor to begin accepting proposals for the school building, without restrictions.*

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

S. Wickens: Based on estimates provided by department heads, the projected general fund operating surplus for fiscal year 2026 is \$313,000. This surplus consists of an expenditure surplus of \$150,000, and a revenue surplus of \$163,000. The revenue surplus is primarily driven by higher than anticipated meals and rooms tax revenue for fiscal year 2025. If fiscal year 2026 meals and rooms revenue were to come in at this same level, it would represent a \$337,000 increase over budget. However, this gain is partially offset by a decline in building permit revenue. The 2026 budget assumed permit activity related to the school district's facilities project, but actual permit values issued to date have been lower than projected. Director Belanger has requested an updated schedule from the school district's project manager, LeftField, to reassess the timeliness and potential revenue impact. Additionally, the forecasted surplus includes \$100,000 allocation for the contingency account. As of October 20, 2025, there have been ten retirements compared to eleven during the same time last year. Severance payments through this date totaled \$411,304, down from \$554,615 a year ago. Following the posting of all related entries, the severance reserve account is projected to hold a balance of \$1,354,715. I've also attached a summary of severance paid through October 20, 2025. A comment on the meals and rooms: we don't normally get the meals and rooms figure until about this time every year, so we are going to beat the 2025 budget by, I don't have that in front of me, but it's about the same amount because we left it flat going into 2026, because that's kind of what I was told to kind of leave it that way. The state was thinking that's where it would be. So, I'm holding it flat even into 2026. And we'll still, if that's the case, see this \$337,000 surplus. My concern after one quarter is definitely building permits. It being down about \$190,000. I mean, it could be a little bit worse even. I'm being hopefully optimistic, but when I sat with Director Belanger and we talked through it, it's the values of the permits that are being pulled. Construction costs seem to be down a little bit and the values are coming in lower. I don't want to have a big surprise as we go forward. We've asked for a new schedule, just like what we had seen during budget time

to see what we are facing. So normally, I'd tell you the first quarter before the tax rate is set we need to know where we are with this.

Alderman Levasseur: Have all financials been filed with the state for the tax rate?

S. Wickens: Everything has not been filed as of yet. Normally we don't have anything in. I think we're still waiting for some final numbers and some final closing of the books.

Alderman Levasseur: It's due on the 30th of this month though, right? I thought they always set the rate in November.

S. Wickens: So most everything is in. You're right. And it's usually mid-December when the tax rate is set. That is correct.

Alderman Levasseur: Mid-December?

S. Wickens: I'm sorry, November.

Alderman Levasseur: Has the school district already put theirs in?

S. Wickens: Yes, their MS24 was filed.

Alderman O'Neil: You referenced the school district amounts not coming to be realized. Are there others that you're aware of that we aren't realizing?

S. Wickens: For comparison's sake, the budget in fiscal year 2025 was \$1,670,000. And, we made budget plus some because of the school district permits. This year's budget is \$2.8 million. It was based on this schedule that we received from the school district. I mean, we talked to them ad nauseum and now it's coming in lower. We do need to get a handle on it. Once we get that new schedule, we'll know a little bit more.

Alderman O'Neil: Other than the school, does there still seem to be activity in the city?

Jeff Belanger, Planning and Community Development Director: Absolutely. It is the school district issue that is causing this. It's possible that they're just a little bit behind. When they pull a building permit, they might pull kind of an umbrella, and then there might be the electrical and the plumbing and other things that kind of are part of that. They might just be a little bit behind in pulling some of those for the different two projects that they're working on right now. So, it's possible that by next quarter, we're going to have a very different picture here. But right now, it does look behind. We're kind of looking at a point in time so we have to see how it plays out a little bit.

Alderman O'Neil: If you back schools out, the rest of it's tracking as you thought it would track?

J. Belanger: Yes. More or less.

Alderman O'Neil: But it's still busy in the city?

J. Belanger: Yes.

Mayor Ruais: Remember, just for perspective's sake, I think we had probably two, three, four Zoom meetings and phone calls during the budget process to get updated schedules because it was changing very frequently. So, I would tend to agree that it's likely just a scheduling thing, but it's certainly, to Director Wickens point, something that we absolutely have to keep our eyes on.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Goonan**, it was voted to recess the meeting in order to allow the Committee on Finance to meet.*

Mayor Ruais called the meeting back to order.

24. Report(s) of the Committee on Finance, if available.

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

“Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Twenty-Four Thousand Eight Hundred Seventy-Four Dollars (\$24,874) for the FY2025 CIP 211525 Volunteer NH Engagement Project Grant”

“Amending the FY2021 and FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount Thirty-Eight Thousand Ninety-Seven Dollars and Seventy-Six Cents (\$38,097.76) for the following FY2021 and FY2025 projects: CIP 611921- 298 Hanover St. Renovations; CIP 210725 – CBDO Special Activities; CIP 610025 Concentrated Code Enforcement 1; and CIP 610125 Concentrated Code Enforcement 2.”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Ninety Thousand Dollars (\$90,000) for the FY2026 CIP C160060526 39 Beech St Programs.”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000) for the FY2026 CIP C180060926 Boys to Men Program Office of Youth Services.”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Three Thousand Four Hundred Sixty-Nine Dollars (\$3,469) for the FY2026 CIP C330040926 Card Reader Access System to MPD NIBIN Machine Room.”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Ninety-Three Thousand Dollars (\$93,000) for the FY2026 CIP C330041026 Manchester Police Department FY26 STOP Violence Against Women.”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Two Thousand Six Hundred Eighty-Five Dollars (\$2,685) for the FY2026 CIP C330041126 FY26 MPD C.A.R Training(s).”

ought to pass and be Enrolled.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Goonan**, it was voted to waive the report's reading.*

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Fajardo**, it was voted to accept the report and adopt its recommendations.*

25. Report(s) of this evening's remaining committees, if available.

The Committee on Lands and Buildings respectfully recommends, after due and careful consideration, that the request from the owner of the property at 175 Lincoln Street for approval of a revocable license agreement to allow for the use of a parking area that is partially located within the city right-of-way be approved.

*On motion of **Alderman Levasseur**, duly seconded by **Alderman O'Neil**, it was voted to accept the report and adopt its recommendations.*

26. Resolutions:

"Amending the FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Twenty-Four Thousand Eight Hundred Seventy-Four Dollars (\$24,874) for the FY2025 CIP 211525 Volunteer NH Engagement Project Grant"

"Amending the FY2021 and FY2025 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount Thirty-Eight Thousand Ninety-Seven Dollars and Seventy-Six Cents (\$38,097.76) for the following FY2021 and FY2025 projects: CIP 611921- 298 Hanover St. Renovations; CIP 210725 – CBDO Special Activities; CIP 610025 Concentrated Code Enforcement 1; and CIP 610125 Concentrated Code Enforcement 2."

"Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Ninety Thousand Dollars (\$90,000) for the FY2026 CIP C160060526 39 Beech St Programs."

"Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000) for the FY2026 CIP C180060926 Boys to Men Program Office of Youth Services."

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Three Thousand Four Hundred Sixty-Nine Dollars (\$3,469) for the FY2026 CIP C330040926 Card Reader Access System to MPD NIBIN Machine Room.”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Ninety-Three Thousand Dollars (\$93,000) for the FY2026 CIP C330041026 Manchester Police Department FY26 STOP Violence Against Women.”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Two Thousand Six Hundred Eighty-Five Dollars (\$2,685) for the FY2026 CIP C330041126 FY26 MPD C.A.R Training(s).”

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

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

NEW BUSINESS

Alderman O'Neil: I have a couple of items. First one, I'm asking to be referred to the HR committee. There were some numbers and I apologize, I didn't have them when I did the memo, but Alderman Sapienza helped with a spirited discussion regarding GLP, a month or so ago. The Rx save card, in the school district is using a lower number for the employees than the city is, and I'm just asking that it gets referred to Alderman Sapienza's committee, just to see what's the right number. This is a big deal for employees if they're paying out of pocket and we should see if there are opportunities to save some money.

*On motion of **Alderman O'Neil**, duly seconded by **Alderman Barry**, it was voted to refer the discussion regarding the cost of GLP-1 medications and the cost savings through the Rx Save Card program to the Committee on Human Resources/Insurance.*

Alderman O'Neil: The other item that has come to my attention is that there have been changes in leadership at Central Little League. I know Public Works, the Parks Division had some plans to take a couple of the fields and make them soccer fields, which are greatly needed in the city. But with this new leadership, there's no leadership at Pony League baseball. My opinion, we're doing an injustice to the kids from the center city. If

we don't allow this new leadership to figure out trying to determine little league boundary lines, which are old and unfortunately, the young people from the center city, if they want to play baseball, they're not getting to Precourt Park or North Little League. Director Clougherty and I had a spirited discussion. The one thing Tim asked, if we did pass this, is to put a time limit on it. I suggested a couple months, and this is being discussed at the state level of Little League. They want to get the center city kids playing baseball. Once we make a change to soccer and unfortunately, it's not for soccer to serve the center city kids. I'm just asking that we pass this. Tim thought if the board did it, it might have a little more than asking his department to do it.

Mayor Ruais: Director, could you give us a little bit of background on this, please?

Tim Clougherty, Director of Public Works: As Alderman O'Neil pointed out, we had a spirited discussion about recreational opportunities in the center city, specifically at Sheehan-Basquil Park. Our current course is to follow the master plan for that area, which calls for construction of a soccer field on the smallest of the three baseball fields that are at that facility. We've done a significant amount of work researching what is actually needed in the city. We can talk about statistics for baseball, statistics for soccer. But at the end of the day, soccer is overwhelmingly more in demand. And that's where we see the need. I appreciate Alderman O'Neil's passion and desire to see us delay this. But I pointed out, the field that we're talking about has been vacant for the better part of ten years. Delaying the project is not in the best interest of the park at this given time. But if that's what the board wants to do, we're more than happy to take direction from the board.

Alderman O'Neil: These have sat generally vacant. There has been one gentleman trying to keep Central Little League going and it hasn't been as active as it could have been way back, and Tim's right about that, but I became aware just a week or so ago. This is a real serious discussion in the city, among the Little League communities, about trying to do something. There's still a Central League charter, so there's got to be a decision made by Little League. Do they keep it or not? The boundaries don't line up. I appreciate Tim saying to put a time limit on it; two months. I don't think it's going to stop them. They're not going to be doing the project in the winter time. I could commit that I would drive Little League to get an answer within two months.

Alderman Barry: Is the Major League park staying?

T. Clougherty: Yes, it is.

Alderman Barry: I agree that we absolutely need a soccer facility in that neighborhood. Who's going to utilize the soccer field, who's going to benefit from it? I know the inner-city kids hopefully are going to benefit the most, but who else is going to benefit? I'm hearing that we leagues may have to pay to play there. Is that accurate?

M. Gomez: We haven't had any discussions with any organization thus far about who would utilize the field. It would be available to any of the organizations that currently run youth soccer programs in Manchester. Currently we have 20 different youth soccer organizations that we work with in Manchester. That ranges from schools all the way to what would traditionally be considered rec programs to what I would call very low cost travel programs.

Alderman Barry: Now, when you say very low cost, what do you mean by that?

M. Gomez: A couple hundred dollars for the year.

Alderman Barry: They pay us?

M. Gomez: No, that would be the registration fee for kids that are participating in the program. Most of our programs that we work with have no registration fees or they have low registration fees. And they offer scholarships. Like I said, we work with 20 different organizations currently. Any Manchester based youth sports organization that commits to low barriers for participation. Parks and Rec does not charge a fee for the use of the fields.

Alderman Barry: What kind of makes me nervous now because of what you said, is these organizations that charge you to play in that area. I want the inner-city kids to be able to

play. And I'm sure Alderman Sapienza is going to agree with this. We want to make anything and everything is available for them without a cost.

M. Gomez: We agree as well. So, we give priority to organizations that are not charging. That's across the board whether we're talking about soccer, baseball, lacrosse, what have you. They would have priority for use of those fields several nights a week. During the warm weather months, there's a small mini pitch at Sheehan-Basquil Park right next door to where we're talking about putting in this new soccer field. That has massive utilization by neighborhood kids almost every night of the week there.

Alderman Barry: That's great; that is what we need there. We absolutely need Hunt's Pool; eventually we need that back. Kids don't learn to swim with the splash pads. They're going to learn to swim if they have a pool. Livingston's got a pool. Raco-Theodore is another topic because I'm frustrated with the fact that the kids in those neighborhoods can't utilize Raco-Theodore as much as they should be able to utilize it because we have swim teams that go there and they take over. That's unfortunate because we have a lot of people. Again, the West Side is kind of left out. We don't have a pool other than Raco-Theodore. And unfortunately, it's utilized by swim teams a lot. My whole point is this, pay to play stuff, these kids can't afford it. We need them to utilize that area. As a city, we need to do everything we can to get kids back outside.

Alderman Goonan: I think your master plan is great. I think we should move forward with this project. I agree that I hate to see baseball in the position it is in right now, but I think common sense tells you that we need a soccer field down there, as opposed to a baseball field that's been vacant for a decade. How many fields right now that serve little leagues are being used at all?

M. Gomez: There are three main complexes that are utilized by the three primary youth baseball organizations in Manchester right now. We've got North Manchester, Hooksett Little League at Livingston Park, we've got Manchester Little League operating out of Precourt Park, and then Cal Ripken which operates out of Stevens Park. Those fields are getting used. If you look outside of those complexes, I had staff run some numbers today, we've had a total of 160 hours of baseball reservations outside of those complexes. By

way of comparison, we've had 1,596 hours of soccer reservations outside of the main soccer complexes that are dedicated to local leagues.

Alderman T. Sapienza: Could you repeat those numbers?

M. Gomez: So, outside of the North Manchester Hooksett Little League complex at Livingston Park, the Manchester Little League complex at Precourt Park, and then the Cal Ripken complex at Stevens Park, we have only had reservation requests for 160 hours, excuse me, 186 hours of baseball this year. If you do an apples to apples comparison, where you look at the main complexes that are dedicated to local soccer leagues, that would be North Soccer at Livingston, South Soccer at Precourt Park, and the Angels Soccer Group up at Rock Rimmon soccer fields, and then finally East Soccer over at Stevens Pond Park, if you look at reservation requests for soccer outside of those fields, it is 1,596 hours. This has really caused an issue for us. We're trying as best we can to slot all the different soccer organizations into fields at times when the kids and the coaches and the parents are available. Quite frankly, we're getting to the point where the demand is outstripping the supply. I think this is a great opportunity for us to put a new soccer field in that will help us meet the demand. It will also be in a part of the city where we've got a lot of kids who are really into soccer and they need that recreational space. Quite frankly, most of what's happening at that recreational space the last several years, unfortunately, is drug use and occasional homeless encampments.

Alderman T. Sapienza: What's your construction schedule for the soccer field?

M. Gomez: We'd like to get the bid documents out in the next month or two. Sooner the better. We're working on them as we speak. And then hopefully we can have the field constructed in the spring. We're going to need to let it sit for a little while for the grass to take hold. But our goal is to have it be available for play in the fall.

Alderman T. Sapienza: If we were to delay it now, would that slow a shovel getting in the ground in the spring?

M. Gomez: Potentially, yes.

Alderman T. Sapienza: We definitely need soccer fields. There's no doubt about it. I've been hearing about soccer being up and coming since I was a boy. It sounds like it's finally here.

Alderman O'Neil: In fairness, though, of that number, as you said, of thousands of hours, how many of those programs charge?

M. Gomez: I think I said we work with 20 different programs. I believe of those three, possibly four are charging.

Alderman O'Neil: That's my point, these are teams that charge hundreds of dollars to play, if not more. I would support this if Parks comes up with a plan that they said they're going to run a a center city soccer program, I'd support this 100%. I don't believe that's what's going to happen there, though. It's going to be a pay to play, and the kids from that section of the city are going to get left out.

M. Gomez: Alderman O'Neil, we have no desire to provide a preference for pay to play programs at this location. Our motivation for putting in this field is to better serve the kids in that neighborhood primarily, first and foremost. And the kids in that neighborhood primarily are not involved in programs that are high cost.

Alderman O'Neil: Are you making a commitment tonight that it will not be the pay to play teams there? If you say that, I'll support this and pull my request.

M. Gomez: The field will be available to anybody that looks to reserve it. Our priority will be for reservations, as it is for all of our fields. As you know, our priority will be for reservations for teams and leagues that are low cost, no cost, and low barrier.

Alderman O'Neil: The East, South, North and I think the Angels, all charge.

M. Gomez: All of those leagues charge.

Alderman O'Neil: They don't charge \$200.

M. Gomez: They may charge \$75 or \$80.

Alderman O'Neil: We're getting into semantics. I just think the kids from the inner city, other than if they go there at 8:00 at night when nobody's using it, there is no league that is being set, you're not proposing a league to serve the young people of the city.

M. Gomez: I've spoken with the Safari Youth Club which, as you know, does a lot of work with people in that community at no cost. They are super excited about the opportunity to have a field in that neighborhood.

Alderman O'Neil: Tell me that's what's going to happen. But if I see some of these other football clubs, they're pay to play. And you and I can disagree. I live in the community. I know what goes on here. They're pay to play.

Alderman Morgan: I want to give a little perspective to the Beech Street Soccer Club that is down there. Over 300 kids every week are playing on the pitch. It's a huge soccer community. They need this big time. Every one of those kids, they're given the opportunity to play at no cost. They're literally showing up, and they're playing. It's amazing if you haven't seen it. It's an amazing thing to see that down there. So, there's definitely a need for a soccer field down there for sure. They have tons and tons of kids and we'll have more I think if we have the opportunity, and they're all playing for free.

Alderman Barry: Do you have anyone on staff that actually oversees sports in the City of Manchester?

M. Gomez: Parks and Rec does not run its own programs, by and large, for league sports. We have drop in pickleball programs that we run; we offer lessons in a variety of sports such as tennis, pickleball.

Alderman Barry: Is that something you run, clinics?

M. Gomez: We cooperate with outside entities to run clinics, but we don't run the leagues ourselves.

Alderman Barry: Do you think that's something that the city needs someone on staff that would oversee all that? It's so important that someone keeps a good eye on what's going on in our city and what's available for our city kids, and we need to promote it. And that's part of the problem, unfortunately, the promotion isn't there. Kids, especially in the inner city, they don't have access to what a lot of other kids have throughout the city to be able to join leagues. Whether it be a soccer program or basketball or football or whatever program. We need someone on board at your office that will be able to do that.

Mayor Ruais: The question before the board is whether or not we want to pause the conversion of the field. Do we feel like there is a consensus that we should pause, or should we go through with the master plan as currently proposed? Because DPW is telling us that there's a need for soccer fields in this area.

Alderman Vincent: How long is the pause going to be and how does that affect what you have currently as a plan? Were you looking for 30 days?

Alderman O'Neil: I said when I was talking to Director Clougherty, it was proposed as two months.

Mayor Ruais: What would we be looking to achieve with a delay?

Alderman Vincent: That is what I'm trying to understand. I think the wheels are in motion is my understanding.

Mayor Ruais: Do we have a consensus?

Alderman O'Neil: I'll pull my motion, your Honor, but I'm going to hold the Division's manager accountable.

Alderman Fajardo: Yesterday, the Mayor's Office released a press release with some updated numbers on progress toward addressing homelessness. Going back through my email, I think most of the communications that this board has received is via press release. I wanted to make a motion that we have some time before the end of the year to have a proper presentation by whoever is in charge of that right now to come before the board and give a full update. I think the press releases are probably written in such a way that they highlight a lot of wonderful things and progress. I personally have more questions, and I think that it would be appropriate to have that opportunity to have conversations like we used to.

Mayor Ruais: I don't think we would even need a motion. I'm happy to commit to doing that.

Alderman Kantor: Has anyone heard about the Concord Skate Park Association and how they are funding their skate park with the grant and fundraising? What's left of the Covid money? The children were definitely affected by the Covid crisis and they were not allowed to go to school. So, kids need to move. How much is actually left of the Covid money because that could fund a portion of something.

Mayor Ruais: I'm not familiar with the Concord Skate Park, but I'm sure we can pull together information if folks are interested in finding out more information about that on the Covid funds. All of the money that the city has received from ARPA, from the federal government, all of those were obligated at the end of last year. So those are all set in stone at this point.

Alderman Kantor: I was just wondering about the investigation on the Wheel of Power and Privilege. Where are we with that?

Mayor Ruais: The superintendent has said that the investigation is ongoing, and when she completes the investigation through the school board, I'm sure a notice will be made available.

Alderman Kantor: Do we have a timeline for how long investigations last?

Mayor Ruais: You have to ask the superintendent. She's conducting the investigation, so I can't speak to any specifics of any investigation or what the length of time is for each individual investigation. I'm sure they're all unique in their own way.

Alderman Kantor: I am part of this wheel of power and privilege because I'm definitely in the middle somewhere. I'm brown and I'm a woman, so I definitely feel less than on this board. So maybe she's going to educate me on this. I'd like to know. I am brown and I am a woman, and I am feeling disregarded, especially in ward six. I don't think there's really true equity in this whole city. And ward five, I'm very sad about their parks, and we should be building a pool for them. It's just ridiculous. How long is an investigation going to take? And how long did my investigation take?

Alderman Morgan: I want to recognize the New Hampshire Fisher Cats, the Double-A affiliate of the Toronto Blue Jays. As we know, last night, the Blue Jays made it to the World Series and the manager of the Blue Jays was the manager of the Fisher Cats as well as several players like Vlad Guerrero, Bo Bichette, and a bunch of other players. So, it just shows what we have here in Manchester, an amazing minor league program with players that are going to be at the next level. So, the guys that you are watching are right here in Manchester. So, buy your season tickets. Go get them right now.

Alderman Levasseur: But at the same time, we're getting rid of baseball in our parks. So, I guess the Fisher Cats didn't turn out to be so great for our youth.

TABLED ITEMS

27. 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.)
28. 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.)*

These items 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

*Meeting Start Time: 7:00PM
Meeting End Time: 8:22PM
Minutes Prepared By: Michael Intranuovo*