

COMMITTEE ON JOINT SCHOOL BUILDINGS

March 10, 2026 at 5:00 PM

Chairman O'Connell called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Bonilla, Fajardo (arrived 5:09PM)
School Committee Members O'Connell, Turner, Hamer

Absent: Alderman Thomas

Messrs.: Alderman Sapienza, M. Upton, J. Soucy, M. Lenfest, H. Cobanoglu

Chairman O'Connell: Before we get to the first item on the agenda tonight, we're going to see if we have an opportunity for people to address the board. I don't have the formal writing here, but I've spoken to Alderman Sapienza prior to the meeting, and he has a question and a comment. So, we'll hear from Alderman Sapienza.

Alderman Sapienza: Thanks for the opportunity. So could someone hopefully explain to me how it is that in December of 2023, the Board of School Committee approved a \$290 million bond for phase one, and now I'm finding out that \$62.6 million has been spent in cash so far for phase one. I'll read it off here really quick: because project spending has progressed more slowly than originally projected, the school district has been able to fund approximately \$62.6 million of the \$306 million project cost with cash. Now, that might sound like fiscal responsibility, but I mean, the analogy was made at the last aldermen meeting that it's kind of like making a higher down payment on a house to keep the payments lower for the next 30 years. That sounds good, but you don't do that if you're broke, which we are. We're staring into the face of a very sizable deficit. I mean, \$62.6 million is approximately a quarter of the overall school budget for fiscal year 2027, approximately. That's a lot of money to spend in cash when you actually don't have a lot of money. If somebody can help me make that make sense, that would be great.

Chairman O'Connell: I don't think we've got the right people in the room to answer that because this is an issue for finance. We do have LeftField in the room, who is responsible. So, we can answer part of that, but not the question you actually asked. They can tell you what monies have been spent to the last penny, but with regard to the sources of the funding, bonding, anticipatory notes, and financials, that's not the purview of LeftField. They're managing the project and every dollar that's spent within it. So, they can answer those questions. So, we could start with, for instance, the number you quote, the \$62 million that's been spent in cash.

Alderman Sapienza: LeftField seems like some terrific folks. They're like an objective third party. Who greenlighted \$62.6 million cash, when in fact we had a \$290 million bond greenlighted?

Chairman O'Connell: Having said, first of all, that the people involved in the decision, I'm not certain of the \$62 million number, but if that is the right number, I don't know what it is. It changes regularly. The people who have been responsible for it and have been managing that are the financial people at the school district, which is Karen DeFrancis and then on the city side, our city finance director, Sharon Wickens, as well as bonding

council and some other entities whose titles I've forgotten, who are at the level of advisors on bonds. I can add something else, which is at the outset of this project, the estimated cost of financing \$290 million of bonding was \$17 million per year. So, I just want to be clear, I don't have the numbers written in front of me, so I'm giving you the best I can to help us all to move forward, now it is around \$17.7 million. As the years proceed, it's anticipated that if we were to bond the full \$290 million, that \$17 million would be needed year over year over year out over time. And so one of the factors is you don't want to get into a point where you don't use the \$17 million for the purpose that you might be alluding to. For instance, take the \$17 million and pay salaries and ongoing expenses for general expenses. What that would do is the year that the bonding was done, first of all, the bond would be a full \$290 million, and the year at which you issued the bonds, you would have to find \$17 million in the budget. And now the taxpayers would have a hole of \$17 million that would need to be filled on unanticipated or at least anticipated, because everybody knew about it. But the money's not in the budget. And the school district would be going to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen saying we're in year three of this project. We're issuing the final bonds. The full note now needs to be paid annually, and it's \$17 million a year. And oh, by the way, we didn't have the \$17 million in the budget for the last three years. So now we want you to give it to us. So, the \$17 million was put aside. The \$17 million has been used to pay down, as you call it, cash. So, it's been used to pay down the anticipated costs. So now I don't know what the latest number is, but for instance, the modular work was paid for out of that \$17 million. And so, it's gone for that purpose because that budget item needs to be maintained so that there is not a shock to the taxpayers in year three. The premise on which this project was approved by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen was that this project would not affect or increase the tax cap compliant number in the City of Manchester. It was being done within the existing budget and that was the case, and the anticipation was that the school district would continue to get funded at the cost-of-living increase over time. What was not anticipated was that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen would pass budgets that would reduce our funding. For instance, in the last two years, it has reduced our funding \$17 million below the cost-of-living increase, which has caused us to have a \$16 million hole this year. So, we didn't have a hole before the hole was made. Another point I'd like to make is that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen last year passed a budget in the City of Manchester, which reduced taxes for the families and taxpayers of Manchester for the schools by 2.4%, creating a bigger hole. And that was made up by that money; the \$17 million isn't a separate bucket. The \$17 million is part of the money that the school district has. Last year we had to spend \$10 million in emergency funds because of the reasons I just outlined. What has been happening is that now we anticipate that the eventual cost of this project, which will come in under budget and on time, we're confident of that, but that the anticipated loan will not be as high as \$290 million. Whatever the new number is, I don't want to risk saying it here today because I don't know what it is, but I do know that the annual cost of the loan will go down to \$16 million or below. So, that is an oversight of where we are. The last thing I will say, and I'll let you respond, is that all of this is being done by the best advice we can get from bonding counsel out of New York, Boston, our own finance director and finance department, and Karen DeFrancis, and is seen by all of those people who advise us as fiscally responsible and as the prudent thing to do and the right thing to do by the taxpayers of Manchester.

Matt Upton, Executive Director of Legal & Policy of the Manchester School District: When the original bond was approved, the spending authority was \$306 million. The amount of

bonding authority was \$290 million at the time that that was approved. There was a representation made by both the Board of School Committee and the BMA that it would have no impact on the tax rate. What the chairman has said is, in fact, correct. If we started spending that \$17 million on operating costs, that money would not exist when the bond had to be issued. Now, if we had issued the bond back at the time, we had gotten the authority and we didn't need it at the time. We could utilize bond anticipation notes which is what we've been doing here at a much lower interest rate, so that the overall cost of the project has been reduced. But let's say we did bond the \$290 million back when the spending authority was given. That \$17 million would be gone. We'd be paying on it right now and there would be no \$17 million available. We're talking about the possibility this year of using some portion of that to actually offset some of the costs of the budget. This is the smartest thing we can do. And you can talk to Sharon Wickens. There are a number of people who are very independent in this who will tell you this is what we were advised to do and made the most sense.

Alderman Sapienza: I'll just briefly conclude with this. This can get rather complex. I'm not claiming to be a municipal bond expert, but when I see that the school spent \$62.6 million cash and we're looking at a \$16 million deficit this coming fiscal year minimum, it doesn't add up. Yes, it can get complex, but you can also simplify it. \$62.6 million cash. To me, it doesn't add up. I'm going to say thank you and goodbye and let these folks make their presentation. Obviously, this is going to come up again as we enter the budget discussions.

Chairman O'Connell: I appreciate your interest in being here. You know, there are 28 public representatives, 29, including the mayor in the city of Manchester. It's not lost on me that you're here and making your point and seeking clarity. So, I appreciate that. I want to encourage you and others to come. This is the place to be doing this. You know, there may be other venues, but it's certainly appropriate here. So, I just would say to you, the \$62 million seems to me that that includes bond and treasury notes because the Manchester School District can only have used \$17 million, that is the most money that's there. So, if that was a full three years, it's \$51 million. So, if you use the entire \$17 million per year for the full three years, it'll be \$51 million. I do know that a bond anticipatory note for \$28 million has already been drawn down. I know that there's a further bond anticipatory note that will be drawn down in financial year 2026-27. That bond, if you really want to get into details of it, will pay off the first anticipatory bond and it will pay off, then it will add more, and that's done for the purposes of minimizing the cost of doing this project. I disagree with you with great respect. First of all, you said the word cash like you emphasized it.

Alderman Sapienza: I'm reading it off this document.

Chairman O'Connell: What's the document?

Alderman Sapienza: This is the document that Sharon Wickens was nice enough to send out; I didn't make this document up. She put it together.

Chairman O'Connell: So again, Sharon isn't here to speak for herself. I'm sure she'll speak as appropriate and anytime she's asked to at the Chambers. But she has been integral to this process and I'm sure I haven't seen what you've got, but I'm certain because I know

from speaking to her that she would not say anything that would say, I don't agree or I don't think this is right or I think this is wrong. So, whatever she gave you, she gave you the answer to the question. Not knowing what you're looking at, I can say with great certainty she did not say I think we could have done it another way or this wasn't wise, because that's not what she and all the other experts are saying. We have a disagreement here; you're disagreeing with the best advice the city can get from the best people we can find on the east coast. They are unanimous in saying that this is the right way to do it. I understand your point, but at some point, you also have to recognize that the voices who do know about it and are trained in the subject and are paid to look after the best interests of the taxpayers, are telling you very clearly this is the right way to do this, and this is the best value for the people of Manchester.

Alderman Sapienza: We're supposed to just leave it to the experts? I'm looking at again, \$62.6 million cash. I'm not making that up. I'll send you this email here. I admit I'm not a municipal bond expert. I know there are experts out there, but if we're looking at a deficit of \$16 million at a bare minimum for the school budget, and I'm reading on this document that Sharon Wickens was nice enough to prepare, and it says that this \$62.6 million cash has been spent, I have to ask some questions. It doesn't add up to me.

Chairman O'Connell: With great respect, it doesn't add up to you, but it adds up to everybody else in the room.

Alderman Sapienza: It does?

Alderman Bonilla: I definitely would further ask Sharon about the \$62 million cash. Ask her to break it down. All of us are meeting together soon in the next couple of weeks. I would save that question there so you could ask them to really break it down. You've mentioned the question about three times, and I hear you. So just mention it there. We'll have all the experts.

Alderman Sapienza: Everybody should have the document that I have. It's public. It's not confidential.

Alderman Bonilla: If you don't mind sharing it with everybody.

Alderman Sapienza: Sure.

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

Jennifer Soucy, Project Manager at SMMA: We thought with the new board coming aboard this year, it would be appropriate to do a design update for the board to share where we're at with the designs, where we're at with the project, and open it up if there's any questions. So, with that, I do have a lot of slides because we do have a lot of good things to share.

Chairman O'Connell: Just so my colleagues on the board know, the purpose of this is especially to for members Hamer and Fajardo and Bonilla, to all of us really, but especially for you, to bring everybody up to speed.

J. Soucy: We'll start with the middle schools; Hillside Middle School, up on the screen is the proposed site plan. So, you see the existing building, Reservoir Ave is on your left. And then the new addition, which if you've driven by there, you can actually see it pretty prominently from the road. It's on the back side, the north side of the building. It's roughly 42,000ft². So, this school, once complete, will accommodate 1,200 students. Some other site improvements that we're doing is adding a parking lot for staff. The parking lot that exists there now where all the construction trailers are, that will be removed and the city has a plan to restore that to an athletic field after the end of the project. We are creating a loop road around the building and where the temporary modular classroom building is now that will be removed and that will become play space just outside of the existing cafeteria. So just sharing a couple renderings; this is a couple views of the new main entrance. We're constructing a new canopy at the main entrance, new signage, all new windows. On the upper image you can see the three-story addition peeking up in the background. This is a view of the new addition. Again, I said three stories. The first floor of the addition is actually the new media center. So, one thing that we've tried to incorporate in all of the new middle school designs is to make the media center more accessible. Right now, they're sort of buried on the second floor within the buildings. So, there's direct access from the exterior. So, it really will become a community resource after hours. It will be easily accessible, lots of nice large windows, natural light. On the left, you can see the existing cafeteria. We will be replacing windows, making them larger. Adding some more light into those spaces. This is a view of the main entry lobby with all of the middle schools. We also are trying to make the entrances more welcoming. So, we've incorporated some graphic walls. And just conceptually we're trying to draw inspiration from local landscapes, industries, different local inspiration. So, this design is actually reminiscent of the Amoskeag Falls and it's just conceptual, but it's to honor that. We're also incorporating some specialty ceilings, which are wood look ceilings. So, it'll give that space a lot of warmth as you enter into the space. This is a view of the new media center. So, you could see the windows to the exterior in the back. Also, incorporating some of this wood look ceiling to add some warmth into the space. We're adding a lot of flexible furniture, a lot of different zones in that space. Another view just looking in the other direction, you can see again, a lot of the different furniture areas that we're creating. And we'll have a makerspace in a separate classroom that'll be open just off of the library. This is a view of one of the new spaces in the addition. This is an art classroom on the upper level of the addition. So, with the higher ceilings and exposed structure, it's a more industrial looking type space. I'll go through McLaughlin and then I'm happy to take any questions on any of the projects. So, McLaughlin, you could see the "U" shape of the existing building. The addition is actually finishing that loop and tying in or linking the two public spaces, the gym on the right, and then the cafeteria on the left. Largely the site's circulation remains the same. We are going to be making this section in front of the building two way to help improve some of the circulation because right now you have to loop around the entire building. So, some minor improvements to the site. Also, when we link these with the new additions, we're creating an exterior courtyard space, which is a nice secure space where we'll have outdoor learning classroom space. Also creating some outdoor play area on the backside of the building for the new fifth grade. This is a view of the new addition. So, this is the new main entrance to the building or relocating all of the admin spaces up to the new addition. And then on the second floor will be the media center which will be easily accessible to the public as well after hours. So, you can see that prominently displayed opening up to the community. This is a view

of the backside of the addition. So, this is that interior courtyard with some outdoor classroom spaces, lots of nice windows and natural light. This is a view of the main entry lobby. You can see the two-story open stair which will lead you up to the media center. A lot of the graphic design in here draws inspiration from the fall in New Hampshire and all the bright colors of the landscape. Just the second floor of that addition. And this is the entrance to the media center. Lots of open glazing. And this is a view inside the media center. This is the circulation desk. Lots of color, lots of flexible furniture, and then a view. Also, within the addition, we have a new makerspace lab type space. So again, open ceilings. Southside is very similar to Hillside. This will accommodate 1,200 students. So, because Southside, Parkside and Hillside are almost identical buildings, our approach to the addition and location are very similar. So, you can see that's on the north side of the building. As far as site improvements, we are trying to make some improvements with adding some layover drop off area in front of the building and accessible parking close to the main entrance. So, you can see that's where the number one and number five and six are in this diagram site. The rest of the circulation around the site will largely remain as it exists right now. We are going to create a hardscape area play area in the front of the building along South Jewett Street, which will have basketball courts. So, we're relocating those from the back of the building into the front.

Chairman O'Connell: For future board members who will be here in the future, if you look to the top end of that, where the parking lot is above the number for that parking lot right there. So, it was hoped in this project, it was never part of the project, it didn't make it into the cut. So, it's not as though we reduced the scope. But as part of the long-term planning, there are a couple of things for the fields and areas for these schools. There's a hope that that area that's now scrubland or whatever, that area right there that had we gone the full hog, so to speak, we would have put a playing field right there. It's set up for it. It's the right place to do it. There is also the field next to Hillside, which is in the CIP budget for a future date that would have a field there.

Alderman Fajardo: Are you referring to the football field or that small parking area?

Chairman O'Connell: I'm referring to the area right there where she's circulating with the cursor. So, it would be the hope that when funding is available, there's not actually a plan, as such that exists for that right now, it's certainly not part of this, for your information, as we go forward, this is what the right thing to do for these schools would be. Our middle schools need playing fields.

J. Soucy: There's an opportunity there for future development.

Chairman O'Connell: And the parking lot is there now and the access to the parking lot is there. So, it's kind of easy.

J. Soucy: So, this is a view of the new addition, more street facing on this side. So, we've also tried to incorporate school colors in some of the exterior elements, but also all throughout the interior of the building. Again, the media center located on the first floor with lots of glazing. And then this is a view of the main entrance lobby. So, this is taking inspiration from the White Mountains and the landscape of the mountains. This is a view of the media center here at Southside. Again, they all have similar elements, although they are unique in their own designs, but we are trying to create some consistency and

parity between all the middle schools. Just another view again, of the circulation desk and the different furniture zones in the makerspace that's off of this library as well. So, Parkside, this school is designed for 800 students. So, the addition is on the back side, the north side of the building, a two-story addition in this case so a little bit smaller. From a site perspective, we are making some improvements with drop off along the main entrance, but also around the back of the building again, keeping in place the playground area for the most part, as we know that this was recently improved. There's a futsal court, some basketball courts that will be relocated and incorporated into the final design. And then we are creating a loop road, formalizing that for emergency access around the building. This is a view of the addition. Again, the media center on the first floor. And then the view of the main entrance lobby, which takes its inspiration from the textile industry, the Amoskeag textiles that are local. And a view of the entrance to the media center, again, you could see some of the floor design incorporating that design concept in the media center here at Parkside. And then a view of the art space up in the new addition as well.

Chairman O'Connell: You've been alluding to the textiles, the White Mountains, and other stuff. For those who are interested in the artistry or conceptual nature of what was done here, a lot of thought went into all of that, both the design, the colors, and they're tied into various things from the Amoskeag Falls to different elements and the schools each have their own and the whole color palette comes from that. I mean, it's work you guys do every day so you're not as impressed with it as someone like me who doesn't realize the amount of creative and artistic effort that goes into this. A lot of thought from our team goes into it and a lot of planning. The number that struck me just as we looked at that, I think it's worth noting there are a lot of indirect benefits that are happening here. For instance, the road around Parkside; right now, there's no road around Parkside. If you ask the police or the fire department, the fire department is thrilled that they now have access to that school instead of driving in mud if there was a problem there, God forbid. That's a consequence. These are big improvements, small, but big improvements. One of the key things, if you're looking at these buildings, is if you go to those middle schools today, they have steps and there's a ramp to one side. Those are all being eliminated; the ground is going to be raised so the whole area outside will be leveled with the front doors. So, there won't be need for special ramps for people who are not ambulatory or disabled or whatever. People have ease of access, and those kinds of things are repeated around the building. So besides what we see here in terms of these wonderful spaces that are going to be great for students to learn in, there are lots of other incremental differences.

School Committee Member Hamer: A quick comment on the Parkside steps. I was there recently. I hadn't been there in a year or two, and it seems like the steps got steeper because everything is sinking. I had somebody with me that I had to help up the steps because they've gotten bigger. I think that's a great point. That road around there, I mean, it's a disaster the way it is now with Gossler Park right next to it and when it comes time to do drop off and pick-ups and things like that. That's a great improvement. I think people will recognize that for sure.

Alderman Fajardo: I just wanted to ask, in terms of the imagery that you were sharing, the renderings, to what extent are these conceptual, to what extent are they considered final?

J. Soucy: I would say they're very late in the design process, so there may be little tweaks, but for the most part, conceptually that's what the design is currently.

Alderman Fajardo: When we walk in someday it should look familiar to those of us who saw these slides.

Chairman O'Connell: And now the moment I know that, at very minimum, Alderman Bonilla has been waiting for, Beech Street School.

J. Soucy: The site plan for the new Beech is across the street from the current Beech Street School. So, it's at the current Sheridan-Emmet Park site. The configuration of the new school is sited this way primarily because we have an underground culvert, historically there's a historic brook that runs pretty much right directly through the middle of the site basically following the profile of the building. So, we didn't want to build on the culvert, but we also kind of took inspiration from that. And, conceptually, we've called it the edge of the brook. Similar to how a lot of the mill buildings follow the rivers as well through the city. So, Beech Street is on your right. We've created from a site perspective, a loading area, a bus or parent drop off area on the site itself. The site is really tight and it's complex in terms of its geometry, but we were able to create a drop off area with some limited parking because a lot of the parking for staff will be across the way. We are going to be doing some improvements along Beech Street for crossing and working with city traffic on those elements that we're going to be adding to the street.

Alderman Fajardo: I was actually wondering about traffic. And you just mentioned that you're working with our highway department.

J. Soucy: We are.

Alderman Fajardo: Is there any anticipation on your part of when this street will ultimately be going from two lanes down to one? Is that something that you're considering?

J. Soucy: We're not. Currently, we're not considering going down to one lane. It's still two lanes.

Alderman Fajardo: I am considering that almost every day.

J. Soucy: We do have improvements. We are going to be adjusting some of the curb lines that are sort of traffic calming measures that we've been working with city traffic on. That will help.

Chairman O'Connell: There will be paperwork going before the Committee on Public Safety, Health & Traffic. That will be coming forward pretty soon to do the crosswalk here on the bottom right-hand corner. And you'll see there's a bump out right there. So that actually has a kind of a traffic-calming effect. There is a layby where it says bus loading there. So that's actually so shorter buses, etc. will be able to pull in there and there is going to be a lane to the right. Today, that's a sidewalk and parking, but now it's going to be a layby area. This will be an enhanced crosswalk crossing Beech Street. When the work is done on the right-hand side, on the east side of this thing where the current Beech Street School is, where there will be a field, a soccer field, etc., there'll be fencing to stop

balls coming onto the street and all that. But another effect it will have is that people will not be able to or inclined to cross across the street at those points. The fencing will bring them down to the point where that crosswalk is. For those of you in ward five, there is a footpath that goes easterly from about where the crosswalk is along the side of that field. So, it connects over onto Maple Street. And that's a tree lined footpath that is envisioned under the later phases of this project. I love the single lane Beech and Maple and others north of Bridge. I think it would be great if they were able to be done, that would be an enhancement to this. But for now, the traffic calming piece or maybe it's not being sold as that, but the bump outs will serve that purpose. And there is also going to be something coming before your board as well with regard to a crosswalk not shown here, but on the western side crossing Union as well. So, and also the work to change Green Street to one way will be part of that package. It's a minor change, but you'll be seeing that in the coming months.

Alderman Bonilla: So, with the bump out right there on Beech Street, do we get the little yellow flashing lights?

J. Soucy: Yes, the rectangular rapid flashing lights.

Alderman Bonilla: And then on the Union side, do we get a bump out there as well?

J. Soucy: This site plan doesn't reflect it. That was a more recent request from traffic, but yes.

Alderman Bonilla: Do we get the yellow flashing lights?

J. Soucy: Not on Union Street.

Hamdi Cobanoglu, Senior Project Manager at LeftField: Just a crosswalk.

J. Soucy: The city could do that project as well.

Alderman Bonilla: We'll take it up with them after.

Chairman O'Connell: That's been sort of, and we're not complaining about it, but it's been a sort of an add because it we didn't make it part of this project originally, it wasn't envisioned that that crosswalk or something would happen on Union Street. Not just on the Beech Street project, but on all four projects, fire, police, traffic, engineering, DPW have all been involved. And if I could take this moment to say that the work, the people in our city departments and the cooperation that has existed on this project, there have been many meetings for many different things. And the internal security of buildings, student safety, traffic, and environmental impacts, everybody at the state level and others. But at the city, I want to call out the city departments, especially DPW, for the amount of cooperation over the last two years that they've been doing. I think everybody on the project would say that it's been a pleasure to work with them. And we've heard it again and again, not because I'm from Manchester, but we've heard it again and again from the teams of architects and engineers who are in the city working on this, that they have lots of good things to say about our staff.

Alderman Fajardo: I'm not surprised to hear that at all. I think we are very fortunate to have a ton of really intelligent experts right here within our city staff.

J. Soucy: I certainly would agree with that. It's been very collaborative and very productive. So, continuing on just to finish out on the site, just south of the building is a new playground area. So, they'll have play structures as well as a full basketball court and hardscape area. Also, on the north of the building, there's a smaller play space, more intimate, just outdoor classroom space. And that's just off of the kindergarten wing. So, kindergarten and first grade will be on the first floor. The gym and the cafeteria, which we anticipate fully being heavily used by the community, are off of Beech Street on the eastern portion of the site facing Beech Street. We have some images coming up of those spaces as well. This is just an aerial view. So, Beech Street on your right, just showing the site and how the massing of the building shapes up. I do want to point out, the main entrance is right in the center here where there's a canopy. And then above that you can see this little carve out where we'll be creating a roof terrace. So, it's a nice exterior enclosed safe space for kids to have outdoor learning, but also, it's right off of the media center. So, it can become a nice community use space after hours as well.

Chairman O'Connell: When you enter that main entrance, you take a right, you've got the cafeteria and then the gym all off your right for community use purposes. And it's a very large space, but on your left on the ground floor on your left is community rooms. There are a bunch of, if you were to take a left, there's a bunch of rooms there for community purposes to the left. And it's designed again to be used out of school hours so that there are bathrooms available, etc., and the rest of the school can be closed off.

Alderman Fajardo: This is intended to exist as a community center?

Chairman O'Connell: A community school.

Alderman Fajardo: Is that true?

J. Soucy: Correct. There'll be spaces that will serve that community school function.

Chairman O'Connell: The community school designation is a designation and we've been able to do things under that designation, but I think more broadly, all our schools as a school district, we're moving to a place with all of these schools where we're anticipating that they'll be used by the community. So, whether they're designated as a community school, which has some legal ramifications to it and funding, etcetera, but in all the spaces, the idea is these are major investments by the community in real estate and having them available sort of 9 to 5 Monday through Friday, September through June, that the idea is to have these spaces available for community use, for play, for meeting, for fun, for whatever on a much broader basis, which we cannot do today with the profile of our current schools, because they're designed in such a way that you either have access to the whole school or not.

J. Soucy: The image is a little washed out. I apologize, but this is a view of the main entrance from the drop off area. So, you could see the roof terrace there. On the left is the media center. And then on the right is the cafeteria and the gym, trying to incorporate some color in the exterior design. You can see that in the panels on the building as well

as in signage. And this is a view, on the right is Beech Street. So, the facade facing Beech Street is the gym where there will be glazing and signage as well. This is another view of the southern portion of the building where the play area is and you can see the basketball court. This is the classroom wing. So also, just trying to incorporate some mixture of materials to create some interest on the facade. This is the north facade, so that's smaller.

Chairman O'Connell: That image from Union Street, right now it shows the fence complete. But actually, there will be a gate here that will allow gated access. So when the school's in use and there are little children playing there, it can be secured. And this will be decided by principals and boards and the administration over the years. But it's designed to be used by the public so that once school is finished and the kids are no longer there, it's not as though this is going to be wired off so people can't use it, because the idea is that you should be able to traverse from Valley Street Cemetery across Union Street through this property, you can go on the street by Green Street, you can go in the alley next to Green Street, but you can go right through this. If you're a couple of parents with a stroller, you could stroll through this property, stop, play, avail yourself of the outdoor sprinkler or whatever, continue across the street through where the new field will be where the current Beech Street School is and continue to continue to walk on a protected pedestrian pathway which would eventually take you across Maple Street and through to the park there so you could stroll all those four city blocks.

Alderman Fajardo: It's amazing.

Chairman O'Connell: It will be a big enhancement to the neighborhood.

Alderman Fajardo: I live next to McDonough and it's very much like that. So, when the kids leave the neighborhood, kids come out and play basketball and there's always activity, families using the playground. And it's pretty constant, which is great.

Chairman O'Connell: So, with the other work the city is doing in terms of tree planting and all the other work that I anticipate that you're going to do, this will be a major enhancement. I expect this property and this development to be a landmark piece of the future of Manchester. I mean, it's right there in the center of Manchester, making a big statement about our values and what we value and our families, our kids, etc.

J. Soucy: This is a view of the north side of the building, just that smaller classroom, outdoor classroom area.

Alderman Bonilla: I just had a quick question on the fencing for the basketball court. I love that there's a gate because what we don't want is the kids to jump over the fence to play. It happens. I remember being a kid, brand new basketball court, but it stinks when a community can't really access it. So, I love that we have a gate. I'm just curious, who's going to lock it? I know it's going to be following our parks, like dusk till dawn. I know that they do that at the Memorial track.

Chairman O'Connell: I've said this many times on this project as we're rolling forward, these buildings are 50 or 100 years project, and there will be lots of boards and lots of principals and lots of superintendents and lots of mayors and changing dynamics in our city. The buildings are being designed to be as accommodating to future needs as

possible. So, the issue about opening and closing a gate, etc., we can change a gate any time. We can change practice. We can change rules. I would like to see it as open as possible, but I'm not the one controlling this. But you can imagine while the kids are playing, you want to make sure you can close the gate so the teachers can supervise, but I don't imagine this ever having a padlock on it that you're not allowed to get in because bad things happen when you lock things up. We've seen that over and over on the west side, where we're planning for the new park there. You need more lighting. And it's the opposite of the former attitude, which was let's restrict access after dark. We need young men, young women, young kids, older people need places to go, etc. and usage and lighting solves problems that locks and darkness cause. I think this is part of the input from the city. What's concerned me on this project is as much as possible not to get to a point where future people, future communities are hamstrung because we didn't think of it or we didn't do it, or we did something, if we thought of that back in the day, we could have done it this way, because the principal today will do it one way. And when she changes in many years from now, hopefully because she's a wonderful person, the next principal might use it in a different way.

School Committee Member Turner exited the meeting at 5:48PM.

Alderman Fajardo: It looks like trees are being added.

J. Soucy: So, all the new trees that we're planning are part of our project. We haven't incorporated any of that from a particular source.

Alderman Fajardo: Are they mature trees?

J. Soucy: I don't want to misspeak on behalf of my landscape architect, but we can get back to you on that as to what we're planning for in terms of tree maturity. A lot of these trees, like the trees I think you're seeing on the left here, are existing trees that will remain. And those are pretty mature trees. So, you'll have a mixture, just because some that are existing are to remain. To get to the interior of the building, this is a view of the cafeteria on the right. You can see a little bit that we'll have a platform for smaller performances and any community presentations. You can see the windows which are south facing and some of the green color that you see on the wall are acoustical panels. So, it's a larger volume space, but we'll have acoustic treatment in there. And then on the left you can see the gym. We'll have a large operable partition wall between the cafeteria and the gym that can be opened up to make those two spaces one large space for larger events. This is a view looking straight on at that platform in the background. And then to the right, you can see where the kitchen is going to be and the serving area. So that's where students will go and get their food. To the right, this is a view of the media center on the second floor. So, we have large expansive windows letting in a lot of light. We will have sun control shades and devices to help try to filter that because it is south facing. But you can also start to see some of the different furniture arrangements and creating different zones. And this is an elementary school, it's smaller kids. So, trying to figure out how to create those smaller zones. And then this is another way we would do that. This is a smaller area in the media center, lower ceilings, creating a little breakout area. And this is a view of inside each of the classroom wings, where we're creating a learning commons space. So, this is an open space open to the corridor where the teachers can have small breakout groups to do small project-based learning. And that's in each of the different classroom wings.

School Committee Member Hamer: I'm just going back to the middle schools for a minute. What are the target dates on completion for those? I know that Hillside and McLaughlin are together and Parkside and Southside are together.

J. Soucy: Sure. We actually have that in the next presentation.

Mark Lenfest, Senior Project Manager at LeftField: We'll share that with you on this next presentation. With the additions complete prior to, with the exception of McLaughlin, but I'll bring up a nice slide for you.

Chairman O'Connell: I get the anticipation because it's exciting. There are a lot more images than what you're seeing here today because every space has been designed. If you go to the district, you can actually see the product like the tiles, the carpeting, the window treatments, all those things are there, but they're not just a color palette. And there's so much more that I wish we had the time to go through. I know that anybody who was interested, we can facilitate that. It's great to have right here in the room, we have SMMA who have an office and they have opened an office at 900 Elm Street, right in City Hall Plaza. I think I can speak on their behalf, they're very amenable, too. I accompanied Alderman Bonilla recently to a visit to that office. And we can see all the work that's going on. And of course, across the street from City Hall, we're accompanied by Consigli, which is the company that's building both McLaughlin and Hillside. Their office is also right next to City Hall. So, there's lots of places you can access this information.

Alderman Bonilla: So, for Beech Street, for the images that were just shown, will we get those at the end of the meeting?

Chairman O'Connell: Everything that was presented now will be included in the agenda and on the website for this meeting. So, it'll be added. The clerk didn't get it yet, but he'll get it today and it will be there.

Alderman Bonilla: I think this is probably for this presentation, right? Construction dates?

Chairman O'Connell: It's coming. Well, Jen, thank you very much. And it's been an exciting time in the city of Manchester. Despite our challenges, it's great that we're able to march forward. So, thank you again. And with that, we'll switch over to LeftField's monthly overview of the project.

M. Lenfest: So, we're going to jump right over to the schedule. We can address that right now. So, group one is Hillside and McLaughlin. You'll see that the Hillside addition completes in December of this year. So that'll be a December move in. And then the actual overall project, there's three summers of work. So, the second summer is this summer. And that will be wrapping up in the summer of 2027 with a turnover to the school district in August of 2027. McLaughlin, the addition and the renovation turnover this year at the end of August. So, we'll be having kids in classrooms in both the addition and the renovation at McLaughlin this year. So, it's very exciting. And as the chairman was saying if you want to go visit somewhere, in McLaughlin, the grand stair that Jennifer showed us, that two story open area, that is in and it is impressive. Consigli has done a wonderful job for us over there. And we'll talk a little bit more about what they've managed to do over

this very cold and snowy winter construction quality wise and schedule wise; it is very impressive.

Chairman O'Connell: The first one of these to open fully will be McLaughlin for the 1st of September this year. Open and ready. All done for September 1st. The kids are going to roll into the new McLaughlin. And then this slide, I got a little bit confused by it first, but you see where in the summer of 2027 there's a summer slammer happening in the summer 2027, the final interior renovation work will happen then.

M. Lenfest: So, group two, Southside, Parkside, you'll see here the addition is complete in December of 2026. More likely that'll be a February move in. And then again, if you look, you'll see the renovation work, it's continuous, wrapping up in 2028, August of 2028 for a start of school in September of 2028.

Alderman Bonilla: Question for the move in. I had received questions. Are we going to align the move in with particular vacation days? How does it work for our students and teachers and educators? How will that work?

M. Lenfest: So that's exactly what we do. We either schedule it during the summer just prior to the start of the school year or if you do have a mid-year move it would be usually either over December vacation or February. So, it would be a solid week of everything's ready to go. Everything moves in. You've already tested all of your AV/IT and when kids come back to school, they've got new places for their desks.

Alderman Bonilla: How does that work when our teachers are on break during December?

M. Lenfest: We handle all of those logistics. We have a move expert. So, we also worked with Consigli on all of the logistics for their moves right down to everybody's classroom, every drawer. The bin goes in; how that bin gets from that room to where its final place is, we offer unpacking. Again, it's a fully vetted and integrated plan.

Alderman Bonilla: I just don't want to take away that precious time off from our educators because I know they desperately need it. That's the last thing I would want to do. So, I'm glad that you all have it all covered. So basically, you're saying you're doing it for them.

Chairman O'Connell: This is a very complicated issue because it's phased. So, it's not as though the new Beech Street School ultimately will be easier because the school will be built. All furniture, everything organized. And then kids will come back at the end of the summer. Teachers will come back and they'll be going to a new building. In the case of the four other schools, there's phasing going on. Not McLaughlin, but in the other schools, there's phasing going on so that currently there are kids in modulares. So, as the new building, as the addition is built that will be occupied freeing up space, not out of the modulares, but freeing up space within the school where work can now be done during the school year. So, there will be times when teachers will lose their classroom for that year, for those six months, whatever that work is going on in parts of the building, it's all scheduled. Even today, schools are looking at the issue of this summer because summer slammers are going on. So, you're a teacher in room 106 in a school and all your stuff needs to be emptied out of that classroom and stored; it's all planned in gyms and cafeterias, because that work's going to go on in the summer. When you come back at

the end of the summer, to your point, we're not asking teachers to go carry this stuff up and down the stairs and in and out of the building. This is all part of the plan. It's managed, so their room is recreated. Everything is tagged. I mean, it was magical when they were doing it on the modular side. There are companies, they use QR codes and everything is shrink wrapped and identified and piloted. It's all very modern. And so, it's not a question of Mrs. Jones has got two boxes here and what are we doing with that? So again, there's planning. There are planning meetings happening today to plan this out over effectively next year. Well, September 1st, but this is ongoing for the next two years.

M. Lenfest: So again, sticking with schedule, for Beech you'll see that new construction wraps up. The construction of the new Beech School wraps up between June and July of the summer of 2028. And then you'll see some additional landscaping work. And then eventually as the chairman spoke about what will be phase two, the existing site and what that becomes, that'll start roughly again that June or July time frame and carry through to the end of the year. But the actual new school kids will be in there for September of 2028.

Chairman O'Connell: So, we haven't planned, as you know, we had groundbreaking ceremonies on these schools and we had topping off ceremonies. Nothing has happened in Beech yet, but the groundbreaking will be coming there soon. The date I don't think is identified yet if I'm correct. They've just mobilized. They're topping off. There are topping off ceremonies which will be had shortly, date to be determined, but coming in the next couple of months when the steelwork is complete at Parkside and Southside. But I think the most important date for Beech, that school will open as a new school with great celebration, I hope on September 1st or whatever the opening day of school is of 2028.

Alderman Bonilla: Thank you for this amazing information. I think as all of you know, I've been waiting for this for a while. So just to clarify, September 2028. That's the anticipated date for our kids to actually start going to school there with a June or July of 2028 completion date. Correct?

M. Lenfest: Correct.

Alderman Bonilla: I know that from my drive-bys around the current location now, when do we anticipate construction or moving everything in right now?

M. Lenfest: So, they've moved, they've mobilized. So, we now have operations trailers out there. There is a significant amount of soil improvement work that goes on over there as well as geotechnical.

H. Cobanoglu: For the first, probably 4 to 6 months, you are not going to see much structural work, because what we will be doing is just the soil remediation work and then pile installation work. So, some drilled shaft and edge pile will be installed. So, it's going to take about four months for those ground improvements and maybe another month for the soil remediation work. So probably mid-summer will start some concrete foundation work. And then probably sometime in September or October, we will start seeing some structural steelwork.

Alderman Bonilla: I know that we've been utilizing the websites for all of the middle schools, right? When will we start to see anticipated updates on that for the Beech Street

School? When will community members start seeing it? Is that after around September of 2026?

H. Cobanoglu: A couple of weeks ago, Harvey Construction mobilized on site and they prepared flyers and they distribute those flyers with the neighbors. So right now, they are in the process of creating a website. And in a couple of weeks and definitely before the next Joint School Buildings Committee meeting, that website will be updated and will be live and then it will be put on the school district's website. So, we can also share it as part of the update and monthly reporting.

Alderman Bonilla: To get clarity, we had mentioned phase two within phase one, of the Beech Street School project. I've also been waiting to hear additional details on when we would take the existing infrastructure of the Beech Street School and make it into the green space as what was promised to us when we passed the bond and everything in phase one. So, I just wanted to make sure about the dates we are looking at and that this is still happening.

Chairman O'Connell: So the next piece, so once the school is built, the demolition and reimagining of the space where the current school is, the building of the field, etc., you're showing it here, the bottom two blue blocks here that says abatement demo. That's the abatement and demo of the existing school. The Beech Street site restoration is here. So, it's running right now. It's on there to be completed by December or maybe early November, late November of 2028. But so that work is planned right now, according to this to begin in August of 2028.

Alderman Bonilla: Oh, so we plan to start demoing around August of 2028, right?

H. Cobanoglu: It's a placeholder for now because we don't have a clear direction yet. So, it's not in Harvey Construction's scope of work, but it can be added as soon as we have a clear direction. So, we still don't know what to do with that building. I think it's probably a city decision or school district decision.

Chairman O'Connell: So that's an interesting piece right there. There's a bit of a dance here. As a school district and this project, even this committee which is responsible for this project, we oversee this, the statutory construct is that this committee oversees the construction of these schools and you could say because the abatement and demolition and the green space is part of this project, you could interpret it that this committee has this being under our purview. And then we would just move forward. I'm conscious of the fact that we have an Aldermanic Board and once the school district, again, this is state law, once the school district announces that it no longer needs the school, then it automatically goes back to the city. I think we could just plow right on and say, this is part of this project, but I think what's actually going to happen, and I would hope to happen that would be done collaboratively, we want to make sure that everybody on the Board of Mayor and Aldermen is on board, etcetera. So, we anticipate this is why there's some grayness. I don't envision as things are today, but TBD, that this board would give the green light to send a bulldozer in on Beech Street School without having gone through some process with the Board of Mayor and Alderman.

Alderman Fajardo: Is there a sense of what the general timing would be for when the school district would declare its surplus back to the city?

Chairman O'Connell: I'm talking now from what I think, and I'm just one person out of 115,000 in the city. I mean, the school, once the kids move in to that school on the 1st of September of 2028, or maybe it could be interpreted it could happen during that summer because the kids aren't going back and the school is not in use and we could declare it, but it would happen sometime in there.

M. Upton: I just wanted to throw in there that as part of getting the new location for the Beech Street School, the city had to sign an agreement with Amoskeag to replicate the play structures and basketball courts that exist currently in that park. So, I agree with the chairman, it's kind of this gray area, but we have this ongoing obligation. I'm sure the city's going to want to fulfill our obligation to Amoskeag. So, the school has to come down in order to do that, I believe.

Alderman Bonilla: I remember when I was a school board member, the aldermen at the time had made it clear that phase one would pass knowing that the green space would be replicated. That was the only outlier.

Chairman O'Connell: There's a little confusion on the nomenclature here sometimes. Well, phase one, phase two, group one, group two, we have so many ones and twos it gets to be clear. We're carrying a number within the \$306 million to do all that work to demolish the school, to abate the ground, to build a soccer field, to build basketball courts. And the current staff has a small parking area on one side. But to develop that whole area, we're carrying that money within this project and it will be done. This is not something that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen would be asked to finance part of this. I was alluding earlier to the delicate dance piece. The project doesn't want to be open to criticism or whatever from the Board of Mayor and Aldermen saying hang on a minute. You can't just go knock down the school. I don't want to get into all the details here. Not that there's any secrets, but there are caveats. There are limits on what can be done with that school. Amoskeag Manufacturing Company agreed the swap of land to allow us to build a new school in that place, a condition of that agreement. But it's not the only thing controlling this that the school be demolished and that the recreation area be recreated. There are other reasons at the state level and because of other funding under other grants from other times, that there are significant restrictions on what could ever be done. So, if a Board of Mayor and Aldermen were to decide that it would like to make an animal shelter there, it actually can't be done because the land is controlled by the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company. We have an agreement with them to do what we're doing. There is no fear, for anybody who's listening. There is no legal way to repurpose the current Beech Street School. It's just not possible without either getting into litigation or reaching legal agreements with the state and perhaps the federal government, because of granting for other things in the past, but certainly and most importantly, with regard to Amoskeag Manufacturing, I think most importantly for you, Alderman Bonilla from ward five, it is the full expectation of this team that's working on this and the school district, that this work will go on in the fall of 2028, the school will be demolished. There will be a new full playing field put in there that's a full purpose full size soccer field in that area with the accoutrement.

Alderman Bonilla: I campaigned and we all campaigned this phase. I knocked dozens of doors that we promised to our constituents of ward five that they would get that green space back. That was the only condition, the only reason why I went forward with that. So, I will uphold that promise as an alderman and because I'm not going to let that green space go. We basically told everybody what will be taken away will be brought back. And that was the condition of the aldermen. And Alderwoman Fajardo would attest to that because again, there was a back-and-forth fight. Oh, you're taking away limited space, especially in the center city. I hope that this goes into fruition and I hope no one decides to play games with us in this matter.

Chairman O'Connell: I'm not trying to discourage the conversation. Even when we spend this amount of time on it, we're talking about a happenstance that is not envisioned, that's not expected, that no one's intending. It's very clear; one can look through the documentation. You can look. So, the only thing that I was alluding to and why Harvey doesn't have a contract today to do the work of that piece, it's available to do it. I think Harvey expects to do it because it was part of that award, but it hasn't been described. There are drawings, etcetera. It hasn't been awarded as in here's the end state. Let's do it. And that's part of we want to move through chronologically to get to that point. We would expect the handshake to happen, the nod to be given. We don't own the land that Beech Street School is on. So, we can dance up and down. If somebody, if a future board wants it, they can do whatever they want. They actually don't control the land.

Alderman Fajardo: Can you clarify? The city doesn't own the land, the city owns the building?

Chairman O'Connell: It gets complicated. The city owns part of the land underneath the current Beech Street School. It doesn't own all of it. It also was granted the whole land area in the beginning by an irreversible deed or reversible transfer to the city of Manchester by the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company. And the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company is very clear that it can only be used for the purposes for which were described by law. And so, there is no discretion for the city to do something else. And Amoskeag is on record, and it's part of the record of this project, that this is the condition on which they allowed the first school to be built. So, it's really pretty copper fastened. And we here could take a different view and say we're going to spread our wings, use our elbows as the joint committee that has been tasked with this that has the authority to do it under state law. I just don't want to get into that place on this board when we've got a Board of Mayor and Aldermen responsible for the buildings in the city, and they do. They deserve our deference. And, you know, they should have their voice. And I'm saying I think it would be wise of us to have them have their voice, but I fully expect it all to just go forward.

M. Lenfest: The playground is already being recreated with the help of the DPW and that's been designed and awarded.

Chairman O'Connell: At Stanton Park across the street.

M. Lenfest: Correct. And, phase two has already gone through a preliminary design. Again, what we're looking at in phase two now is more comprehensive than what was actually originally provided at the original park. So again, the original park didn't have a

soccer field. It did have the basketball courts. It did have a limited playground. You're getting the basketball courts back. You're getting a better playground in another location. And again, the vision of the soccer field. So that's what's going on currently.

H. Cobanoglu: And all the costs related to abatement demo and feature improvements, development related to site is in the budget, but it's not committed to Harvey. But it's still in the budget as a placeholder.

Chairman O'Connell: It's all being done in conjunction with DPW and they're fully involved.

M. Lenfest: Jumping back into the normal progression with the summary update. I'm going to hit the high spots here. Modulars, we've wrapped up the warranty work. We are closing out the financial contract with Triumph. Beech, bidding says 30%. We are actually going to have the budget submitted from Harvey on Friday. So that's a huge milestone. We'll be able to analyze how that matches up with the projected budget. McLaughlin and Hillside, the construction, we are actually a little further along than this. Again, the amount of work that Consigli was able to put in place in what I would call a difficult winter was extremely impressive. They poured all of our structural slabs. So, all of our slabs on deck, slabs on grade, and they didn't let the weather win. It was impressive. If you get a chance to go by either one of the group one schools, Hillside or McLaughlin, you'll see that as a direct result of them persevering. They are framing the exterior of the buildings. The masonry will be showing up shortly. And these are moving forward on schedule.

Alderman Fajardo: Just for fun, I can see Hillside from my back stoop. I'll be sure to report back if I see any of this start to slip.

M. Lenfest: Parkside and Southside, procurement has continued there as well as construction. Again, they've done very well under adverse conditions weather wise to get foundations in. Parkside has a very unique slab system where it's a double slab. They got the first slab in; they've put the structural fill in. They've persevered and those projects are moving forward.

H. Cobanoglu: Structural steel will be delivered for Parkside next Monday and then for Southside for the following Monday.

Chairman O'Connell: With respect to the presentation, I don't think we need the line item on this. We've been here an hour and twenty minutes. I don't want to speak on behalf of everybody, but if we don't need to actually enumerate each of the lines here, if you have a high point you want to pull out from it that is fine.

M. Lenfest: Honestly, we just hit the highlights, the Beech budget, the GMP on Friday. And then as Hamdi noted, the steel showing up on both of the group two projects.

Chairman O'Connell: Every Wednesday we have our construction meetings happen on site every week. There's a meeting at each one of the individual sites, but there's a roll up meeting or an OAC owner or architect construction meeting on Wednesdays, which I attend along with many others. I ask three questions. And one is, are we on time? Are we on budget? And are we doing it safely? Has everybody gone home safe for this week? Are we on budget? Are we on time? Not that we shouldn't do all our due diligence, but

that's the big picture. And the good news from the project today is that it's on budget, it's on time, and so far, it's safe.

M. Lenfest: The last two items, the invoice was sent in today. It should be finalized on Friday. That should be in your updated package that we'll get to the clerk, and he will get to you folks. And again, as discussed, we'll be adding the Beech Street site to this list in the next couple of weeks.

2. Monthly status and financial report for February 2026 submitted by LeftField.

*On motion of **Alderman Bonilla**, duly seconded by **School Committee Member Hamer**, it was voted to accept the report and submit it to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and Board of School Committee for informational purposes. **Alderman Thomas** and **School Committee Member Turner** were absent.*

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Bonilla**, duly seconded by **Alderman Fajardo**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand".

Clerk of Committee

*Meeting Start Time: 5:00PM
Meeting End Time: 6:23PM
Minutes Prepared By: Michael Intranuovo*