

# COMMITTEE ON JOINT SCHOOL BUILDINGS

May 12, 2026 at 5:00 PM

Chairman O'Connell called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Bonilla, Fajardo  
School Committee Members O'Connell, Turner, Hamer

Absent: Alderman Thomas

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

Mark Lenfest, Senior Project Manager at LeftField: The Priority One Project summary update, you'll see that we've made significant progress with Beech Elementary School both in design and bidding. There's been some site construction that has started out there, site improvement work. McLaughlin and Hillside you'll see are both approaching 50% complete. McLaughlin is scheduled to wrap up at the end of the summer with occupancy starting September of this year. Parkside and Southside, if you've been fortunate enough to get out there, you'll see that the steel is wrapping up out there. We had our topping off at both schools and the detailing has started as well as some of the mechanical roughing. So, we're about 20% on each of those projects. Activities completed over the last 30 days, we've continued all of the priority one project owner, architect, contractor meetings; we've continued the coordination meetings. We had the group one commissioning kickoff. We were in full blown commissioning on both of those projects to date. We continued logistics development for all projects; continued the group two procurement; continued the Beech procurement; the group one envelope, which is all of your exterior framing, sheathing, and brick work, has commenced on both projects as well as the mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and fire sprinkler systems, which have been ongoing. I know some of you were able to make it to a walk through. It's amazing. If you go out there next week, you'll see incredible changes. It's happening very fast, which is fantastic. Group two, we're in steel detailing and they did slab preparation. They've actually poured slabs since last month. We've continued roofing at McLaughlin and Hillside. Group two schedule refinement, Beech Department of Environmental Services soil management coordination, Beech schedule review meetings are ongoing. Fixtures, furniture, and equipment and technology meetings took place last month and continue through this month. Summer work schedules and move ready planning kicked off last month. Just so everyone's aware, move ready planning, we actually engage the principals and teachers along with the selected vendor is for the move. So, we literally get them, the crates are explained to them how they get labeled, how they get packed, who will pick them up when, where they'll be stored and eventually where they'll be returned to their rooms for the start of the following semester. Continued cost management on all projects, continued schedule refinement on all projects, as well as communication with all stakeholders.

Chairman O'Connell: The commissioning kick off, can you describe what that entails?

M. Lenfest: With your mechanical, plumbing, and electrical trades, there's third party testing that goes into that. So, we're very fortunate that EEI, who does a lot of work with

the city and the school district, is our commissioning agent. So, they come out and they make sure basically that everything is installed correctly. They review the as installed mechanical systems against the design drawings for performance. They attend performance testing, pressure testing of pipes. They'll be back out for airflow of rooftop units, things of that nature. We also do an envelope commissioning. This is more so with the manufacturers. We require them to come out to visually inspect the installed materials in the testing, whether it's hose testing, to make sure that we don't have any water penetration through any of the exterior features, membranes, caulking, the framing, sheeting and brickwork. So, there's a whole series of commissioning that happens during the construction. So really third-party expert testing.

Chairman O'Connell: One of the things that I noticed and, maybe this is the kid in me, but I learned that they test the windows and the outside by applying light pressure water at the structure to ensure that it's not leaking.

M. Lenfest: There's a rain screen or hose that puts water onto the exterior. And there's a vacuum system that tries to find a weak spot and suck the water through the assembly. It's pretty involved.

Alderman Bonilla: Two things I wanted to say also, I heard great things about the visit to Hillside. Particularly to a lot of the workers there, how intentional they were with building relationships with the students. One of the school board members had told me that they were really good at it, especially in portraying that they too can take part in the future, seeking out trades, that this career is a possibility in front of them. So, kudos to a lot of your engineers and workers at Hillside. So, praise them for that. I wanted to thank you all for providing the summer work schedules and move ready planning to our teachers, because I recognize the last time we had met, there was a lot of anxiety from certain teachers about who's going to tell them where to go or if this was going to be during their breaks. I feel relieved. I feel like a lot of their concerns were heard. So, thank you for that. I did have questions on the 30 days look ahead. So, recognizing the procurement that has been ongoing at Beech Street, when will this procurement stop so that we can continue and that construction can finally resume? I've noticed the pipes, the sensors, from the last time I went there. I had also spoken with Kelly Newman, the principal, because they literally see this every day. I just wanted to make sure, when will construction resume?

M. Lenfest: So, construction has started out there. Really what's happening right now is there's a soil management plan that went into New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. So, they've just responded to that. That's how the materials on site get managed. So that just came back with some comments. Harvey Construction has received that; that's being analyzed. That being said, the site improvements, which is soil stabilization and how the foundation systems are going to be supported and go in in proximity to the existing tunnel or culvert that crosses that site, that work has started.

Hamdi Cobanoglu, Senior Project Manager at LeftField: They did some survey points they installed over the culvert to make sure there's no settlement during construction. So those are for survey purposes, but actual pile works under the building will start after the soil remediation work, which will start in a couple of weeks. We just heard from DES, they gave the go ahead for the building footprint area, but had some questions around the

building area. So, we will coordinate those things in a couple of weeks. And Harvey is right now engaging with their subcontractor, the site contractor, and they are getting ready to start construction.

Alderman Bonilla: Great. Good to hear. I know that there were a couple whispers here and there about contamination. It seems like in the next couple of weeks, from what you're saying, is that we're going to be right back on schedule or will continue moving forward with what we were doing.

M. Lenfest: The site does have contamination. Again, most of the sites around the mill areas of Manchester do. That being said, it's part of the soils report. We do have a budget for it. It was expected. This is just part of the part of the process, making sure with DES that they're comfortable with the process that's happening. We do have an LSP, a licensed soils professional through Haley and Aldrich who was working on our behalf. Again, they're the geotechnical consultant. They work through SMMA who is participating in managing that process. And we've had a good partnership with the Department of Public Works who actually takes the responsibility on behalf of reporting and whatnot for the city. So again, this is this is part of the process and it was expected and managed. Alderman Bonilla brought up a great point about student engagement. I'd like to just call out that Consigli Construction and SMMA have done a phenomenal job with engaging the students. They engaged them in the classrooms. They have message boards that are in the schools. They've brought them all through walkthroughs in the buildings. We have Vance who couldn't be here with us tonight, he caught up with me late last week just to bring me up to speed. He's part of a mentor program, and they're going to be bringing kids from MST through, specifically kids that are interested in the trades and letting them know what's out there. And again, these can be life altering introductions to skilled trades which is amazing. SMMA is in lockstep with that movement, and has volunteered their time to engage the kids if they want to become engineers, architects, it's been great. It's been a great team effort. I'd be remiss if I didn't call them out for that.

Chairman O'Connell: Originally the idea was to bring some students and some teachers and they've brought every single kid in the school through that property at least once and will do so again. I'm delighted. I can't wait for the kids to be there. There's a lot to be learned. Even what's going on at Beech Street today in terms of the geological work and stuff that people are interested in. So, one of the things you mentioned, the tunnel, I think it probably is commonly known, but there is a large tunnel that goes underneath that property. The school building itself will be not on that tunnel. It'll be off to one side of it. But part of the work that's going on today was that there are sensors being placed there to ensure that it's both defensive and proactive, but it says we want to ensure that as piles are being driven and other things, that there is no damage done to the tunnel and that we can prove post-facto that there wasn't because that tunnel has been examined, it has been photographed, the interior of it, which was quite an expensive exercise to film all of that. This tunnel is, I think 12 feet in diameter at one part which is accessible eventually down at Union Street, out of Valley Street Cemetery, and in other places. But at one time at least, the Manchester Fire Department was using that tunnel as a restricted space environment for training purposes. So, it's quite a significant thing. But as part of this project with the work that's going on today that you can't see above the ground, but with the sensors going in, it's to say that if somebody was to claim afterwards, oh, as you were driving the piles, you upset something or even the buildings in the area that you're over

there hammering and you move something, we're able to say exactly what the impact on the ground was. There was no shaking, there was no whatever else. Back to the point about kids learning stuff, there is stuff that goes way beyond the putting up of walls and the electrical and carpentry and all the rest of it. Like you, Alderman Bonilla, I can't wait to see those bulldozers in there moving some earth around so we can sit, eat our sandwich, and watch the people working.

School Committee Member Turner: I know when I toured Hillside, I can't remember who I spoke with, but it was probably one of you, about the rising fifth graders coming to Hillside and all of our middle schools, if there might be an opportunity for them to tour the new construction, and I meant to follow up with an email to the building principals, but I know fourth graders are going on tours this week, at least at Hillside. I'm not sure what the schedule is for the other middle schools, but I'm just going to pass the baton. If there's an opportunity for that organically to happen for our fourth graders, even if it's just a peek inside or to highlight what's happening with the construction, I think that would be valuable for those students who are rising fifth graders. But there are other options; I know that some families grapple with that transition from elementary to middle in the city. And so, just to highlight the amazing things that are happening in our schools and put an exclamation point on our new facilities that are getting additions and renovations. So, I don't know if that opportunity has already come and gone, but if it still exists, the fourth graders that are touring, I'd love for them to get a light shown on the new construction.

M. Lenfest: I appreciate that completely. So, Doctor Chmiel is a huge advocate of student engagement. I know I don't need to say that to this board. I will connect with her and see who's available from what schools to go. She's encouraged us every step of the way to involve every student possible. As the chairman said, literally every student at Hillside got a tour. We'll definitely meet with her tomorrow with our group.

School Committee Member Turner: I think the fourth graders are definitely scheduled to go. They're all going on tours, so I'm not sure if the window is closed for that overlap of while they're there. Obviously, it's an active workspace; we don't have hard-hats for everybody, but if there is a break time where anyone can just peek in for five minutes with the rising fifth graders, I think that would be beneficial.

M. Lenfest: This is definitely the time to schedule it; during the summer when it's a much more active site, we wouldn't be able to. But again, Consigli has been phenomenal at getting people in and out. When we took the tour as a group a couple of weeks ago, you saw how safe it was and getting us in and out. I'll engage with them. I definitely feel that that can happen. So, the next 30 days, we're going to continue the owner architect contractor meetings on all projects. Group one interior and envelope construction continues. We'll start to resume group one site work. The majority of the site work remaining will happen after the kids get out of school. Again, that will be some drainage work around both group one sites. Furniture, fixtures and equipment and technology meetings are ongoing. We are actually getting ready to order some of our technology; that'll be a good milestone. It's been very good collaboration between us as the project manager, SMMA as our consulting experts, and the MSD IT Department which has been very active. That'll be a good milestone for us. Again, we'll continue with the summer work schedules and move ready planning as well as the mover procurement. So, we're closing in on that. The move ready planning, we actually have a meeting tomorrow. It'll be our

fourth meeting for Hillside. Just to give you an idea of how much goes into this, we have an excellent move consultant, Josh Brewster. As Alderman Bonilla said, the communication with the teachers is paramount. We want them to have a comfort level that they're being looked after. They deserve it, they work hard. We'll have a completely vetted and detailed path for them. Group two schedule refinement is ongoing along with group two procurement. We have made a lot of progress on group two procurement. Harvey along with Hamdi are getting ready to wrap that up. Group two steel detailing and mechanical roughing and site work are ongoing. If you look at the pictures from the websites, you'll see the hangers hanging down from the steel above. And that's where your future piping will go for the building. So, you don't see the piping yet, but the work is happening. All of the layout is there. Again, good milestones for group two. Group two envelope construction will be progressing or starting again. That'll be the framing, sheathing, then eventually the brick and exterior components. Beech, continued procurement; Beech New Hampshire DES soil management coordination, as Hamdi mentioned a lot of that just happened. So that's the overlap between when the report happens and the meeting. So again, that was early this month. As he mentioned, they'll actually be starting that work in the next couple of weeks. Beech site improvements begin, Hamdi spoke about that. And then the rest is standard, continued logistics development, coordination meetings, cost management, schedule refinement, and communication with stakeholders.

Chairman O'Connell: I just would like to emphasize the piece with regard to the move and the move ready, so people understand. Starting schools last days, I think the 17<sup>th</sup>, teachers last days on the 18<sup>th</sup>, these sites will mobilize on the 19<sup>th</sup> because what you're referring to, amongst other things, is that all the furniture and everything has to be removed from lots of rooms, because construction will go on right through the summer. And so, the coordination of taking stuff out of rooms, and they'll be stored in places like the cafeteria or the gym or places that are not going to be impacted, that just needs coordination. In the case of McLaughlin, it's a little different, because McLaughlin will be ready and preparing to open as a school. The project is complete for the first of September. The issue of the playground at Gossler/Parkside, this is sort of a public announcement here. I know that it's been telegraphed by the project, but I just want to make sure we're all aware of it. There will be a period for 2 to 3 weeks this summer when the current playground at Gossler/Parkside will be unusable. I just want to make sure that there's a clear understanding in the community about this. That playground has a high level of value. It was recently put in with a rubber flooring. The playground will be impacted for the minimum possible amount of time. Most of the equipment will not need to be moved, it will be intact. When it is complete, and I mean after those weeks it will be back open and running and brought back to where it was. I just want to make sure that people, particularly in that corner of the city, don't think they've closed the playground. Do you know the dates roughly for that?

H. Cobanoglu: It depends on the subcontractor's schedule and we are pushing them to get a date. We prefer right after the school closure, but it depends on the subcontractor schedule. They also do other playground projects in the city. So, we asked them to put us in the queue as a first project, but we have not heard back from them yet. Once we know the date, it will be just a 2 to 3 weeks closure.

Chairman O'Connell: As we discussed offline here, there will be a sign put up there so people, when they approach the playground, will be able to see that this playground is closed for the next 15 days or whatever, and we'll be back. I just want to head off the idea of someone arrives there, sees the playground blocked off for a period, and starts to panic about it. It will be beautiful and better when it's finished and enhanced.

School Committee Member Turner: I'm not seeing it, I apologize for my lapse of remembering, but the partnership that we temporarily had with the church, I believe it was next door to Southside. Did that happen and was that seamless?

M. Lenfest: Yes. They've been a fantastic neighbor. We'll be using a temporary road through their parking lot currently, for bus traffic. They couldn't have been a better neighbor. They've been great.

H. Cobanoglu: It is temporary for 5 to 6 weeks. As soon as the school closes, then there will be no buses. And when they come back in September, they will be using the school property and not the church parking lot.

School Committee Member Turner: I'd just like to publicly thank them again for their collaboration with us.

M. Lenfest: Absolutely. They were fantastic. Matt Upton, on behalf of Manchester School District, helped us out with any of the legalities and paperwork. They were great; couldn't have been better. So again, this is just a snapshot of the budget. We are on budget for all projects currently. So again, within the \$306 million, the detailed reports are in the monthly report. The invoice, we'll be replacing this cover sheet with the new cover sheet. The district got that wrapped up I believe either yesterday or today. So that had no issues. We'll have the updated report and updated documents in the report that we'll get to the clerk and he'll circulate. No schedule changes. We're tracking on schedule all projects. That being said, we do have the links. Alderman Bonilla, I know last time we all met there was an issue with one of the links. All five links should be working correctly. I believe we got it squared away at the last meeting, but we did check them before we came. So, feel free to jump on here. There's some very exciting milestones and photographs that are captured.

Alderman Bonilla: We're on time, we're on budget, and our workers are safe.

M. Lenfest: Yes, sir.

Alderman Bonilla: I think that for anyone who has additional questions, especially my colleagues, we're on time, we're on budget, and our workers are safe. I know I brought it up last time, but have we had any further conversations on once the Beech Street School is built, what's happening to the existing lot? The demolition, is that all included within the \$306 million?

M. Lenfest: That is in the \$306 million, and those conversations are ongoing. And we're working with SMMA on some additional programming in that area. So, they're refining their proposal based on a proposed park and how that building is decommissioned and is turned into a public space. So that's ongoing.

Alderman Bonilla: I've also heard from our chairman that the true goal is to interconnect all three parks in the center city. We have Stanton, Sheehen-Basquil, and where the current Beech Street School is right now. Interconnecting all of them with walking paths, that's been the plan, correct?

Chairman O'Connell: Just to be clear, because I don't want to bring any hesitancy, so we're all on the same page, if you look at it from Google Maps or get a little plane and fly over it and you look at it, the idea is that you're able to walk on green space. So, this includes obviously Stanton Park, but as you go eastwards, you get to now what will be the new school. And where the new school is, along the southern edge of the new school there are new trees planted there. It has two purposes, so there's both the play areas and landscaped areas that are along the side of the school. So, if you were walking through Stanton Park, you could cross through the new school park or play areas, etc., which will be greened and then that will get you to a crosswalk, which will bring you across Beech Street. When you get across Beech Street, there's a new park, which you just referred to right there, and there's a tree lined path envisioned going east to west across that. So, if you continue eastwards on your left-hand side, currently there's the current Beech Street School and the modulars that are there behind it. What will be there as you walk along that path when this is complete, is there will be a playing field on your left-hand side, as well as there's a small parking area along your left hand side, and then that will bring you to Maple Street. And when you cross Maple Street, as part of this project, there is no plan to put a pedestrian crossing meeting that crossway at exactly that point. It's a block and a half away from this project. But the point is, as you walk across Maple Street and now you're over by the baseball fields, you should be all the way until you get to Wilson before you run out of grass.

Alderman Bonilla: Right. And with the new field space, does that also include the new courts as well? The basketball courts?

Chairman O'Connell: Correct.

Alderman Bonilla: Why I ask is obviously, I recognize there are courts a couple miles down the road. But I feel like there's been a lot of concerns with whether they are coming back. I just wanted to put it on the record, they're coming back. We're bringing back the field. I know that there's already an existing bump out and an enhanced crosswalk already on Maple already. So, it would be to utilize that with every current infrastructure we have.

Chairman O'Connell: The key elements, and you said they're designing, because they're still designing sort of the final stages of what that park, which is effectively underneath and behind the current Beech Street school, exactly the dimensions of it, sort of how it's laid out. And we've talked about seating, we've talked about maybe water bubblers, there's lots of things being discussed about what exactly would be on that site, but the key elements that were promised as part of this process, when we came before the Board of Mayor and Aldermen for approval for the \$290 million in bonding, was that the key elements were a playing field and basketball courts would be replicated on that site, and then whatever else might be there might be there.

Alderman Bonilla: Just to get clarity, the current parking spaces will be like the spaces for the new Beech Street School, right? All teachers would do is just cross over to park their vehicles by Gill Stadium? The new spots that you're putting in, they are limited spots with the new build?

M. Lenfest: Correct, and that's what I was going to say, we do have limited parking at the new school, and it will be the existing parking across the street where it exists currently.

Alderman Bonilla: I know it may be a little repetitive, but these questions keep coming up. We're not hiding anything. We're being honest, truly honest, and we appreciate your continued work. So, thank you.

Chairman O'Connell: As part of the agreement with Amoskeag, which ultimately controls these properties, one of the stipulations is that when they allowed the swap over, because they're both controlled by Amoskeag with some caveats and asterisks, was that the parking that's around the JFK Coliseum and the other parking must be retained. And so it will be, and it's not part of the scope of this project.

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

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

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

A True Record. Attest.



Clerk of Committee

*Meeting Start Time: 5:00PM  
Meeting End Time: 5:34PM  
Minutes Prepared By: Michael Intranuovo*