

BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN

May 19, 2026 at 7:00 PM

Mayor Ruais called the meeting to order.

Mayor Ruais called for the Pledge of Allegiance; this function being led by Alderman Goonan.

A moment of silence was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Kaw-uh, Goonan, Dexter, Fajardo, Bonilla, Kantor, Trisciani, O'Neil, Terrio, Sapienza, Burkush, Barry, Vincent, Thomas

Mayor Ruais: With the Board's indulgence, prior to us getting into public comment, there have been a number of times that Chairman Barry and Alderman Thomas have asked for this, and we have some time tonight, so I wanted to take this opportunity. I'd like to welcome Maddie, Landon, Aaliyah, McKenzie, Nicholas and Alana Babineau from Saint Joseph's Junior High School and Trinity High School Choir to please start the meeting tonight with a couple of songs.

Students from the Saint Joseph's Junior High School and Trinity High School choirs sang the *Star-Spangled Banner* and *Lord, I Need You*.

Mayor Ruais: That was beautiful. Thank you all.

Alderman O'Neil: A special recognition, accompanying this group tonight is the legendary retired police sergeant Lloyd Dowdy; he is the current SNHU Arena Security Director.

Mayor Ruais: A couple weeks ago, Chairman Barry actually filled me in on a heroic situation, or the actions that Alderwoman Thomas's kids took last year. I wanted to recognize how amazing your actions were that day and thank you all with a resolution from the City of Manchester. Whereas the City of Manchester recognizes the Thomas family for the strength and support they showed during a serious medical emergency

while on vacation in Florida. And whereas, when Alderwoman Thomas suddenly became critically ill, her children Landon, Maddie, and Lucas remained calm and helped their family through a very difficult situation. And whereas Ryan contacted emergency services while Maddie stayed by her mother's side until first responders arrived, showing maturity and quick thinking during an emergency situation. And whereas, during Kelly's hospitalization, Landon and Maddie also helped care for their younger brother Lucas while supporting their family away from home. And whereas throughout this difficult experience, Ryan, Landon, Maddie, and Lucas showed maturity, resilience, and a strong commitment to supporting one another and their family. And now, therefore, I, Mayor Jay Ruais of the City of Manchester, do hereby commend Kelly Thomas, Ryan, Landon, Maddie and Lucas for their strength, support for one another, and actions during this medical emergency. Thank you all so much.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Mayor Ruais advised that the purpose of the public comment session is to give residents of Manchester the opportunity to address the Board. All people wishing to speak must sign up with their name, address and topic. Once called, they will have up to three minutes to speak and any comments must be directed to the chair and concluded when their time is up. If the Clerk calls their name and they are not present to speak, they will not be given a second opportunity. Any resident wishing to speak will come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized and give their comments.

Michael Martioski, 17 Congress Street: I have a couple of flyers here that I would like to pass to you wonderful folks up there. I'm a combat Marine and a Purple Heart recipient. I am also 100% disabled. Unlike some folks who may have been awarded this level of disability for falling off a truck, blowing an ankle, hurting their back during a hike, things of that nature, my disability rating is due to a traumatic brain injury and PTSD as a direct result of armed combat and the things that I've seen while in Iraq in 2004. I'm also active in the Department of New Hampshire Marine Corps League, VFW Post 8214, and I'm semi-active in American Legion Post. It takes a lot of time. However, I am here tonight as a regular citizen to discuss something near and dear to my heart; veteran suicide. The national average is 22 a day. We know that in some states it's lower and in some states it's higher. We also know that the numbers don't necessarily reflect accurate reporting, since not all suicides observed are able to be identified as veterans due to homelessness, mental health issues, or a general lack of records. I myself was once on the doorway to

the dark side back in 2004. Because I'm not working, I found a great way to help keep myself focused and engaged. I do some charity work and periodically find ways to help veterans, charities, giving back to organizations that help my brothers and sisters, such as the Homeland Heroes Foundation and Warriors At 45 North, which has given me some purpose and direction. It was because of this that my wife and I stumbled on an incredible opportunity, a national nonprofit called 22 Until None. It started as a global initiative about six years ago to show our veterans they are seen, heard, loved and respected, and that they don't have to lose their battles. On June 6th, there is a veteran suicide awareness hike at Camp Carpenter in Manchester. It is a five kilometer or for some of us that haven't served, approximately 3.2 miles. Easy pace and a very simple terrain hike. It's a beautiful walk in the woods around a wonderful lake. It's gorgeous. Originally my wife and I did the first two as satellite hikes and then decided to lead one. That was about three years ago with the help of Scouting America and Camp Carpenter staff member David Southwick. It has become a successful recurring event. This event is free, family friendly, and also leashed pet friendly. So, if you have your dog, cat, iguana, whatever, as long as it's on a leash, it's welcome. There are flyers available. I passed them up there. I got more back there. We will have various veteran groups as well as community partners there with tables and information, and we will serve light refreshments. The fire department is sending an engine and we might have a police presence as well. Please join us. This is not a fundraising event, so please don't worry about being pressured to buy anything. We just want to show our veterans some love and support.

Glenn Ouellette, Manchester: In another few weeks, I get into my new apartment. You know, I've learned a lot about being homeless for two months, and I consider myself one of the lucky ones. But I will tell you something. There are people out there that are homeless, not by their own fault. Something has happened to their lives or their families. And there are others that are homeless because they want to continue doing the drugs and alcohol they always have and rule themselves. It's important that when we deal with the homeless people, that we help those who want to help themselves and get out of a rut and join back society as we know it. It's also important that we make sure that those that do not want to follow the rules of society or the laws that this country is based on, that we don't say, oh, poor them, they are homeless. Can't do that. We need to make sure that they have structure and that they obey the laws like everybody else. Now the summer

is coming. I'm not looking forward to the younger generation riding motorcycles downtown and doing the wheelies, or taking their feet off and putting their knee on the bench. We need to keep our society safe and parents need to tell their teenagers or younger generation the same thing. We are a city of one and we are to operate as one. As it comes for the budget, I'm going to make a prediction. You're going to override the budget. By how much, I don't know. I also know that when you make a budget, it's not always easy. We have needs and the cost of living has gone up. Everything has gone up. I just hope that you've done what's best for the community of Manchester, and that's all that we can hope for. So, thank you for serving us on the board.

Nancy Troupakis, 128 Karatzas Avenue: I'm a resident and a homeowner in ward six. I'm here tonight to strongly oppose any proposal to exceed the tax cap, especially when the driving force behind this increase comes from decisions made by the school district that show a clear lack of fiscal responsibility. I am also deeply concerned that the aldermen's proposed budget is higher than the mayor's budget that was put forward, without proper regard for the very constituents you are elected to represent. Exceeding the tax cap is not just a budget decision. It breaks the promises many of you made to the voters. We keep hearing that the district is underfunded, but when you look at the facts, the situation is largely self-created. It starts with transportation. The district chose to take over the entire bus operation: busing, staffing, maintenance, fuel insurance, long term replacement. That decision shifted millions of ongoing costs onto the taxpayers. And just as important, this was done without meaningful input from the taxpayers. Now we're going to have to pay for it. No competitive bidding, no renegotiation, no shared risk. Costs will only go up. That was not forced. That was a choice. Next, administrative growth. Enrollment declined but administrative costs increase. More positions. More salaries. More long-term obligations. Spending went up while the demand went down. Again, not underfunding; a decision. Then long-term commitments. The \$290 million bond added major debt while operating costs were rising at the same time. And now we're told there's a crisis. Well of course there is. When you add permanent costs without a realistic way to pay for them, you create a structural deficit. This was not inevitable. It is a direct result of choices made by this school district without a viable long-term plan. And exceeding the tax. The tax cap does not just impact homeowners, it impacts landlords who will have no choice but to pass those costs on to renters. That means higher rents across Manchester and more

pressure on families already struggling. And it raises a serious question: how can the city encourage landlords, developers, potential developers to provide affordable housing and then just months later, turn around and hand them a 12% tax increase? You can't promote affordability on one hand and make it harder to provide it on the other. This infection affects the entire community. Taxpayers did not create the problem, the district did. Manchester deserves accountability and transparency. The school board, please stop portraying this as underfunding. Take ownership of the decisions that led us here and be transparent with the public about them. It's not underfunding, it's a spending problem. I urge the Board of Aldermen to reject any budget that exceeds the tax cap. And to the mayor, if this board approves the budget that breaks its promises and exceeds the tax cap, I respectfully urge you to veto it. Manchester deserves leadership that keeps its word, respects residents, protects both homeowners and renters. This isn't underfunding, it's overspending, and taxpayers should not be asked to pay for decisions they did not make.

Paul LaFerriere, 185 Eastern Avenue: I'm here to also oppose the overriding of the tax cap. I'm going to explain to you a reason why. I've got 48 units that I'm president of my association, in which about 30 of those residents are over 65 years of age, have a fixed income, are not getting pay raises, and they sure as heck can't afford having more taxes on their property. We've also got people that live up in our area, on Eastern Avenue and on Karatzas Avenue that are low income, that are paying rent. So, you guys want to raise the tax system yet you're not thinking of the other Manchester residents that are going to have to pay for this or get taxed out of their home. This is going to be ridiculous, and I don't want to move out of my home either. It's pretty bad when you turn around and refinance your place to try and save yourself a few bucks, and then all of a sudden, the few bucks aren't there because the taxes are up. What's it going to do to us? I'm asking you to not go over the tax cap. I appreciate you listening to what I had to say.

Amber Nicole Cannan, Ward 3: I'm a Department of Public Works commissioner and a resident of Manchester. I'm also a person with multiple less visible disabilities. For about a year I was unable to walk, but I still needed to navigate this city for groceries, work, teaching, and basic daily life. During that time, I found that navigating Manchester was not just difficult, it was often unsafe and sometimes impossible. Sidewalk cutouts are missing in many areas, forcing people into the street. Crosswalks are too infrequent and

some have been removed, including near the library on Pine Street and across Granite at Commercial. Where crosswalks exist, many lack bump outs, making crossings longer and more dangerous. Cars regularly block sidewalks, eliminating access entirely. This forces people into traffic. I have around 300 photos of this. In the winter, the issues get worse. Snow and ice blocks sidewalks and curb cuts, making large parts of the city inaccessible for many people; this is difficult for disabled residents. It often makes access impossible. At the same time, parking enforcement is concentrated in downtown metered areas, while enforcement elsewhere is limited. This allows sidewalk obstruction and misuse of accessible parking spaces to continue. There are also not enough accessible parking spaces. I have personally been unable to access businesses or even grocery stores because no accessible spaces were available or because they were being used improperly. New Hampshire is one of the oldest states in the country, and disability increases significantly with age. More than 40% of adults over 65 live with a disability but our accessible parking standards have not kept up with that reality. What we are seeing is a gap between compliance on paper and usability in practice. These are daily barriers. I'm asking the board to consider the following sidewalk maintenance investment that is commensurate with the road budget: adequate funding for DPW to maintain infrastructure, ensure timely snow removal, and install missing sidewalk cutouts, crosswalks and bump outs; expanded parking enforcement, including vehicles blocking sidewalks and misuse of accessible spaces, and an increase in accessible parking spaces across the city, especially at high use locations like the YMCA, the city department buildings and grocery stores. They're very solvable problems, and addressing them will make Manchester more accessible for everyone. I have a copy of my statement, as well as statements from at least five other residents here along the same lines, and 300 photos to add documenting these inaccessible spots.

Vanessa Blais, Ward 4: Tonight, I am serving as the Director of Policy and Planning for the New Hampshire Council on Developmental Disabilities. I'm here tonight to read into record the public statement from Jennifer Coffey, who is a disability advocate here in Ward 11, and she was unable to attend tonight. I, Jennifer Coffey, am asking for consideration, but frustrated that we have to bear ourselves to be treated equally. We have a vibrant city that is not accessible to everyone and that is a problem the city ignores and has continued to fail to address. It is important for the city to understand that using

an accessible ramp or sidewalk to hold snow stops a person from being able to access the city. Those behaviors can cancel an appointment and a family gathering and make someone feel locked up. Add to that the limited parking spaces, and it's basically impossible for the majority of people with mobility issues to access anything in the city, like the Post Office on Elm Street or the nearby YMCA, which has an accessible entrance but no corresponding disability parking spot. Of that, there are only two on that street, only two people that can be in that area of town at the same time. Without ramps and proximally located accessible spots enforced by the parking department, someone in a wheelchair can't get into a business or can't get out of their car. The city does not do enough to keep people out of the disability parking spots and the ramp near them. I lost count of how many people without disabilities parked there to pick up food. It's just a few minutes is not okay as an excuse for locking disabled folks out of the city. And that is what this does. It keeps the city inaccessible to all. This has a horrific effect on the mental and physical well-being of many in New Hampshire, most especially those of us who live right here in the city. You have to change this and include us at the table as you talk about redesigning the city. An accessible world is lifesaving. Right now, we have more isolation than inclusion.

Elaine D'Allaire, 361 Hayward Street: I'm nearly 70 years old and was born with osteogenesis imperfecta. I go to the Manchester YMCA 4 to 5 days a week. This is how I keep my body functioning and manage my acute pain. This is how I'm able to live alone and stay independent. Years ago, I sustained a disc injury opening the YMCA multiple fire doors. We then entered into an arrangement. But access does not begin at the ramp. It begins where I park my car. Moreover, I cannot call the youth center to get help if conditions should prevent me from getting to the ramp. It appears the YMCA, at least on paper, dictates their building is accessible. But for who? Most of the time there is no ADA parking at or near the ramp. I must park up a huge hill and make my way across sidewalks and missing bricks which catch my crutch. Fast cars fly past me and I work my way through traffic. I am the one risking a fall and could result in multiple broken bones. Why? In the winter, snow and ice accumulate on the YMCA curbs and ADA parking areas. I have taken pictures for the last six months and reported these directly to the city. No one has taken the lead to the best of my knowledge, which is why I have spent years trying to get this problem addressed. I have made calls and asked questions. I have tried to locate

who is responsible. Instead, I have experienced a system where responsibility or accountability does not exist. I am not the only person seeking your attention tonight. Many people in Manchester rely on accessible parking with safe pathways to survive and live their lives. We are not just an inconvenience. We carry the burden of navigating environments that are actively hostile towards us. I'm pleading for all people who have no voice tonight. I will continue my sustained focus. All residents have the same rights to enjoy our community. It is essential for maintaining any high quality of life.

Guy Ouellette, Ward 6: I'm here to speak for those friends of mine and acquaintances that couldn't make it. I'd like to maintain the tax cap the way it is. The people, most of the people that I know, are living on Social Security and Social Security disability. I think it's very difficult if we have an increase in the taxes and property taxes, many of them who have paid their mortgages off and are now living day to day, basically an increase in their taxes, I think would be very tough for them. It would be a very heavy burden for a lot of those elder citizens here in the city. I think if we can maintain the tax cap the way it is, I think it would be beneficial for them. I'd like to see us treating our elders with more respect in this city, helping them, this lovely young lady that I just helped out of the seat. I had to help her through the front entrance of the door because the access panel did not work. She struggled to get through that door and that almost broke my heart to see it. I think if we can spend more time being more respectful to the elderly in this city, I myself being one of them. I am a baby boomer, believe it or not. And that's all I really have to say. I'd like to say most of what I've already heard this evening, I agree with also.

Victoria Sullivan, South Beech Street: I live on South Beech Street. I am also a state senator and I represent District 18. I came with the list that I read to you last time about the money that we've sent back from the state, the \$11 million for room and meals tax, the increased money we send back for education, even though we've got a declining enrollment, and the budget certainly does not reflect that. But listening to everybody tonight, I think you guys just need to understand, no matter what our data says, that there's real people behind these numbers. I'm on the west side today walking and talking to some folks. I realize that there's a piece of metal sticking up out of the sidewalk. I've seen it next to Saint Joseph's Parish. The same thing. Broken signs with pieces of metal. I'm listening to these people talk behind us about how inaccessible our city is. And that's

just a trip and fall for people that don't have struggles getting around the city. But instead, you're going to spend \$2 million on one of the best sidewalks we have in the city to rip it up and put it back down instead of taking care of the things that we need to take care of. You guys, just like at the state level, are strapped with a budget. We had to work really hard to not raise property taxes. We had to make some tough decisions. And now that's on you guys. You made promises to reduce taxes. They've been increased every single year. And now you're looking at actually playing the shell game with the rivals to make it look like you're cutting the tax rate, but you're actually increasing the spending. People are out of money. They're out of chances. We had beautiful children up here before us singing tonight. They are impacted the most. Every time you use the word bond, you are putting them in bondage. You are bonding them to your decisions when they're trying to raise families in this city, you're not thinking about what you're doing to the people that you are here to represent. You have to make tough decisions like every family in this city is doing right now at their kitchen table, trying to figure out what they cut. You know, what? Families are going to cut soccer. They're going to cut camps for kids. They're going to have to decide that they have to buy less meat and more pasta, because that's what people are facing right now. My mortgage payment is my primary, my principal is less than what I'm paying for taxes every month. Now, this is not sustainable. We have elderly people that every time you make this decision, have one foot out the door of the home that they worked their whole lives for; they supported this city their whole lives. They raised their families here. And you're telling them, we don't care. We have other priorities than you, and we're going to raise taxes. And if you have to sell your home, that's not on us. It is on you. It's on every one of you. You represent your neighbors. You don't represent anybody else in these seats other than your neighbors and the children that are going to be impacted. What does financial strain do to our families? It increases alcoholism. It increases drug abuse. It increases domestic violence. And when parents don't know how they're going to keep a roof over their kids' heads, this is how they're impacted. Your decisions are contributing to the crisis that we have, the housing crisis here, because every time you raise property taxes, rents get increased. I don't know if you've looked at the price of rents in this city; it's unsustainable. I could not start out in this city. I could not bring up a family here now. I don't know how families are doing it, but this is on you guys, and I hope you make the right decisions and stand up for the taxpayers that you are here to represent.

Brittany Ping, 199 Putnam Street: Ward 11 is the best. I do apologize, everybody else. Norm, you know this is true. I did not prepare a speech today. I have had the distinct pleasure of taking a break from coming to talk to all of you, so it's nice to see you. Thank you all for the work that you do. This is a thankless job. Building a budget is a thankless job. Building a budget, mayor, that you have to present before you have all of your figures in, it's not fun. I really appreciate the work that you guys are putting in behind the scenes, whether or not I agree with the large tax increase that's being presented this evening. I do work in housing. I do own a small business. I have lost 20% of my personal income in this past year. So, the last time we went through a revaluation, I had to sell my multi-family home because my rents were in a lease at a nice low rent rate for my tenants, and I could no longer afford to own or occupy that home at my rent rates. So, I currently live in what was supposed to be my investment property where the rent that I pay pays my mortgage and the second-floor tenant pays for the updates, like the new furnace and the new decks that we require and all of those fun things. So as somebody who pays \$1 million in payroll every year for the employees that I employ, I chose to take a personal hit. I took a 20% income loss last year and that's not to cry, poor me. But it's to say when people are making these decisions at their dining room table, like I'm doing, it's hard. It's not easy. You know, evictions are going back up in this city because people can't afford what's out there. I personally can't afford what's out there. I don't know if you've been to Market Basket and spent \$100 in groceries, but it's not what it used to be. I'm not saying this budget is being presented lightly, but the reality is we can't override this tax cap. And mayor, if it comes down to it and you have to veto it, I hope you do. And I hope Norm and my alderman is going to vote in the best interest of his constituents. I was looking today at our area median income. Our neighborhoods have \$46,000, the area median income in some of our neighborhoods on the west side. You guys know it in ward three. You know it in ward five. You know it. They can't afford another dollar and a half per thousand on the value of their rent. It is not going to go well for this city. I don't want to see a 3.8%. I don't want to see on the tax cap. I'd love to see a decrease, but I know we have to do what we have to do. And so please do not vote to override this tax cap. And if it comes to it, mayor please veto it.

Ken Tasse, 276 Karatzas Avenue: Don't nuke the tax cap. I am a former member of the school board and chairman of the Manchester Republican Committee. I would like to speak tonight about the tax cap and about the upcoming decision on the city budget, mainly as it as it pertains to the school board decisions and the big ask that they've thrown at the city. When I was on the school board to make a point typically regarding budgets and fiscal decisions by the school board, I would use a business analogy quickly to be shut down or interrupted at that time by one of a number of different people who saw things a little bit differently than I did. So now since I have an opportunity without interruption, I'd like to continue something I tried to say about three years ago. In a business, the argument was the school district is not a business it is a school district, it has teachers and students and administration. To give an analogy, you've got a management team. In order to have a good company, you have to have a management team. You have to have a good product. You've got to have a market, you've got to have customers, you've got to have investors to pay for your product development, to pay your salaries, etc. In the case of our school district, our superintendent is the management, investors are the taxpayers, the customers are the students and the families who put their children through our schools. And the product is an excellent education. Administration and staff would be the employees in a company. And when a company does not produce a good product, people stop buying the product. When investors see that the revenue is not coming in, they'll pull their money out of that company and they'll move it to somewhere where their money is going to be put to better use. And that's what we've seen. We've lost 3,000 students over the past five years to enrollment. Taxpayers are screaming, as you can see tonight, that they're tired of being taxed out of their homes and as was also mentioned, rents are going up because landlords are also being taxed out of the city. Coming back to the tax cap, I would ask that the superintendent and the administration of the school board really think twice about what they're asking for. This burden is not to be put on the shoulders of the taxpayers who are trying to stay in the city. You've got people who are on fixed incomes that are barely making \$2,000 a month. When their taxes go up by \$400 a month, they've got to leave the city. I know that you've only seen the most recent proposed budget, I think on Friday you saw it. Three days is really not enough to review this. I ask first for anyone that is going to be putting out a vote to vote against exceeding the tax cap. If we do get to that tonight, please someone motion to table this until two weeks from today.

Troy Micklon, 29 Ode Way: I'm here tonight to speak in opposition of the alternative budget proposal. Many of you ran on a platform of affordable housing in the city. That term is not just about building more units, it's also about keeping the overall cost of living under control for the people that are already here. At a time when families across Manchester are struggling with inflation, rising utility bills, rising insurance costs and everyday cost of living, this board should be more focused on protecting taxpayers, not increasing the burden on them. This alternative budget restores nearly every spending reduction made in the mayor's original proposed budget, expands personnel costs and substantially increases spending. What concerns me the most is that we've heard promises about respecting the tax cap before. In 2022, when the alderman from ward nine first ran for his seat, he publicly stated, that our goal should always be to respect the tax cap and increases as low as possible. Months later, he voted to override it. Here we are once again discussing a budget that goes far beyond what many taxpayers expected City Hall to be spending. And according to the updated budget projections prepared by the City Finance Department for tonight's meetings, the city is currently projecting approximately almost \$1.8 million in operating expenses surplus for FY 2026. That should be a sign that Manchester is moving at least slightly in the right direction economically. But instead of using that momentum to stabilize taxes and control spending, we're now being asked to override the tax cap and spend even more. When is enough, enough? I would also like to address the reevaluation argument. The city charter is very clear that even during city wide reevaluations, the amount of property taxes raised is still limited by the tax cap. A reevaluation should not be treated as an excuse to dramatically increase spending simply because property values have changed on paper. This board needs to recognize the impact it has on affordability across the entire city. Every time property taxes rise dramatically, those costs do not just affect our homeowners. They get passed on from landlords to the tenants through higher rents. If the board was serious about making Manchester more affordable, you cannot keep treating taxpayers like an unlimited source of revenue. Manchester's taxpayers deserve a city government that actually respects the tax cap, spends responsibly, and recognizes that affordability matters. I urge this board to approve the mayor's budget and to reject this tax cap busting budget.

Mayor Ruais: A reminder to please direct your comments to the chair.

Rob Chebook, 82 Arlington Street: I had some stuff prepared, but pretty much everybody's covering the exact same stuff I was going to talk about, so I'd rather take this time to speak about Mr. Mayor, when I met you when you were running for your first meeting, your first term. I met you at my friend's house, who also lives on Arlington Street. It was a very small group of people, homeowners, business owners. And you had a lot of good stuff to say. Some of the stuff you've touched on in your first term, some of the stuff you haven't done anything with. And one thing that really stuck with me was you would never vote for an override on a tax cap. I left there feeling good about you. I went out, I convinced a lot of people to vote for you, saying you're an honest and honorable man. We'll see what happens with this budget. For the rest of you, everybody else on the board, like everybody has been saying, if you keep raising taxes, no one in this room can talk about affordability anymore. Nobody; because it'll be on you. You're raising prices on everybody. Rents go up. You're making it harder for young kids to buy houses in this city. So, for the rest of you, if you override the tax cap tonight, nobody here can honestly talk about affordability. You've lost all credibility.

Rich Girard, 283 Orange Street: Tonight, you're expected to take up the Trisciani-Burkush budget. It raises taxes by over \$22 million, shattering the tax cap, which only allows an increase of \$8 million. To mask the unprecedented 12% tax increase in the tax rate, the current tax rate, which is calculated using the current tax base, is compared to an estimated rate using a much higher estimated tax base because of the revaluation. This is not just mathematically wrong, it's wildly deceptive, but easily corrected. All you have to do is equalize the tax bases so that the tax rates can be honestly and accurately compared. The article I sent to you all yesterday contained the simple math needed to do this. If you disagree, show us the math or stop the lies. Trisciani and Burkush claim that their proposal comes in approximately \$2.9 million under the expense cap and includes a proposed revenue cap. The article I sent contained the exact tax cap language from the charter. It limits spending increases to the allowed increase in taxes plus or minus any gains or losses in non-tax revenue. That means the \$12 million in lost tax revenue must be subtracted from the \$8 million in increased taxes. That result being a -\$4 million. \$4 million must be cut from the budget. So how this proposal can be \$2.9 million below this cap is a mystery or a flat-out falsehood. Show us the language or stop the lies. Similarly,

there is no revenue cap that allows the board to increase taxes because of an increase in the tax base, let alone due to the revaluation that is specifically prohibited by the tax cap as the language I sent you yesterday proves. Moreover, in 2014, voters hammered a charter amendment that would have allowed this to happen despite being endorsed literally by every elected official in the city. If you still think a revenue override exists, show us the language or stop the lies. Finally, let's put the size of this tax hike in perspective. During Mayor Gatsas's eight years in office, taxes increased by just over \$41 million or 24%. That's 3% per year and included three tax cap overrides. During Mayor Joyce Craig's six years in office, taxes also went up by just over \$41 million, or just under 20%. That's a three and a third percent increase per year and included two tax cap overrides. Since Mayor Ruais has been in office, taxes have climbed by \$19.5 million in two years. That's 7.8%, or 3.9% per year. This \$22 million tax hike is more than half the eight-year tax increase under Gatsas, more than half the six-year tax hike under Craig, and would more than double the two-year tax spike under Ruais. Bringing the total tax hike, since you took office, Your Honor, to nearly \$42 million, an astonishing increase of 20% in three years, literally doubling the average annual tax hike under big spender Joyce Craig. If any of you think this is okay, you are profoundly wrong. Especially if you're a Republican who claims to support the tax cap. This budget must not be allowed to pass. Mayor, I urge you to veto it if it does, and urge the five Republican aldermen to uphold your veto if you do, since you all said you supported the tax cap. This isn't overriding the tax cap; it's obliterating it. Sharpen your pencils, get spending under control, and stop the lies.

Cyprus Hall, 609 Beech Street: I'm a ward four resident and a ward three business owner. I'm a lifelong non-driver, in part due to a neurological disability and in large part due to pure preference. I walk everywhere, rain or shine. I walk to work, church, corner stores, yoga studios, cafes, parks and the library. The sidewalks of the central and north neighborhoods are my home, and I'm sorry to say that my home is in an increasing and dangerous state of disrepair, even in temperate weather. On my relatively stable legs, my eyes are always glued to the sidewalk when I should be saving some of that awareness for the world around me. Cracks, dips, bumps, potholes, root growth, overgrowth, debris, and missing slopes make nearly every stretch of my community's sidewalks a potentially dangerous obstacle course. This only gets worse in inclement weather. I carry my needs to and from work on a small rolling cart, which makes my trek even more challenging.

This past winter, I had to close my business several times, even when the roads themselves were clear, due to poor and absent snow removal on the sidewalks. I couldn't get myself the things I needed to work safely, and I only needed to get from Beech to Pine. I couldn't do it. I couldn't even take a shuttle or a rideshare because they won't take me with my cart if those things are available to me at all when I need them. Increasingly, young people aren't driving. You can look up the numbers and it will shock you how many non-drivers there are under 30. Want people to live, work, play, want skilled workers and young families to come and stay? Safe access to businesses for non-drivers and opportunities for drivers to choose to walk makes life easier and more affordable. Pedestrian and disabled access are so severely neglected here in our Queen City that it presents not only physical and economic barriers, but it is downright embarrassing. A functional city needs safe sidewalks and crossings, it needs disabled access. It is so fundamental and so basic and so obvious that it is shameful we haven't done more already. I know that we can do better and I'm excited to hear how we're going to do it.

Tessert Bloodrue, 609 Beech Street: I am here today to talk about the sidewalk situation in the city. I am disabled and use mobility aids to get around. I do not drive due to vision issues and impairment in my left eye and neurological conditions. I repeatedly have to walk to work on broken, cracked, uneven, and often extraordinarily dangerous sidewalks six days a week. I have in the past year ripped through two pairs of shoes, cut my heel on walkways covered in shattered glass, twisted my ankle from stepping on chunks of sidewalk that were just crumbling under my feet, and frequently suffer muscle strain and joint damage from just walking around the city. Snow has also not been managed well, making this past winter an absolute nightmare, full of slipping, injury, and having to walk to work in the roads because the sidewalks were covered in multiple feet of snow. In a healthy city, walkways would be managed and maintained. This is absolutely not the case in Manchester. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, hundreds of people, nearly a thousand people, are killed annually because they are forced to walk in the street due to poorly managed footpaths, or lack thereof. I have come exceedingly close this year to being part of that statistic. Just this past winter, in December, I was nearly run down by a pickup truck driver who was mad that I had chosen to walk on the road. The only reason that I was walking in the street was because the sidewalk up Beech Street had three feet of snow covering it, covering the sidewalks for several blocks, rendering it entirely

impossible for someone like me to even attempt climbing through all that snow. The dangers of walking on the roads aside, the state of our sidewalks is currently abysmal. I frequently have to walk through sharp gravel left by crumbling sidewalk slabs. I can't take my rollator through most sidewalks because they're so uneven. There's roots and tree stumps growing through the sidewalks. There are potholes the size of my tires. And there's shattered glass, car parts, things from car accidents that are never properly cleaned. And there's so many different hazards across the streets of Manchester that I have to try to navigate around every day. Walking on these sidewalks has also led to a lot of joint subluxations and pulled muscles. I have a hard enough time holding a job down with the disabilities that hinder me from working as hard as an able bodied and able minded person, and our sidewalks are making it extraordinarily harder than it needs to be. Manchester can be a beautiful place to live, but until we do something to fix and maintain our sidewalks, it remains a hazardous and hostile place for pedestrian traffic. For the safety and accessibility of children, elders, disabled folk, and all the non-drivers of the city, I urge everyone here to push legislation or a budget or something that will level, repave, and clean our sidewalks around the city. We deserve to have a safe path around Manchester.

Kathleen Paquette, Ward 5: I'm a New Hampshire State Representative representing and living in Manchester's ward five. I'm asking you tonight to vote no on the unfair, financially irresponsible and frankly, in my opinion, misleading budget proposal being brought forth by several of the aldermen tonight. I receive calls and emails all the time from Manchester residents who are already struggling to pay their property taxes. Families are financially struggling. Seniors are worried about staying in their homes. And while we continue to talk about affordable housing, we all know what happens when property taxes rise this dramatically: rents rise, too. Manchester residents are desperately asking their leaders for tax relief, and this proposed budget ignores their pleas and stabs those who are already financially struggling right in the back. It is difficult for taxpayers to look at the way these numbers are being manipulated, and not feel like they're being asked to carry a burden while being given an incomplete picture. This proposal is not just bad. It feels like a money grab at the expense of the taxpayers. This is a betrayal to the people we represent. The people of Manchester cannot afford this. Manchester residents deserve responsible budgeting and leadership that understands and respects the financial reality

that families are facing every single day. I urge you tonight to stand with the residents you were elected to represent and vote no to any budget that overrides the tax cap and causes additional financial distress to Manchester's families.

George Kalipolites, 668 Lake Avenue: 12% tax increase. A set tax rate would be \$19.58 per \$1,000. An example, a \$350,000 home with a 12% increase is a \$822 yearly increase. That whole tax property rate for the year would be over \$6,800. There are 16,400 total property owners in the city. Between 10,000 and 11,000 are middle class homeowners that are paying property tax. Let's not forget the tax cap was voted by the people for the city charter. Inflation rate CPU is at 4% presently as of April. That's still climbing. Rent, food and living, everything is going up, not coming down. Gas prices alone are \$4.55 a gallon, projected another 2 to 3 weeks, \$5 a gallon. If the board cares about people, you should go with a tax cap. Another idea I want to give you guys is quarterly tax payments. Every quarter property owners make a payment, it is a better income stream for the city and easier on the taxpayer.

Ellis Daigle, 255 River Road: I'm nine years old. My family and I just moved to Manchester from Auburn. I'm excited to walk on sidewalks because I've never really done that. I want to keep our community safe. I don't want dangerous sidewalks to harm us. I think it's scary to walk on the street without a safe sidewalk. I want those who are houseless, disabled, kids, and elderly people and people who don't drive to be safe on sidewalks because I care about them. I think walking and biking are important because it doesn't waste gas and doesn't pollute the earth. I also think bicycle lanes are important because I don't want bicyclists to get hurt on the road. I feel sad that people in wheelchairs have to use bicycle lanes because the sidewalks are not clear and the snow is covering the sidewalks. I hope you will patch the sidewalks and help our community to be safe. Also, I hope you will keep sidewalks clear from snow.

Austin Bouchard, Ward 2: I'm here tonight to speak on the aldermanic budget, if that's even the proper word for something brought forward with so little public notice and so little respect for the people who will be forced to pay it. From behind a veil of secrecy, this budget steps into view a historic tax increase aimed at taxpayers in a revaluation year when confusion has already done the work of concealment. It arrives without the warning

it deserves, without the scrutiny it demands, and without the reform that should have been required before one more dollar was even requested. That is not transparency. That is not courage. That is a government forgetting to whom it answers. Let us speak plainly. The tax cap allows roughly \$8 million in initial property tax increase this year. This proposal seeks roughly \$22 million in new property taxation. Call it a revenue cap override. Point to the expense cap. Hide behind whatever technical language you need. But taxpayers do not pay terminology. They pay the bill. This does not merely exceed the tax cap, it overwhelms it. And in a revaluation year, that becomes even more dishonest. A lower tax rate does not mean a lower tax bill. If property values rise and the city takes in more money in total, then calling that a tax cut is not clarity, it's deception by arithmetic. To claim discipline, because this budget sits approximately \$2.9 million under the expense tax cap, is insulting. That is consuming \$22 million more from taxpayers and expecting praise because you stopped short of \$25 million. That is not stewardship. That is indulgence with a political ceiling. And the deeper indictment is this: there is no corresponding reform. There is no serious audit. There is no visible discipline. There is no evidence that poor outcomes have been answered before more money is demanded. This board was not elected to make government comfortable. It was elected to make government accountable. Sometimes programs do not get funded. Sometimes positions remain vacant. Sometimes departments are told no. That is not cruelty. That is governance. School spending has risen more than 24% in recent years, while aggregate academic outcomes have improved by less than 1%. Less than 1%. If City Hall struggles with that math, perhaps we can borrow one of the district's math coaches, because no serious person should look at that return on investment and conclude that the answer is simply take more money. We were told by the schools that they need sunlight to learn. Perhaps this chamber needs sunlight to govern. A tax increase of this size should see the light of day remain there long enough for the public to understand it and be defended openly before one more dollar is taken from Manchester taxpayers. And yes, this is about liberty. There is something deeply troubling about a city government that believes it can reach into a citizen's home, into a citizen's kitchen, and dictate what can and cannot happen there. And then standing in that same kitchen, help itself to the citizen's wallet on the way out the door. That is a government that has forgotten its place. So, say it plainly. Say to Manchester in a revaluation year, without meaningful public notice, without measurable reform, and without proof, that more spending will produce better outcomes,

we believe that this government deserves more money. Own that statement and carry it to every homeowner, renter, senior, family and small business owner who will be forced to pay it. But do not ask the public to trust a process that has not trusted them with the truth, and do not call it leadership to take the easier road and send the people the bill. Vote no.

Scott Tacker, Ward 9: First of all, I just want to say thank you to each of the board members here. This is a difficult job that you do. I've been talking to my neighbors a lot over the past couple of weeks. If things start hitting the news and start hitting social media and everything's cropping up and I'm hearing a common theme about my neighbors, and that common theme is my voice makes no difference. They don't care. So, they no longer speak up to their elected officials. They no longer attend or participate in these meetings. Look around here. There's tons of open space in this chamber. Where are they? They're not here. As an infrequent participant in these types of sessions and these discussions, I'm not versed in this city government. I'm not versed on how things operate. But I do know one thing. I like my community and I decided to live here 20 years ago because of what this city offered. As I walked into the chambers tonight, I introduced myself to a gentleman, Mr. O'Connell, and we had a brief discussion about that very topic that people don't care. Well, he educated me in quite a few things. I learned about the difficulties that you have to deal with your constituents. However, it's my understanding that you as an elected official, your primary goals are to represent the city's best interest while weighing the desires of your constituents. As I've learned and observed over the years, that is a difficult struggle for you to meet because your residents, the political action groups, you've got to weigh that between what's needed to be done for your city. This year is no different. Our nation is facing ever increasing costs and people are concerned. They have stress every day about how they're going to put food on their table, how they're going to pay their bills, how they're going to pay their rent, their mortgage. It goes on and on. Just a few years ago, if we remember, some of you were involved in all this, our city was presented the opportunity of receiving a massive influx of federal and state funds during a time of national crisis. Your residents warned you that accepting these funds was going to result in decisions that this group had to make on future expenses and these services that were being added because the funds were going to dry up. And the term was these are temporary. Well, those funds are gone and people no longer apply the term

temporary. I just ask you one thing. The proposed budget, while it is a rate reduction, I'll give you that, if you look at it overall however, if when I looked at the public information at my property and I talked to some friends who are in real estate, if the revaluation numbers are accurate and this budget goes through, I'm looking at a 10% to 11% increase in my tax bill. That's not sustainable. I just ask you to remember that first thing. Remember and hear your residents.

Amanda Bouldin, Ward 5: I was sent here to read the comments for someone else, but then somebody beat me to that. So instead, I want to say that Alas de Frida is a pretty great place to eat in the city, and my mom really likes eating there. But it's very sad when we roll up and there's a food delivery driver parked in the handicapped spot immediately outside. And a lot of the testimony that I heard tonight was reflective of the experience that I've had a lot of times with my mom who has a handicapped placard and uses a wheelchair or a walker when we're out in public. And definitely if she dared to go outside ever in the winter, which is almost never, the condition of the sidewalks in recent years would be problematic for her. But I feel like the greatest tragedy in her life is inaccessibility of Alas de Frida. I would like you to consider that the next time that you go there to eat, because I feel like everybody in this room has eaten there. And if you haven't, that's really the tragedy.

Grizli Glenn, Ward 3: Hello. 'm going to get off subject. Although I'm getting off subject, this subject is equally as important, especially to me and my community. I'm here again because the city keeps showing us the same problem that there's no clear, consistent standard for police accountability in Manchester. Recently, Officer Justin Ketcham was placed on administrative leave after a cell phone video surfaced from the Bruce Road arrest. That video raised serious concerns, and now the Attorney General's public integrity unit is reviewing it. But my question is why does accountability only seem to move when the public gets a video? Because if Officer Ketcham can be placed on administrative leave while his conduct is being reviewed, then every officer involved in the use of force should be also be reviewed and removed from patrol while an investigation is pending. This should not stop with one officer. If another officer was involved in the use of force on the man who was already handcuffed, the officer should also be placed on administrative leave. If there were officers present and failed to de-escalate or failed to intervene, that

should also be investigated. Officers do not get to stand around, join in, or look the other way and then pretend that they had no responsibility. Manchester Police policy talks about de-escalation. It talks about reasonable force. It talks about officers having duty to intervene. The department talks about integrity, accountability, professionalism, dignity and respect. So, I'm asking this. I'm asking the city and I'm asking you all when do those words actually apply? Because they cannot just be pretty words on a website or in a mission statement. They have to be something when officers are using force against real people. And this is not just about Bruce Road. This is about a pattern. I will be releasing my own interactions with Officer Ketcham. Surprise, surprise. Because what happened to me also raises serious concerns. In my case, officers did not de-escalate. They did not follow their own protocols. More officers joined in instead of calming the situation down, and all eight of those charges against me were dropped. And that matters. That speaks to credibility, that speaks to training, that speaks to supervision. And it speaks to whether this department corrects misconduct or protects it. And this brings me back to Nickenley Turenne. Nickenley was 24 years old, a black man who was shot and killed by three Manchester police officers. His family still does not have the full truth. The public still has not seen the body camera footage. The Attorney General's investigation still has not given the public full answers yet. The officers involved in killing Nickenley were allowed to return to regular patrol while investigation is still incomplete. So again, what's the standard? If the cell phone video of an arrest is enough to place an officer on administrative leave, then why is the fatal shooting of Nickenley Turenne not enough to keep those officers off patrol units until the investigation is finished? If the standard is based on how serious the force was, because Nickenley is dead. If the standard is based on protecting the integrity of the investigation, because that investigation is still ongoing, or is the standard only applied when a bystander records something posted online, and then the department can no longer control what the public sees? Because if the public exposure is what triggers administrative leave, then that's not accountability, that's damage control. There are also serious concerns in the community about what happened before Nickenley was shot, including whether he may have been following commands while he was shot. So if that's not true, then release the body camera footage.

Mayor Ruais: You've had your opportunity to speak. You've had your three minutes to speak like everybody else has had. You've had your three minutes to speak. Your time has expired.

G. Glenn: This building does not belong to you.

Mayor Ruais: Your time has expired. That is your three minutes to speak.

Grizli Glenn: Public accountability. Release the body cam footage. Period.

Mayor Ruais: I would take one moment to reiterate my comments from the budget address. Chief Marr and I have been very clear that we want a swift resolution to this case. This is something that is right now up at the Attorney General's office and is not in the hands of the Manchester Police Department. The other comment that I would make, particularly because we have a number of our police officers here this evening, is I have full faith and confidence in Chief Marr and the men and women of the department. They have an extraordinarily difficult job, and I trust them in their interactions with the public and the work that they do every single day to keep our city safe.

Patrick Binder, Ward 10: I'm here to talk about the tax cap. I hear you guys are thinking about violating it and increasing my taxes. I wouldn't maybe mind so much if we're going to increase the taxes had the city had a great track record of spending it well. It would be one thing, but we can't even get the basics right. I wouldn't mind living in a city that's expensive to be in, but that should be a city that's nice, clean, well maintained, exclusive, and has great services. But we don't have any of that. Instead, we have declining enrollment, failing grades, the grades are really bad, translating into ten different languages at our school system, potholes everywhere, open drug deals in Kalivas Park, a park named after a veteran.

Members of the audience disrupted public comment.

Mayor Ruais recessed the meeting at 8:20 PM.

Mayor Ruais called the meeting back to order at 8:24 PM.

Mayor Ruais: The board rules regarding public comment state that speakers are encouraged to be civil in their language and presentation. True threats and the use of fighting words are prohibited, in addition to any and all speech or actions which violate any applicable law. During public comment, speakers shall only address the chair. The audience shall likewise not engage in any conduct that would prevent the public participation sessions from occurring, or would otherwise violate any applicable law.

P. Binder: As I was saying, I wouldn't mind the tax increases so much if I thought it was being spent really well and that the city had a track record of spending the money it does have really well. But when I look around the city, it seems like that's not the case. The students have, on average, very failing grades. That report card was terrible. There are potholes everywhere. There are open drug deals in Kalivas Park. And the police are not addressing it. I think they've just contained it to that park, which is a shame. It's a park named after the first Greek immigrant to die in World War I that was from Manchester. That has been something that's been mentioned here that I just noticed a week ago is just the number of illegally parked cars up and down Elm Street. And I was like, wow. And then you start seeing them in the handicapped spots, but they're parked everywhere. Double parking people. It's Uber drivers, Uber Eats drivers, delivery drivers of all sorts. I asked the parking enforcement guy and he said he has been trained not to do anything about it. I asked an MPD officer about it and he said, welcome to Manchester 2026, which also seemed to say that they're just not going to do anything about it. I'm pretty sure if I parked there, I'd get a ticket, but they for some reason don't, so they're ignoring it. There's open prostitution up and down Manchester Street. I had a job there and literally people were just coming up to your door looking for jobs or whatever they call them. It was disgusting. I think the city knows that these problems are there. They know the potholes are there. They know the sidewalks are falling apart. I just don't trust that you guys can do the basics. I think you need to really sharpen your pencils, get better at what you know, what you're supposed to be good at, and not just try to throw money at it. Prove that you can do the basics right before you start asking for more and more money. I encourage you all to not violate the tax cap, don't raise taxes. Try to lower your spending, try to find cuts, try to find ways to spend it smarter. Because a lot of this is clearly a systemic

problem. I don't know where it falls with the aldermen or the votes you're having or the department heads. But ultimately it falls on the mayor and something's got to be done. All we can do is come here and complain, and then vote. But what we'd all prefer is that something gets done while you guys are sitting there. Put your minds together and figure out how to spend money within the tax cap and do the basics that a city needs to do to be an awesome place to live. I like living here, but I want to like living here a lot more.

Kira Morehouse, Ward 1: I'm here representing an awesome nonprofit that is in ward three. I'm reading on behalf of one of our neighbors of the nonprofit who couldn't be here tonight.

Good evening. My name is Tamara Morris, and I have been a resident of Manchester since 1991. I appear before the council today to raise a serious concern regarding sidewalk accessibility in our city. I do not drive and therefore depend entirely on walking and public transportation to reach my workplace, church, grocery stores, and family members' homes. As a result, I regularly travel on foot throughout the Manchester community and directly experienced the condition of our pedestrian infrastructure. In many areas of the city, sidewalks are inadequately maintained, hazardous during the winter months, or entirely non-existent. These conditions pose significant safety risks and create ongoing barriers for residents who rely on walking as a primary means of transportation. I urge the council to treat sidewalk maintenance and expansion as a priority. Accessible and safe sidewalks are not a convenience. They are a necessity for mobility, public safety, and equal access within our community. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Jim O'Connell, Ward 2: I'm on the Manchester Board of School Committee. I know you all have been working very diligently to try to make these numbers work and find an adequate budget for the City of Manchester. I'll leave that to you. That's difficult work and you need to do it. So. But the reason I came tonight is because I listen to people speak and I take most people to be well intentioned and speaking from what they believe to be truth. I want to make sure that people know some facts. And that's what I want to say. The taxpayers of Manchester got a 2.5% decrease in funding for schools last year. I want to be careful, there's money that goes in and out from the Department of Agriculture for

food, federal funding, state funding, etc. School funding is funded in multiple ways. I'm talking about the Manchester taxpayers, and I would hope that people would listen because this is not that hard. Manchester taxpayers got a 2.5% decrease in taxes on the school side last year, which amounted to \$2.9 million or so on savings. Every house in Manchester got that last year. So, if you think your taxes are going through the ceiling or keep going up because of schools, it simply is not true. Over the last six years in the city of Manchester, the amount of money that Manchester taxpayers have been asked to pay each year for schools has been below 1.5%, while inflation over the last four or five years has gone up by 24% or 23%, roughly 4.5% a year, because there's been some difficult years recently. The Manchester School District effectively has been operating at about 3% below the actual cost of living. Two or three years ago, the district got a \$1 million increase. \$1 million is real money out of people's pockets, I get it, but electricity and gas went up by \$970,000 that year. So, my only purpose in being before you is not to berate you, I don't envy the work you have to do, but there's a disconnect between some of the good people speaking here tonight who say we've got to do something to hold the line on taxes. I just want to be clear, as a Manchester school board member, that when it comes to your schools, you have paid less than 1.5% a year over the last six years. You got a decrease of 2.5% last year. So that's the main point. Again, thank you for what you're doing and all your work. And you know, I appreciate you.

Avery Cyr, 30 Hanover Street: The Manchester School District has the biggest student population in the state, at 11,712 students as of February of 2026, according to the New Hampshire Department of Education, and has a non-caucasian student population of 50% in a state that has, on average, a 20% non-caucasian student body at most schools. Manchester schools are unique in this way, full of diversity and rich and vibrant cultures, and as a city, we need to ask ourselves, what kind of city do we want to be going into the future? Do we want to be a place where families want to move and send their students to our schools? Or do we want to be a city that simply holds our own and doesn't encourage outsiders to call Manchester home? Those who want the city to be a place where families want to be should not support the mayor's budget that includes a \$16 million deficit to public schools in the city. Families facing class sizes over 20 students per teacher and having to force their children to walk two miles to school will not want to be in Manchester and the future of the city will be in peril. If we do not invest in our schools, families will

leave Manchester and the city over time will decline. Those who remain will be dealing with a shrinking local economy and face higher property taxes. The only way to prevent this is by encouraging people from all over New England to come and live in Manchester. This budget does not accomplish that.

Chastice Cocchiarella, 1484 Candia Road: I just want to speak about the tax cap. I've been a Manchester resident most of my life. Grew up here, went to school here, raising my children here. I also am a landlord and the tax cap doesn't only affect my family, it affects every family like my family and it trickles downhill. If the tax cap were to be raised, we would be forced to raise the rent of our tenants who are elderly, are on a fixed income, and we are landlords that are trying to keep the rent low for them so it is manageable, just like we need our bills to be manageable. The spending in Manchester is out of control. It's not being budgeted well; it's not being put in the right areas. I feel like everybody's looking outside at the pretty box instead of what's inside the box. We need to look inside our schools and build the foundation where our kids want to go, where they feel safe to be, where it's exciting to learn, not just get them in, get them out, push them through, push them out. Because that's what I see happening in our schools and that's what I'm experiencing with my children. They're being poorly managed, in my opinion. There's a lot of management, but yet still managers are not doing the job that they're supposed to do which is educating our children, supporting our teachers with support, not just filling our classrooms. Education is something that thrives where somebody wants to go and be because you can give any education you want to these children, but if they're not thriving to be there and soaking it in, then it's not going to be effective. Also, I've been hearing all about the sidewalks. Instead of spending the money on making things look prettier, like Hanover Street, which ideally it sounds nice, but when you have all these other areas that need more attention, that need more beautifying, Hanover Street is already great. Let's concentrate on some other areas. I just want you to please think about the citizens of this town that really need you to think about them and how much this is going to affect them and generations to come.

Madeleine Turner, 36 Charleston Road: I've lived in Manchester for my whole life, 65 years almost. And there's definitely some problems with a lot of things. My issue is with the water. I've been trying to get somebody to look at the problem for quite a few years

now and nobody's paying attention. People are getting sicker. The population is in more need. There's more handicapped. And I heard today the sidewalks are getting worse. I owned a business on Mechanic Street for 25 years, and we had the brick sidewalks. And when I was a business owner there, I used to shovel the drive, the walkway, and as much of the sidewalk as I could because the city wasn't doing it back then. I see that there's major issues. When I was on Mechanic Street, I asked for them to put more handicap parking because people used to park in front of our door and make it difficult for our clients to get in. The water, they need to remove the fluoride. I know there needs to be a vote. I'm here to again request that there be a vote put on the next ballot, that it not go another time because this is very important. I just went to a climate summit in Concord. And as you can see today, 93 degrees, the weather is all over the place. Now we need clean drinking water. Adding that fluoride is another expense that really could be taken away from the water department. The other concern I have is the water is being treated by reverse osmosis and adding minerals to it and bottling as Dasani. Now, who gets that profit? I don't know. It's a question I'd like answered, along with the vote that everyone can know that fluoride is not healthy. There's a lot more brain cancers, brain infections, things that we didn't have years ago. And it's just getting worse. Microplastics are in there. And the PFAs and all the other forever chemicals. So, if we can remove one, can't we do it? I can't buy a filter that will remove it. If I could, I would, but it's just not a possibility. I thank you all for listening and I hope that you take it seriously that the water has something to do with the way people behave. Outbursts like tonight maybe might have a little bit of an influence on it.

Malinda McCusker, Ward 8: I am just here to speak in opposition of the new budget that has been proposed with the exorbitant tax increase. Jay, I just want to remind you, when we were walking ward eight, the families that spoke about their taxes, the school district is the last place this city needs for \$1 million. As we can see, the police department probably needs some more money to hire more police officers, not the school district that provides our children with an inadequate education. They can't read. They can't do math. It's not that difficult. DPW, I'd like to drive down the street without hitting potholes.

Nathaniel (No Last Name Given), Ward 11: I would like to talk principally about the most salient point in the budget that I disagree with, that being how Manchester has quietly,

due to a deficit of a mere \$48,000 going to fund one of our institutions, one of the most important institutions in the world, libraries. The West Side Branch Library in Manchester is going to be closed due to \$48,000. I just want to say that this is deplorable. This is an affront against art. This is an affront against mankind. People decree to this day the burning of the Library of Alexandria. And this is no different. This is one of the last bastions of the common space in the world, especially in America. People congregate there. People spend very important moments of their lives there. People use it to access vital resources, file for benefits, work on school projects, go to the bathroom, get a moment out of the sun, out of the cold. I understand that there are two branches of the library in Manchester, and the west serves primarily only the west side, but it is part of a larger consortium which serves over ten cities, all of which can access that branch of the library, all of which can access materials from all the different cities in the consortium. Closing this, which would require only the allocation of \$48,000 of additional funds, is a terrible thing, and I really hope that you do the right thing and reallocate funds towards keeping it open because I would call it evil not to. I think that you would be removing a vital resource to the city, to the town, to the state. I just want you to think about that.

Mayor Ruais: Is there anyone else who hasn't been heard that wishes to speak?

There were none.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Accept BMA Minutes

2. Minutes of the May 5 BMA Meeting.

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

3. Sidewalk Petition (Residential):
- 127 Talbot Street
 - 138 Poplar Street
 - 420 Westwood Drive

Information to be Received and Filed

4. Communication from the Solicitor's Office regarding lawsuits filed against the City.

REFERRALS TO COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

5. Resolutions:

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000) for the FY2026 CIP C410021626 School Based Dental Program - Medicaid”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Nine Hundred Forty-Three Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety-Four Dollars (\$943,894) for the FY2026 CIP C410022126 Public Health Preparedness”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Thirty-Two Thousand Dollars (\$32,000) for the FY2026 CIPC650050126 Parks Deferred Maintenance”

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

6. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$20,000 for CIP C410021626 School Based Dental Program - Medicaid be approved.
(Unanimous vote)

8. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$32,000 for CIP C650050126 Parks Deferred Maintenance be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
9. Recommending that the request from the Library Director to extend CIP 712424 Carpenter Library Interior Abatement & Painting to June 30, 2027, be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
10. Recommending that the request from the Economic Development Director to extend CIP 810425 Facade Improvement Program to June 30, 2027, be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
11. Recommending that the request from the Public Health Director to extend various CIP projects be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
12. Recommending that the request from the EPD Chief Engineer for extensions and closeouts of various CIP projects be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
13. Recommending that the request from the Police Department for authorization to apply for funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance FY26 Public Safety and Mental Health Initiative Program be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
14. Recommending that the request from the Police Department for an amendment to CIP 411025 ARPA - MPD Bonuses/Hiring to transfer \$45,000 from the Salaries and Wages category to the Other category be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
15. Recommending that the request from the Police Department for an extension of CIP 411624 Smart Policing Initiative to September 30, 2027, be approved.
(Unanimous vote)
16. Recommending that the petition to discontinue the Caron Street turn-around be referred to a road hearing to be scheduled by the City Clerk.
(Unanimous vote)
17. Recommending that the petition to discontinue a portion of North Church Street be referred to a road hearing to be scheduled by the City Clerk, and that the petition be subject to the terms of the Department of Public Works being agreed upon by the petitioner.
(Unanimous vote)

18. Recommending that the request from the Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Services regarding its lease at 434 Lake Avenue be received and filed.
(Unanimous vote)

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES/INSURANCE

19. Recommending that the request from the Fire Chief for the following changes to the department's complement:
- Reclassify two (2) filled Administrative Assistant II positions, grade 105, to Administrative Assistant III positions, grade 106
 - Reclassify one (1) filled Administrative II position, grade 105, to a Customer Service Representative III position, grade 108
- be approved.
(Unanimous vote)

20. Recommending that the request from the Water Works Director for the following changes to the department's complement:
- Add a newly created Power and Process Controls Electrician position, grade 117
 - Update the class specification for Power and Process Controls Manager position, grade 118
 - Change the class title of Process Control Specialist, grade 114, to Process Control Technician, grade 114
 - Update the class specification of revised class title Process Control Technician, grade 114
- be approved.
(Unanimous vote)

21. Recommending that Ordinance Amendment:
"Amending Section 33.081 Sick Leave (D) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Manchester to change the terms of sick leave use."
ought to pass and be referred to the Committee on Bills on Second Reading for technical review.
(Unanimous vote)

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, HEALTH AND TRAFFIC

22. Recommending that the following traffic regulations be approved:
- STOP**
On Overland Street at Bellevue Street, NW Corner
Alderman Burkush
- HANDICAP PARKING ONLY**
On Cedar Street, north side, from a point 30 feet east of Union Street to a point 25 feet further east
Alderman Bonilla
(Unanimous vote)

**ON MOTION OF ALDERMAN O'NEIL, DULY SECONDED BY ALDERMAN TERRIO,
IT WAS VOTED THAT THE CONSENT AGENDA BE APPROVED.**

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

7. Recommending that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$943,894 for CIP C410022126 Public Health Preparedness be approved.
(Unanimous vote)

Alderman Kantor requested that agenda item 7 be removed from the consent agenda.

Alderman Kantor: I thank you very much for all you do. I just want to completely understand when it says public health preparedness. What does that exactly mean? Because that's a lot of money.

Anna Thomas, Public Health Director: This has been funding that we get every year from DHHS to fund infrastructure in our department and key positions. Preparedness is basically having enough of a base to be able to respond to emergencies facing the city. So, there's an array of positions that we're able to fund with those state monies. It's ultimately federal money. But we are a recipient as a state agent, if you will, of those dollars.

Alderman Kantor: So, it's positions. Are you looking into the effects of fluoride? Are you looking into the effects of microplastics?

A. Thomas: No, that's not something that the positions fund, they fund things like our nurses, they fund our environmental health specialists who do the inspections and the enforcement on a regular basis of our food establishments. So that critical infrastructure is what it's funding.

Alderman Kantor: So, if there's another pandemic.

A. Thomas: Then they would probably all be activated, just like we were during the last one. Every single person.

Alderman Kantor: Would you still react the same way that you did when Fauci announced the whole Covid crisis?

A. Thomas: I am going to take the direction from state leadership, which is exactly what we did from DHHS and the governor, and we're funded through them to respond locally. And there were lots of committees formed that provided guidance to local communities. We were not part of them. So, we could only follow the guidance that was given to us. We were basically given that guidance on a regular basis. And that's what we followed.

Alderman Kantor: It is a little overwhelming and not being able to, in a situation like that when you don't know, you don't know what to do. But when you're awakened to people reaching out and texting you that there are other options, would you question the state or would you question the rest of the government? Or are you just going to fall in line? I'm just questioning this because of nearly \$1 million of preparedness, and the effects of the Covid scam that affected all of us is horrible. Horrible with keeping our children out of school and keeping us isolated, mental health. Now we have more homelessness than ever. I kind of want to understand how this is really going to play out if it happens again.

A. Thomas: Keep in mind you came into your position towards the tail end of the response. When there's a novel virus like that, nobody knows what's going to happen. You remember distinctly just by virtue of being a constituent, watching the news every single day and seeing people being dragged out in body bags from nursing homes. It was a terrifying period. And none of us knew what was going to happen. I don't blame anybody per se, for the decisions. It's really easy to say hindsight, we should have done this. Those are important lessons learned to know when we go in the future, we have a better handle on that. No one faced a pandemic at this scale in any of our generations. So other than 1918, this was the last time this city had to face something like this. It's not really comparable to any other disease process or incident facing the community because this was something that affected every single person in existence. And the threat was incredibly real because in the beginning stages of this, the case fatality rate was enormously high. So, nobody knew what was going to happen. There was no vaccine. There was not enough information. Could a worldwide pandemic hit again with some

other strain of something? Absolutely. Have we learned a lot? We've all learned a lot. We all know now what can happen. And it's devastating. You know, we've learned what can go horribly wrong. But I think at that time, I think everybody was faced with very difficult decisions. And that includes members of this board. I don't know if there was necessarily a clear path right and wrong every single time. I think everybody did the best they could. And it was a scary time. And now we're past it. We've learned a lot. Our infrastructure, our staff worked every single day, seven days a week, non-stop, fighting the pandemic for the city. Many of those hours were unpaid and they worked tirelessly. We were in the EOC every single day. Chief Goonan is the only other one who probably can attest to that, because he was in there, too. And we know now that we're battle tested. You know, when we face this again, we're going to be ready and we've learned what's worked. We've learned what didn't work. There were things that the state tried to roll out and we outmuscled the state models. I have a lot of pride in what we accomplished during that period. I have a lot of confidence, too, in the people who work for the city, especially in the Health Department. They will do everything they can to protect the citizens of this community, and I have full faith in every single one of them.

*On motion of **Alderman Terrio**, duly seconded by **Alderman O'Neil**, it was voted to approve.*

REGULAR BUSINESS

- 23.** Communication advising of the resignation of Craig Brown as a regular member of the Water Commission.

*On motion of **Alderman O'Neil**, duly seconded by **Alderman Terrio**, it was voted to accept with regret.*

- 24.** Nominations:

Lead Exposure Prevention Commission

Arnold Mikolo to succeed himself as a regular member/representative of a community advisory group, term to expire March 19, 2028

Glory Kadima to succeed herself as a regular member/resident whose family has experienced lead exposure, term to expire March 19, 2028

Mari Fontaine to succeed Warren Laskey as a regular member/certified lead risk assessor, term to expire March 19, 2027

Conservation Commission

John Kaligandis to fill a vacancy as a regular member, term to expire

August 1, 2027

Thomas Palangas to move from an alternate to a regular member, term to expire August 1, 2026

(Note: Pursuant to Rule 23 of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, these nominations will layover until the next meeting of the Board.)

25. Confirmations:

Fire Commission

Mark Mulcahy to succeed himself as a regular member, term to expire May 1, 2029

Keri Papalardo Tuomi to fill a vacancy as a regular member, term to expire May 1, 2028

Steve Connors to succeed Robert Corbeil as a regular member, term to expire May 1, 2029

*On motion of **Alderman Barry**, duly seconded by **Alderman Burkush**, it was voted to confirm the nominations as presented.*

26. Communication from Anna Thomas, Public Health Director, requesting approval to enter into an agreement with the International Institute of New England for translation services, which includes mutual indemnification language.

*On motion of **Alderman O'Neil**, duly seconded by **Alderman Burkush**, it was voted to approve.*

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

Sharon Wickens, Finance Officer: Based on estimates provided by the department heads, the projected general fund operating surplus for fiscal year 2026 is \$1,769,000. The surplus consists of an expenditure surplus of \$728,000 and a revenue surplus of \$1,041,000. Several departments are reporting expenditure surpluses resulting from employee turnover and associated hiring delays. Public Works is projecting a \$400,000 revenue shortfall due to reduced charge back services for the school district. This decrease is offset by an equivalent reduction in overall expenses. In addition, the department experienced a particularly challenging winter, resulting in overages in overtime, salt, and fuel expenditures. After accounting for all factors, Public Works is reporting a net expenditure overage of \$200,000. Comcast franchise fee revenues continue to decline and the City Clerk's office projects an overall revenue shortfall of \$250,000. Finance is reporting an expected interest income shortfall of at least \$350,000,

resulting from the decline in interest rates. The Tax Collector reports an estimated \$1,450,000 increase in auto registration revenue. This is driven in part by continued growth in fleet activity. The Planning Department anticipates a \$550,000 revenue surplus as the final building permits associated with the school's facility project are expected to be issued by the end of the fiscal year. This forecast includes a \$110,000 allocation from the contingency account. As of May 18th, there have been 40 retirements compared to 26 during the same period last year. Severance payments through this date total \$1,608,664, up from \$1,265,448 a year ago. Following the posted of all related entries, the severance reserve account is projected to hold a balance of \$1,115,640. I've also attached a department summary of severance paid through May 18th in the departmental overtime report as of May 8th.

28. *On motion of **Alderman Terrio**, duly seconded by **Alderman O'Neil**, it was voted to recess the meeting to allow the Committee on Finance to meet.*
29. Mayor Ruais called the meeting back to order.
30. Report(s) of the Committee on Finance, if available.

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

“Amending the FY2022 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Twenty-Two Thousand Eight Hundred Dollars (\$22,800) for the FY2022 CIP 212122 ARPA - Healthy Food Access Strategic Plan & Implementation”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000) for the FY2026 CIP C410021626School Based Dental Program - Medicaid”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Nine Hundred Forty-Three Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety-Four Dollars (\$943,894) for the FY2026 CIP C410022126 Public

Health Preparedness”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Thirty-Two Thousand Dollars (\$32,000) for the FY2026 CIPC650050126 Parks Deferred Maintenance”

ought to pass and be Enrolled.

*On motion of **Alderman Burkush**, duly seconded by **Alderman O’Neil**, it was voted to waive the reading.*

*On motion of **Alderman Kaw-uh**, duly seconded by **Alderman Dexter**, it was voted to accept the report and adopt its recommendations.*

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

The Committee on Lands and Buildings respectfully recommends, after due and careful consideration, that the request from the Division of Parks, Recreation & Cemetery for authorization to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Janesville Neighbors Community Group and accept a gift of four planters to be installed within the public rights-of-way in the Janesville area be approved.

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

32. Resolutions:

“Amending the FY2022 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Twenty-Two Thousand Eight Hundred Dollars (\$22,800) for the FY2022 CIP 212122 ARPA - Healthy Food Access Strategic Plan & Implementation”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000) for the FY2026 CIP C410021626School Based Dental Program - Medicaid”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Nine Hundred Forty-Three Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety-Four Dollars (\$943,894) for the FY2026 CIP C410022126 Public

Health Preparedness”

“Amending the FY2026 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Thirty-Two Thousand Dollars (\$32,000) for the FY2026 CIPC650050126 Parks Deferred Maintenance”

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

*On motion of **Alderman Goonan**, duly seconded by **Alderman Kaw-uh**, it was voted that the Resolutions ought to pass and be Enrolled.*

33. Ordinances:

“Amending Section 33.024, 33.025, & 33.026 (Power & Process Controls Electrician) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Manchester.”

“Amending Section 33.024, 33.025, & 33.026 (Power and Process Controls Manager) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Manchester.”

“Amending Section 33.024, 33.025, & 33.026 (Process Control Specialist) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Manchester.”

*On motion of **Alderman O’Neil**, duly seconded by **Alderman Dexter**, it was voted to waive the reading by titles only.*

*On motion of **Alderman Burkush**, duly seconded by **Alderman O’Neil**, it was voted that the Ordinances ought to pass and be Ordained.*

34. On motion of **Alderman Dexter, duly seconded by **Alderman Bonilla**, it was voted to recess the meeting pursuant to RSA 91-A:2, I(a) for strategy or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining.**

Mayor Ruais called the meeting back to order.

NEW BUSINESS

Alderman Kantor: I want to bring up an issue. Elephant in the room, this issue is about the Fire Department. The issue is one person makes the decisions to elevate employees within the Fire Department. The issue is if one person makes the decisions to elevate

employees within the Fire Department, people that have worked hard to get promoted, but if there is a personal issue between the chief and that person, they will never get the job even if they are the best candidate. A fair system needs to be in place; perhaps giving the Fire Commission more power and involvement in the process as it used to be. I heard then the chief would have to explain why he wouldn't want someone to be elevated to another position. This would be best for the city and for the morale of the department. I wanted to bring that up to make that statement and for open discussion.

Alderman Terrio: I'm going to assume that city wide and for every department, including the Fire Department, there's some type of grievance process that would address this.

Mayor Ruais: Which would go through HR and they could file a grievance through the union and HR, and it becomes a personnel matter at that point.

TABLED ITEMS

- 35.** Communication from Owen Friend-Gray, Deputy Public Works Director, requesting the establishment of a tax increment financing (TIF) district for the purpose of financing the construction of infrastructure related to the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant.
(Note: Tabled May 5, 2026.)

This item remained on the table.

- 36.** Budget Resolutions:

"Resolution 'Approving the Community Improvement Program for Fiscal Year 2027, Raising and Appropriating Monies Therefore, and Authorizing Implementation of Said Program."

"Appropriating to the Parking Fund the sum of \$5,142,275 from parking revenues for the Fiscal Year 2027."

"Appropriating the sum of \$33,804,234 from Sewer User Rental Charges to the Environmental Protection Division for the Fiscal Year 2027."

"Appropriating to the Manchester Airport Authority the sum of \$49,366,765 from Special Airport Revenue Funds for the Fiscal Year 2027."

"Appropriating to the Manchester Transit Authority the sum of \$1,999,838 for the Fiscal Year 2027."

“Appropriating to the Manchester School District the sum of \$234,981,749 for the Fiscal Year 2027.”

“Appropriating all Incremental Meals and Rooms Tax Revenue Received by the City in the Fiscal Year 2027 and held in the Civic Center Fund, for the payment of the City’s Obligations in Said Fiscal Year under the Financing Agreement.”

“Appropriating to the Manchester School Food and Nutrition Services Program the sum of \$6,300,000 from School Food and Nutrition Services Revenues for the Fiscal Year 2027.”

“Raising Monies and Making Appropriations of \$195,337,885 for the Fiscal Year 2027.”

“Appropriating to the Central Business Service District the sum of \$700,000 from Central Business Service District Funds for the Fiscal Year 2027.”

“Continuation of the Central Business Service District.”

“Authorizing the Finance Officer to Make Certain Budgetary Closings for the Fiscal Year 2026.”

(Note: Tabled May 5, 2026.)

Alderman Trisciani moved to remove agenda item 36 from the table. Alderman Fajardo duly seconded the motion.

Alderman Terrio: This is the budget we saw the other day?

Mayor Ruais: This is my budget.

Alderman Terrio: Not the budget we received?

Mayor Ruais: Presumably, if there are amendments to be had from that, this is when the board would consider them.

Alderman Terrio: If we voted this down tonight, we can bring it back and amend it. Correct?

Mayor Ruais: That's correct. The board has until June 9 to approve the budget.

Alderman Sapienza: I'm opposed. I like your budget.

Mayor Ruais: Well, this is my budget.

Alderman Sapienza: The one that you came forward with about 8 or 9 weeks ago. Your tax cap complaint budget.

*Mayor Ruais called for a vote. The motion carried with **Alderman Kantor and Sapienza** being duly recorded in opposition.*

Alderman Trisciani: Everybody was handed out the budget changes and I would like to start with one motion around our surplus funding. Given that the Finance Director has projected a total of the FY26 fund balance of \$1,769,000, as reported by the department heads, by ordinance, this fund balance would be allocated one third each to rainy day fund and severance reserve accounts, and the rest would fall to the FY26 tax rate.

***Alderman Trisciani** moved to allocate \$589,667, which is one-third of the surplus, to the severance reserve account, and to utilize the remaining \$1,179,333 fund balance, which is two-thirds of the surplus, to reduce the FY27 tax rate, and any excess of the FY26 fund balance by year end will follow the ordinance as intended. **Alderman Fajardo** duly seconded the motion.*

Alderman Sapienza: If it's by ordinance, then why do we need to vote on it if it's already by ordinance?

Mayor Ruais: Well, this suspends the ordinance to do two-thirds that would fall to the rate. The surplus is a third, a third, a third. This is to suspend that, to do two-thirds to fall to the rate.

Alderman Burkush requested a roll call vote. Aldermen Burkush, Barry, Kaw-uh, Goonan, Dexter, Fajardo, Bonilla, Trisciani, and O'Neil voted yea. Aldermen Vincent, Thomas, Kantor, Terrio, and Sapienza voted nay. The motion failed.

Alderman Kaw-uh: The vote we just took, that was to give more money back to the taxpayers, which is like lowering the tax rate of a potential budget we're going to do. So, we just voted not to do that?

Mayor Ruais: That's correct. This is what occurred in FY25 in my first budget. I think the signaling effect there is that there aren't enough votes to override and move forward on this budget as it's been presented.

Alderman Barry: As we worked through this budget process and review the city department budget proposals, we have recognized several priority adjustments to those proposed fiscal year 26 appropriations. These adjustments include additional support for city government to continue vital community services, additional support for first responders, additional support for infrastructure and quality of life, and additional support for the school district.

Alderman Barry moved to override section 6.15(c) of the City Charter for the sole purpose of utilizing approximately \$14,000,000, 13% of the anticipated \$108.5 million in revenues available with the new increase in assessed values of \$5.6 billion.

Alderman Barry: By way of reference, the last time the cap was overridden in the FY17 revaluation year, 97% of the new revenues were utilized to pass a budget.

Alderman Burkush duly seconded the motion.

Alderman Burkush: I'd like to speak to my second, Your Honor. If I want to support the men and women of the Manchester Police Department and their ongoing contract negotiations, improve our roads, restore city services, and increase school funding, I would support this motion, and I'll ask for a roll call.

Alderman Sapienza: I just want to say for clarification what this is. There's a lot of words there. I thank you, Chairman Barry, it was a lengthy motion, but the simpler version is we're voting to override the tax cap. That's what it boils down to in no uncertain terms. To me, the revaluation shouldn't even be mentioned. It's ongoing. It's not going to be done

until maybe July or August. And you have the abatement process. This is a duck. It looks like a duck. It walks like a duck. It's a duck. Overriding the tax cap is overriding the tax cap. That's the short version of the story. You want it. There it is. There's a duck. That's what we're doing here.

Alderman Kaw-uh: There's been a lot of discussion about this being the Trisciani-Burkush budget, but I want it to be known in the public record that there was a lot of negotiation. From what I have heard, I was not in these negotiations, but there's been a lot of negotiation with the mayor, who has been a partner in this and working diligently to try to find ways for us to make sure that the city has the funding that it needs. Nobody, to my knowledge, is happy with this budget, and I know that I am not happy with this budget either. There are things that are going unfunded that I think are absolutely critical. Things like fully funding our paving program, things like fully funding our schools. But I recognize that I'm also just one person on the board, and I can't make a decision for everybody else. And so that's part of why I'm willing to support this budget, because even though it's not everything I want and I'm not proud of this budget, with all respect to the folks who negotiated it, they did a great job figuring out what we could do. I guess all I'm saying is that I'm not jumping for joy at any of this. It's a compromise. I just hope that others on the board can see it in themselves to support it, as well as a good faith compromise to try to move our city forward.

Alderman Terrio: I respect Alderman Barry and Alderman Burkush. Just to clarify, I support the Police Department. I do support the proposed new police contract that hopefully we will be seeing in the near future, but I can't support this override in this amount. And so just to clarify this, this is a work in progress, but I won't be voting for this tonight.

Alderman O'Neil: Let's be clear to the public here. If we don't vote to override, there's no new contract for the men and women of the Police Department. Let's be clear about that, and not play games and charades and all that. Your Honor, do you support to get a contract with the men and women of Police Department if we override the revenue?

Mayor Ruais: I support a contract with the men and women of the Police Department.

Alderman O'Neil: That wasn't my question. Do you support overriding the revenue, which is going to take 10 of us in order to fund the potential new contract with the men and women of the Police Department?

Mayor Ruais: I would go broader. There's a lot of numbers that were thrown out tonight. But the two budgets that we have done in my course, we came \$10.2 million under the tax cap. You know, the DRA at the end had to add in the county tax and that lowered that amount. But that was \$234 per median household in the city of Manchester. So, we worked really hard to come both under the cap and to respect the taxpayer. Now, that was too much money spent for some and nowhere near enough money spent for others. One of the things I said in my budget address last year was that a red line for me was cutting essential services like police or public safety. We understand that there are 27 vacancies in the department. We understand that there are at least three more coming within the next month. We understand that there are 18 that could retire at any given time right now. So, when it comes to public safety, I certainly don't want to see us backsliding. Alderman Kaw-uh referenced, and of course, as mayor, I'm going to have my finger on the pulse of what's going on, there were a number of things that I said that I thought were places where I thought spending could be reduced. And when I had those conversations, it was we're going to lose a vote on this side if we do that. And I said, okay, that's part of the negotiation.

Alderman Kaw-uh: Concessions were made. Let's be clear.

Mayor Ruais: I know; that's what I'm saying, I was happy to have conversations at any time with anybody that wants to talk about the budget. I'm also a realist, as Alderman Terrio was talking about in one of the earlier meetings, Alderman Terrio and Alderman Burkush, that my budget didn't fund a million and a half dollars for healthcare. It didn't fund \$425,000 for CGL. It didn't come fund \$400,000 for overlays, regardless of whether or not overlays is funded in the budget, that gets dumped to the rate at the end of the year anyway. If we didn't cover the \$425,000, we would have to pull that from the reserves. If we didn't cover the million and a half in healthcare, we would have to cover that from the

reserves. Alderman Terrio, if I'm not mistaken, you asked the question in an earlier meeting about what would that signal to bond counsel if that \$2.3 million wasn't covered.

S. Wickens: That would be a negative to the rating agencies. We have a lot of debt that's going to be issued, and a reserve is just that. It's to account for things that are unknown; the items that you mentioned are known.

Mayor Ruais: We reserve it for an emergency.

S. Wickens: Exactly.

Mayor Ruais: If at the end of the year, we had all of a sudden, a \$2 million health cost come out of nowhere, we have to cover that, right? But if it's something that is known and we don't cover that in the budget, that's going to be a negative signal to the ratings agency.

S. Wickens: Yes.

Mayor Ruais: A number of the reductions that I talked about was potentially PHAST, to Alderman Kantor's question earlier, those were ARPA funded positions. Do we have to do them all in a year, one budget? The roads, I think there is \$1.6 million in this budget in addition to roads; of course, we all want roads here. Do we have to go up to \$1.6 million? Do we have to try and take a bite out of the entire apple in year one? So, there were a number of items that I thought we could reduce spending. But like I said, I recognize also that we have \$2.3 million that my budget did not cover.

Alderman O'Neil: I want to be clear to the men and women of the Manchester Police Department that are here, and Chief Marr, if we don't override for the revenue, we're not getting a contract with them. There is not enough money without it. Or people can say, I want to eliminate this position in the city and that there is not enough money without a revenue override to fund a respectable and competitive contract for the men and women of the Manchester Police Department. Plain and simple. There should be no spin about that.

Alderman Trisciani: One thing that's really important to point out here is the mayor presented his budget on March 26th. After that date, being March 27th, we instantly reached out to the department heads. That data was shared with what the department heads were missing in the mayor's budget, and what they felt they still needed to be productive and to serve our community and the people in the public. With that, we formed one budget team. Now, mind you, anybody can put together a budget team. We have spent countless hours as a team since March 27th. Countless hours, countless people, our department heads have gone above and beyond. Our Finance Department has gone above and beyond to come put together what we felt is, as Alderman Kaw-uh said, maybe it's not the best, but you know what, it serves what our constituents have asked for. And \$1.6 million in addition for roads is what people are asking for. You heard tonight our sidewalks are deteriorating, our roads are a mess. And this is something that we put in. We need to fund our public schools. We need to support our first responders. So, my question is, where was everybody else coming to the table that is not voting for this tonight? Where is your budget and what do you have to show for it? We have asked a few times, what do you want to see? We get nothing. So, at this point, this is the budget before us. And yes, I agree with Alderman O'Neil and with my colleagues. If we do not vote for this override, we have nowhere to go and we are not showing support for our first responders and our Police Department this evening.

Alderman Kantor: First of all, when is enough, enough? We are supposed to be an age friendly city. That's what we're marketing ourselves as, age friendly. And we're spending so much money and we're going to be taxing our seniors and our families out of their homes. I have gotten call after call. You think we have a homeless problem now? We're going to have a bigger homeless problem next. This is completely out of control and we all know there's waste and fraud. First of all, I'd like to go over how many positions throughout all the departments were created during the Covid pandemic. How many positions? And how many are still there? Because we know the virus is cleared. We know that. And we all know that actually the virus needs to run its course anyways. So, to be defrauding all of our citizens and making people wear masks and pushing them to get vaccinations is absolutely ridiculous. I was at a roundtable with a lot of people and Chief Aldenberg had said, which I 100% support MPD I'm a back the blue girl. I want to share

this because I am not for funding the schools anymore, because they're out of control and irresponsible. But my point is, Chief Aldenberg said, when there was a lot of people in the room, to Anna Thomas, our Director of the Health Department, if you still want those positions, you need to make sure you secure that funding for the next budget season. Now, how many? How many positions were created in all of the departments that are still there? Because if they're still there, the Covid shenanigans have disappeared, right? So those positions should not be there. And we have created under all the years of the homeless crisis that was created with the fire stations and now the homeless shelter, 39 Beech Street, that got demolished, all the millions and millions of dollars that were wasted and wasted. And how many people did we really help? We just created more people to come here to affect all of our seniors and all of our families living in our homes, their homes, and they want to stay there. And guess what? The number one priority is their safety. So, I 100% back MPD, period. I'm not voting for this ridiculous budget until we actually scrape everything off. I did try and support your budget. And people should live within their means, especially the school department, who are how many million, \$90 million it got in Covid funds? And what did you do? Keep our kids out of school. How disgusting, despicable. And how much do you make? Making bad decisions for everyone? Floored. So enough is enough. Not voting for this. And period. Where are those Covid positions? And if they're still there, that money should go to the Police Department, period.

Mayor Ruais: When I sent out the one-page request to the department heads, one of the items that I asked is do you have any Covid positions left. I'd have to go back and check. I believe there's seven among the departments, but I can get you a definite answer on that.

Alderman Kantor: That would be wonderful. Thank you, because I'm sure that kind of adds up to a lot. And there's like what, \$900,000 going to preparedness for the Health Department right now? Is that already in the budget or is that escalated on top of what they already received?

Mayor Ruais: What I believe Director Thomas indicated was that was a grant that came from the feds through the state and passed on to us.

Alderman Kantor: So, it's extra money that is funding positions when we don't have a Covid crisis. So are they going to actually take care of our fluoride and PFAs and microplastics in our water and everything else we should be investigating? What's really affecting us is unacceptable, bad leadership, and we need to hold all of us accountable, including me.

Mayor Ruais: Director Thomas, that's not ARPA money, correct?

A. Thomas: It's not.

Alderman Bonilla: I love to lead with integrity. I'm not a liar, so I'm not going to bull you all. At the end of the day, I'm looking at each and every single one of you, especially those who are standing in the back, our first responders, our Manchester Police Department, I'm going to reiterate what both of our aldermen said earlier. There is no supporting or backing the blue without breaking the ceiling. I'm going to be real with you all. You can't say you're going to back the blue, and support our first responders. They're sitting right here listening to all this. I'm not going to lie to you all. We just came from a meeting. We all know that you cannot support the Manchester Police Department without breaking the tax cap. That is it. We all know this. So, if anyone's going to say I backed the blue, I'm here for my first responders, well this is the decision we have to make. You all know where my heart is at though, is supporting our public schools. I was a prior school board member. And that's where my humble beginnings are at. But at the end of the day, when you all leave and when you all start posting, which I know we all have the right to do, I know many of you in the stands that support our law enforcement, but again, I need you all to understand the realities of where we're at. So, I want to be straight up. So, out of respect for all our first responders here, that's what I have to do. I'm not going to lie to you all. But on top of the additional budget and the needs that we provide, and this budget is not perfect, like Alderman Kaw-uh had mentioned, it's not everything we want, but it's doing what we have to do in order to keep our city running. I'm going to say it again, if we don't break this tax cap, you're not going to be supporting the first responders. I want you all to look behind you. Look at them in the eyes. They're right there. We always say thank you and give them certificates. That's not enough. It's not enough for them.

Mayor Ruais: One thing I would add just to build off of Alderman Terrio's comments, I do believe that there are a number of aldermen that are working in good faith on this. I had phone calls over the weekend with aldermen. The vote tonight, I wouldn't want to signal to anybody if the ten votes aren't there, which I don't believe that they are, I wouldn't want to signal to anybody that tonight is the last night that a budget could be passed, that there is a June 2nd meeting, that we could come back and we could still pass a budget. I appreciate, alderman, what you're saying. I would just add the caveat that we have more runway to come up with a budget that I believe meets the needs of the city, the school district, and importantly, the taxpayer.

Alderman Bonilla: I'm just going to say with respect, at the end of the day, it's going to require us to break it. I feel like we all know that, but thank you.

Alderman Barry: What caught my attention was a couple of weeks ago or last week, all of us, everyone on this board, received a memo from the police in reference to the comparison with Nashua PD. And what it was, was an ad on LinkedIn recruiting officers for the city of Nashua. The numbers were way off from what the City of Manchester gets. Way off. I'm talking for someone that starts like from \$63,000 to \$77,000, first year. What caught my attention was not the numbers itself, but the fact in that LinkedIn, the police said, the city backs us. Not here. I'm going to reiterate what Alderman Trisciani said. March 27th, I sent a letter out through Matt Normand, our City Clerk. And you talk about people that assisted us throughout this budget process. It's not easy. It's not an easy thing to do. And I'll tell you, our numbers were a lot higher than they are now. We came down. We did what we could. Alderman O'Neil several times said, there's no fat in this budget, and whoever does find fat, especially on this board, tell us where it is and tell us which department you want to take from, and call that department head and ask them how it's going to impact them. Every one of us can call the departments. You want to talk about Covid? You want to talk about how many people are working in this department? Give them a call, send them an email, and ask them what's going on with their department. We reached out to all the department heads. We asked them what the impact of the mayor's budget was going to be. They sent the response back. We worked on that response since March 27th. Now we're in May. Almost two months have passed and we've been working.

It hasn't been one day a week. And, in good faith, we have met with the mayor. He was cordial. We had great meetings. We talked about the numbers. We came down with some of the items that we had. We did it, and now we're here. If anyone wants to vote no to override the revenue, tell us where you want to cut. Show us a budget that you guys have. Show us where you want to cut and tell us why, and also include the impact that it's going to be on that on that department.

Alderman Terrio: I honestly like all of my coworkers here, my fellow aldermen. And I'm not going to take anything personal being publicly flogged, that we don't like public safety. And so let me just say that I'm not going to override the budget tonight. I'm looking at the police. I'm going to vote for your contract. I can't say what it was but we have a new contract. I think you're going to like it. I'm going to vote for it. I know several of the people who are voting no tonight are going to vote for it. I can't speak for them, but I know for a fact they've told me that. I support the police. I'm going to vote for the police contract. But there's a lot of stuff in here that I want to work with the mayor and Alderman Vincent, and Alderman Thomas, and with you folks to cut. The other thing is we can talk to department heads, but we can also talk to a lot of our constituents who are on fixed incomes. They're poor. They're on Social Security. I'm not going to take this personal. I have thick skin. You know I support public safety. I'm going to vote for the police contract, but I'm not going to override the tax cap tonight. We still have time to fix this. It just has too much in here. I can't support \$500,000 in general government spending, I don't want to spend \$1 million for funded vacancies, I don't want to spend \$1.7 million in contingency budgeting, I don't want to do that. I am going to do other things. For instance, we need \$1.5 million for health care. We've heard from Sharon that we have to do that. We need money for casualty, general liability. I know that we need \$400,000 for overlay. I know that, but there's a lot of stuff in here that I just can't support. And so, I'll be voting no tonight. We'll be working together. Don't beat us up over it. I won't have any hard feelings about this. I'll work with you. We'll figure this out. We're going to come up with something that's workable and agreeable and get the ten votes.

Alderman Vincent: I agree, I think the budget's not perfect. It's never going to be perfect when you have people that have different views and ideas. I think what's important is there's communication behind the scenes. I'm a little disappointed in the rhetoric about

the police, because if anybody on this board thinks anybody doesn't support the police, that's madness. I think that's a weak leg to stand on in your argument. I don't need applause; it wasn't for applause. I just think that to reach the ground that we need to get to, it's going to take conversation. This was given to us Friday night. I don't think it's unreasonable for people to not agree with this budget. Listen, to ask anybody to go over the tax cap, and there's a lot of rhetoric out there about the tax cap as far as the numbers go that people just don't understand, but regardless of that, I think there's good conversation going on behind the scenes. I know we can get to a budget that works for the people of this city, and we will support what needs to be supported. So, to sit here and yell at each other and say all this weak-minded stuff, in my opinion, is just rhetoric that doesn't need to happen. Let's stand like adults, let's talk like adults. Let's get a budget that's good for these people. And let's just move forward, please.

Alderman Kantor: I just wanted to bring up that I support MPD, and I especially support ICE, so don't tell me I don't respect my police department when they need backing very much. Another thing is the Covid crisis. Yeah, you can bring it up, Alderman Bill Barry, but I did text you in October 2020 telling you that we shouldn't be wearing masks and it was completely unhealthy and you chose not to listen to your constituent. So, you know what? There is information out there. I appreciate everyone coming out and speaking up. I am supporting MPD, but I'm also supporting our taxpayers and we need to be smarter.

Alderman Barry: An inquiry for Sharon, can we actually even vote on this absent the \$600,000 from the first motion that Alderman Trisciani made?

Mayor Ruais: Would we have to do an amendment?

S. Wickens: Yes.

Mayor Ruais: It changes the appropriation.

Matthew Normand, City Clerk: Correct. You can go back and take a vote on that if you get ten for this. You'd have to go back and take a vote. It reduces the tax rate by \$1.1

million, that first motion that failed. So, if this passes, we can go back and take a vote on that.

Mayor Ruais: If this were to pass, we would have to go back and amend it from there. So, we are still able to take this vote. We would just have to go back and change after that.

Alderman Bonilla: I love each and every single one of y'all, but for me, I'm a person that's just going to be straight up with you. I'm not going to lie to you. I feel like it's hard for folks, certain folks, to answer the question again, an override has to happen in order to support our law enforcement. That's it. Simple and straight. I'm going to say it again. It has to happen in order to support our law enforcement. I'm not saying y'all are not supporting them, but I'm going to say it to you straight. I'm not lying to you that it has to happen in order to support our law enforcement. It may not happen tonight, but it has to happen. So, I'm not going to lie to you all.

Alderman Burkush moved to table the Budget Resolutions.

M. Normand: We have a motion on the floor.

Mayor Ruais: We have a motion on the floor, but a motion to table would take precedence.

M. Normand: Correct.

Alderman Barry duly seconded the motion to table.

Alderman Trisciani: So, we can't negotiate the police contract anymore at this point.

Mayor Ruais: We've given consensus for them to go back with a counteroffer.

Alderman Trisciani: But we haven't funded it.

Mayor Ruais: We can come back and vote on the budget on June 2nd at our next meeting.

*Mayor Ruais called for a vote to table the Budget Resolutions. The motion carried with **Alderman Terrio** being duly recorded in opposition.*

Alderman O'Neil: I think we have four enterprise budgets we could approve.

Mayor Ruais: Is there a consensus on the board that we want to take this piecemeal?

Alderman O'Neil: It is not piecemeal; they are enterprises, they are separate resolutions.

Alderman Kaw-uh: I would second any motion to do that.

Mayor Ruais: Whatever the will of the board is.

Alderman O'Neil: It will have no impact on the general fund. None.

Alderman Sapienza: Is it on the agenda?

Alderman O'Neil: Yes. They're on the agenda; read it.

Mayor Ruais: We just tabled all of the budget resolutions.

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

A True Record. Attest.



City Clerk