

BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN

June 2, 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 Dexter.

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, I have one recognition I would like to make this evening with the folks from Engine Five. I have the distinct privilege of recognizing their heroic actions on March 27th. City of Manchester, a Resolution: Whereas on March 27, 2026, members of the Manchester Fire Department's Engine Five responded to an unknown medical call that was updated in route to a cardiac arrest emergency. And whereas upon arrival, engine five personnel found a patient who was not breathing and without a pulse requiring immediate lifesaving intervention. And whereas the crew promptly initiated high quality CPR and utilized a 911 language interpreter to effectively communicate with Spanish speaking bystanders and the patient's family. And whereas engine five members connected the patient to a 12-lead cardiac monitor and successfully administered two defibrillations while continuing advanced resuscitative efforts. And whereas AMR ALS one personnel arrived on scene and worked alongside engine five to provide continued advanced life support measures in a coordinated and professional manner. And whereas, through the extraordinary skill, dedication, teamwork and commitment to public service demonstrated by Lieutenant Carl Ludwig, firefighter John Amin, firefighter John Berry, firefighter Thomas Welch, paramedic Dave Rideout and EMT Kieran Remillard, the patient was successfully transported to Catholic Medical Center with a restored pulse and breathing independently. And whereas this successful outcome exemplifies the professionalism, training, compassion and teamwork displayed each day by the members of the Manchester Fire Department and American Medical Response in

service to the residents of Manchester. Now, therefore, I, Jay Ruais, Mayor of the City of Manchester, New Hampshire, do hereby recognize and commend Lieutenant Carl Ludwig, firefighter John Amin, firefighter John Berry, firefighter Thomas Welch, paramedic Dave Rideout and EMT Kieran Remillard for their outstanding actions, dedication to duty and lifesaving efforts on March 27, 2026 and extend the gratitude and appreciation of the City of Manchester for their exemplary service to our community. Thank you, gentlemen, very 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.

Ann Williams, 151 Rosegate Farm Drive: I'm a fixed income retiree and ward eight voter. I'm here in favor of the original proposed alternative budget, the one that helps Manchester in its goal to be that best mid-sized city. I represent more of ward eight than you may think. Surprised? Our demographics are changing. The building of many new apartments and condos have brought young families and young professionals who have an increased need for services. I can support this sentiment with the numbers from the recent election, where our alderman won by only 26 votes. Board members serving 8 to 10 years and sometimes more than a decade, it may be time to make room for new voices and fresh perspectives. Manchester's future belongs to the next generation. Younger residents deserve the opportunity to help shape the city they will inherit. I am concerned that a singular focus on avoiding new taxes or tax cap compliance does not create a sustainable, livable and thriving Manchester. In fact, it risks taking the city backward. Remember what Manchester looked like in the 80s and 90s before the airport expansion, before restaurants lined Elm Street, before Delta Dental Stadium, and before the arena that now brings concerts, sporting events and entertainment to our community? We chose to make investments to transform Manchester into a city we are proud of. At the very least, we should be maintaining what we have while continuing to move forward, not backward. The school budget appears to be at the heart of our consternation. The

naysayers talk about how reduced enrollment must translate to reduced budget. Honestly, if you've had kids graduate and leave your home, did your costs go down? Are you paying less for food, for insurance, for anything? It is deeply unfair for some yelling the loudest: a Concord legislator, past aldermen, current aldermen, who have chosen private education for their own children, to criticize public school spending while denying public school students the same opportunities and resources as their kids have. Families who rely on public schools deserve strong support and investment, not continued cuts. And you heard me right. Some of the loudest voices you've heard recently have sent or are sending their kids to private schools. Another seemingly small budget cut, but one packed with significance, is the plan to eliminate the role the budget for identifying and writing grants. A serious mistake. As this area has the expertise to secure outside funding for Manchester. If you are headstrong into cutting department budgets, grants will be a lifeline. I urge the vote to the board to vote to fund our critical public service departments, even if it means going above the tax cap.

Harrison Williams, 639 N Bay Street: I speak before you to address a critical issue impacting the very foundation of our city's well-being, our budget and the tax cap. I understand that overriding the tax cap is a significant decision, one that requires careful consideration. However, I urge you to set aside any hesitation and recognize the urgent need to address our financial framework to meet the rising demands of our community. We are facing a perfect storm of rising costs. Our schools are striving to provide the best possible education for our children, but their budgets are stretched thin. A robust education system is not a luxury. It is an investment in our future, and it demands adequate funding. Similarly, ensuring the safety and security of our citizens requires a fair and competitive police force. Again, this requires funding. We cannot compromise on the resources needed to support our law enforcement. Do not sit there and claim to support the police if you are not going to provide them the resources to perform their jobs. Beyond these vital areas, our city's infrastructure from the Departments of Public Works and basic road maintenance is showing its age. These are not optional services. They are essential for a thriving community. Neglecting them now will lead to far more costly repairs and potential crises down the road. How can we hope to be a great city if we don't invest in ourselves? How can anyone hope to succeed if they're not willing to believe in themselves? The current tax cap, while well-intentioned, is now acting as a constraint, a

noose, effectively strangling our ability to adequately fund those crucial services. We are essentially battling a rising tide with a shrinking bucket. The same dollar no longer buys the things it once could. The cost of everything from groceries to gas increases, compounding on itself. Our tax dollars simply don't stretch as far as they used to. Ignoring the fundamental decrease in purchasing power is a huge misunderstanding of how the economy works. As someone who has watched this board repeatedly struggle with this issue, I would be so bold as to implore the city to adjust or even abolish the tax cap. This may be daunting, but it is becoming an increasingly necessary step to ensure we can adequately address the rising costs of providing essential services that this city offers. It's about recognizing the value of our city's future and investing in its long-term health. Let's not allow budgetary constraints to compromise the quality of life for our residents. Let us be bold, proactive and responsible in securing a sustainable and thriving future for our city.

Richard Irving, Ward 2: Before celebrating Manchester's 180th birthday, please protect the tax cap, because you're on the verge of voting on a budget that will raise property taxes. City government wasn't created to be a charity. I'm asking the mayor and aldermen to stop spending our money foolishly on personal wants, like new schools and replacement sidewalks near the theater district on Hanover Street. Focus on your city's needs like housing, roads, health, police, parks and recreation, clearing of snow and ice on all sidewalks and trails for everyone, and helping the homeless population. And finally, on that subject, we won't tolerate homelessness and bad behavior on the part of vagrants that break the law and disrespect our city and its taxpayers, and not about citizens living and paying bills.

Paul LaFerriere 185 Eastern Avenue: I'm addressing statements made at the last Board of Mayor and Aldermen meeting about the budget proposed by Alderman Trisciani and Burkush to override Manchester's tax cap. It is unacceptable that board members implied that anyone who opposes that budget somehow does not support the Manchester Police Department or back the blue. Frankly, mayor, I found those accusations extremely offensive. I, along with other ward four members, couldn't make it and demand a public apology from those aldermen that stated this, and they know who they are. Your honor, as you know, I'm a retired disabled Army veteran and retired federal law enforcement

officer, and I'll always support our Manchester PD. Many taxpayers oppose the wasteful school and city budget. It should be reworked with savings redirected to secure approval of the Manchester Police contract and fund DPW repairs to sidewalks, roads and infrastructure. Because I am a constituent who spoke against this budget at the last meeting, we were offended by public comments claiming that we do not support them. Well, we Republicans and the Republican aldermen who were accused deserve a public apology in this chamber or the matter should be addressed through the city's core values and policy procedures. The aldermen who opposed this tax cap override listened to the taxpayers and are presenting two alternative budgets tonight. The issue was never whether our police department deserves better pay and support. It does. The real issue is that the Democratic alderman used the police contract as cover for a much larger spending increase that could be shortchanged that contract. Residents can see the difference. Another alderman wrote a letter to the union leader accusing the taxpayers of threatening a Republican alderman over the Democratic budget proposal. That accusation is wrong. Taxpayers are doing exactly what citizens are supposed to do in a democracy: using their First Amendment rights to speak out about a budget that affects their families, homes and future. To the Mayor and Aldermen, you were elected by the people and you work for all the people of Manchester. That means listening to all residents, not just those that agree with you. At least the Republican aldermen listened to the taxpayers and responded by offering alternatives. I did not hear a Democratic alderman do the same. Instead, I continue to hear to support their budget that many residents oppose. That is why tabling it was the right outcome for the last meeting. The alderman who made that accusation owes taxpayers a written public apology to the Union Leader. Political theatrics are not needed. As I said before, senior citizens and taxpayers cannot afford a property tax increase, renters cannot afford higher housing costs driven by rising property taxes. If taxes rise, more residents will face financial hardship and housing instability.

Arnold Mikolo, 73 Clinton Street: I'm here as somebody who cares deeply about the future of our city and public space in green infrastructure. I'm urging to include \$250,000 for urban forestry site preparation for this year's capital improvement plan. This isn't a new idea or untested proposal. The city has already done the hard work of securing the USDA Urban Forestry Grant. The grant represents a real commitment from the federal

government to help us grow our tree canopy, but federal grants don't operate in a vacuum. They require matching infrastructure, local investments, and implementation capacity. The sidewalk bump outs this funding will support are what makes tree planting physically possible in dense, heavily paved areas in our city. Think of some of our corridor blocks where there is nothing but concrete from building to curb. There is no soil, no space, no room for trees to take root without first removing hardscape and creating a dedicated planting zone. That's exactly what this funding does. It doesn't replicate the grants. It activates it. Without the \$250,000, we leave those federal dollars underutilized. We lose planting season. We can never get it back, and we send a message to the agencies and organizations investing in our cities that we are not ready to meet them halfway. I know this board takes its budget responsibility seriously. I'm asking you tonight to take this opportunity seriously, too. The groundwork has been laid. The grant is secure. All that's missing is your vote to fund the infrastructure that makes it real. Please include this in your CIP.

Rick Blais, 733 Chestnut Street: A lot of people talked tonight, so I'll just read through. I want to thank you guys. I see so much commonality here. There are threads dividing people. It's not valleys, it's not rivers. But we all want great schools, safe neighborhoods, strong infrastructure response, responsible spending. Because at this point, it's getting outrageous what's happening, over the years. About two years ago or three years ago, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen at that time had voted into giving the school taxing power versus the aldermen and mayor, and with no more oversight for the mayor being on that board. I made a proposal at that time saying, because nothing can get done in two years, you all know that, I keep hearing that over and over again. You run for election, you win, then you spend a year voting on real stuff. And then the second year you have to spend massaging the voters and trying to meet that person in the middle. As a result, nothing gets done. And that's the challenge. Nobody can work a long-term plan to change the way the city is operating. We operate problem to problem, rather than more strategic planning. As far as the school budget continuing to increase every year after year, I hear people saying cut. I haven't heard the school getting a cut budget from the year before. Now they're talking making a proposal and that proposed budget is getting cut, it has nothing to do with the real money that's being spent. So that's something that I think people play with words to stir the emotions of people up. And it's sad that they have to do

that. Too often when a budget reduction is discussed, immediately it shifts to laying off teachers. Like I said at the last hearing I was at, they never talk about the bloat in the administration. There's 30%, I guarantee you can cut from there with AI and more efficiencies. But they choose to ignore that and they always go to the teachers. Why? It's the heartstrings of Manchester. The kids are going to suffer. Well, maybe the administration needs to suffer a little more. So, I'm a firm believer in that. I think we should have a detailed line-item budget. When I look at a budget and this is big number, if I'm an average taxpayer, I have no clue what I'm looking at. Well, fortunately I know what to look for in a budget, but when you have a line item you can make honest cuts. Without those line items there, nothing gets cut. They smoke and mirrors the numbers that they give us, so it's very dangerous. The Manchester School District is at the bottom of the state. I don't know about a quality education, but I know you can go to Trinity for \$15,000 and get a superior education versus \$20,000 plus per student that we're paying. So, for them to say that their kids are getting a great education, it isn't. Kids that are graduating and going to college, they have to spend an extra year in their program, whether it's a four year, they have to go five just to get the remedial math and English done. That's sad because we're letting down every high school kid in this city.

Guy Ouellette, Ward 6: There are two constants in life: death and taxes. I oppose any tax increase. For those of us who are fortunate enough to be retired or soon to be retired, the tax burden is overwhelming. We've been good stewards of the Queen City for generations and decades. We are trying, and I want to emphasize trying, to enjoy our golden years with less stress and worry. Now with inflation, food, gas, meds, just to name a few, our disposable income has all but vanished. We sacrifice one for the other. Increasing the tax cap would only create more anxiety and mental duress, which is a benefit to no one, but it will create more concerns down the road. We need to recognize and appreciate what our elders have accomplished and done through their lives in the city. We've built new athletic fields throughout the city, new municipal buildings, dog parks, etc.. When is enough going to be enough? Increasing the cap will have an irreversible adverse effect on us all. How much can we sacrifice our overall health? Our happiness is at stake. We are taxing our elders out of their domiciles. It's un-American and a sad narrative to put forth. We are better than that. Driving around the city, there are real estate signs going up everywhere. Why? Affordability. Quality of life. We don't need to mistreat our elders

and put them on the streets. They've already made and paid their dues. They don't deserve to be treated like this. Please, I implore you to show some good judgment and compassion. Vote no on the increase of the cap. And I want to expressly thank all of our service members in the audience this evening for their service. I also want to thank the Manchester Police Department and our firefighters for everything they do.

Cindy Stewart, 255 Sagamore Street: I am an at large member of the Board of School Committee. I am speaking directly to the Manchester taxpayers. There is a wave of misinformation circulating in our community. I do not know how the Manchester School District became the bogeyman to some, but tonight, on behalf of the 12,000 children we serve, I want to set the record straight. First, our financials are an open and a verified book. The recent audit from the independent auditing firm gave the district a clean opinion with explicit praise. Any insinuation of inaccurate or altered financial statements is blatantly false. If anyone has fictitious accusations to levy, please take them up directly with the auditor. Second, we are absorbing decades of broken federal promises. When the IDEA Act was enacted in 1975, Congress committed to funding 40% of the per pupil cost for special education. In 51 years, that federal share has never topped 17%. Liability passes straight to the municipalities, with special ed costs increase exponentially. The result? A current annual shortfall to this district of \$10 million. Third, by state law, this district must provide transportation for Manchester students attending parochial, private, and charter schools within city routes. We receive zero reimbursement from those institutions, and we bear 100% of the cost. If school transportation is cut in the budget, the impact will be felt by every single family with school age children in Manchester. Furthermore, we provide most special ed services to Manchester's parochial and charter school students. This means district staff and contract workers are deployed to or housed within these institutions because reimbursements rarely cover the full cost. Many Manchester taxpayers subsidize the difference. Fourth, New Hampshire's base adequacy funding is embarrassingly the lowest in the nation. To add insult to injury, Manchester is the only municipality in New Hampshire that funds its public schools at less than 50% of the municipal budget. When we talk about the school budget, we are not talking about reckless spending. We are talking about navigating a minefield of unfunded mandates and intentional downshifting of costs to the local level. The villainization of our teachers, administrators, and especially our students, is unfounded. No one is coming to save our

city, not Washington and certainly not Concord. It is up to us; or more accurately, it is up to you.

Kelly Jobel: I'm a district employee here in Manchester. I'm here tonight to speak in support of what is best for our children as a district employee of 25 years, having experience at both the school and district level. Today, while I was helping a middle school student with their computer, I asked the student if they were excited for summer. The student quickly responded no, followed by several reasons. They would miss school over the summer. For so many of our students, school is the only constant, safe place in their lives and they look forward to coming to school each day. I'm sure many of you can relate to seeing the crazy increases on your favorite items at the grocery store. In December of 2020, this gallon of orange juice from Walmart was \$6.97. Today, the same gallon of orange juice is \$11.53. Our schools are facing the same issue. This toner cartridge costs \$42 more than it cost in 2023, over a 30% increase in just three years. This cartridge is only one example of one product out of thousands of products and services the district purchases and uses each year to provide our students with the best education they deserve in addition to many products that were free for educational institutions that are now charging for them. As you make your decision tonight, please support a budget that supports our schools and providing what is best for our students.

Greg Erskine, 125 Electric Street: I am here to speak in favor of the budget that was recently proposed by Miss Trisciani and because I'm a product of Manchester's public schools, K through 12. I started kindergarten at Smyth Road, then seventh and eighth grade at Hillside, then High School at Central. I did alright in school. I took the highest-level classes I could, and I got into a good college because of Manchester. At college, I was surrounded by kids who attended private schools, and what I noticed when I got there from Manchester was that I did not know any less than they did. I did not struggle any more than they did. I not did not perform any more poorly than they did, and it was because of the hard work of teachers here in Manchester. That kind of difficult educational labor was possible because of a teacher to student ratio that kept our class sizes at reasonable levels, and that kept support staff hired to make sure that our schools run smoothly. With the proper amount of funding our schools can be and have been the equal of any other school in the nation, public or private. Manchester can be a gem among

public school systems nationwide. A properly funded school system is the keystone on which the virtue of our civil society is built. But beyond this loftiness, the other thing I remember about being a teenager is that occasionally they get into trouble around Manchester. I look back on this now because I'm now a father. I've got four kids in Manchester's public schools just like I was, they're young, but I know that as they get older, they're more likely to get into things they probably shouldn't. A public school system that keeps kids engaged at every level is an investment. It means that down the road, we will have to spend less money on public safety because as our kids become teens, they will feel the spiritual fulfillment of education instead of getting bored or stupid or rascally. It's also an investment in the long-term health of Manchester, because it means that when my kids decide to have families, they are likely to settle down and do so in Manchester, just as I have, just as my parents did, just as my grandparents did, because they know that Manchester made them strong and they will return to pay that strength back to the city that we all love. Every day I drop my kids off at Northwest Elementary and our family thinks it's an incredible place that's full of teachers and administrators and support staff that are so dedicated, so sharp, and experienced and compassionate. Every day I am filled with gratitude for the education that my kids are getting. I would like to maintain that level of excellence for the rest of their schooling and for everyone in Manchester.

Jessica Margeson: I want to speak tonight about timing because I think timing is everything when it comes to the \$250,000 urban forestry infrastructure request. Budget season involves competing priorities, and I understand that everyone in this room understands that there are roads to fix, buildings to maintain, a lot of potholes to fill, services to fund, and only so many dollars to go around. I'm not here to suggest that this allocation is the only important one, but I am here to make the case that this particular investment has a window, and if we miss it, we may not get it back. The city has secured a USDA Urban Forestry grant. That grant was not easy to get. It required applications, planning, community engagement events and a demonstrated commitment to canopy expansion. That work is done. The federal commitment is in place. Mayor, what we need now is the local infrastructure investment that allows us to actually use it. The curb bump outs, the hardscape removal, the site alterations, that turn a grant award into trees in the ground and an investment in our inner city. If this board does not include the \$250,000 in this year's CIP, we risk falling behind on implementation timelines tied to the grant. We

risk losing planting seasons. We risk sending a signal to federal partners that the city cannot follow through on its commitments, and we risk watching a rare funding opportunity slowly expire while our most vulnerable neighborhoods remain unshaded. Parks and recreation brought forward a sound proposal. The mayor's budget didn't include it, but the board has the final word on CIP, and I'm asking you to use that authority to add this back in. The grant is there. The plan is there. The community need is there. Please make the funding there, too. I want to add, my biggest question, I get asked about how it helps with the heat canopy. There's a period of time in our city where a lot of trees in that area were taken down, and those trees provided shade to housing, which cuts down on the electricity use to cool that housing in the summertime. And it can get quite hot in the sun.

Maria Matesi: I'm here tonight because I care deeply about the future of the city and the opportunities we have to create for people who live in Manchester. As you consider this year's budget, I ask that you support the community first budget that was presented here on May 19th by nine aldermen. Also include the \$250,000 investment for the streets and tree bumps. When I think about what makes a community strong, I think about two things. Opportunities; opportunities we provide for children and the environment we create for families to thrive in. That is why investing in our schools is so important. Our students deserve every chance to succeed in the schools. The community first budget would restore critical budgeting to the school district and also help with the programs of summer and also for transportation. Nelson Mandela once said, education is the most powerful weapon which you could use to change the world. And I believe that is true. Every dollar we invest in education is an investment in the future of Manchester and also for the next generation, teachers and health care, and the list goes on. I want to ask you guys something. If we didn't have the school system that we had before, would we all be sitting here today? About two years ago, we had a great district that gave us everything. The teachers were funded, buses, summer programs were funded, and students were thriving. And now everybody's scared of what's going to be happening in the next few summers that are coming. I would suggest that we take our education seriously when it comes to funding. Our educators deserve more support when it comes to school systems. Students are struggling to focus on outcomes because we don't have enough of a support system. I ask that we provide more support with the budgeting, and also, I know there's

more problems that we have to focus on, but there is always more to offer when it comes to the school system. Lastly, I would ask that we really think about these budgeting things when it comes to school system. Our students need help, our educators need help. And also, the roads; please, the roads, when it comes to winter it's really hard to get around. This year it was really bad and I pray that next time we can do better with budgeting on that part, too.

Amber Nicole Cannan, Ward 3: I'm a Manchester resident and a person with disabilities and a DPW commissioner. I walk these streets. I've been hit by cars while crossing them on sidewalks. That's why I care about bump outs. When we talk about trees, we often talk about environmental benefits and those are important. Trees improve air quality, reduce heat, and make neighborhoods healthier. But I'd like to speak about this from a disability perspective. Shade is an accessibility tool for many people with disabilities, older adults, people with heart conditions, respiratory conditions, mobility impairments, or heat sensitivity. Excessive heat can make walking through the city difficult or even dangerous. The neighborhoods targeted by this project are some of the most paved parts of Manchester, and I'm talking about those bump outs for the trees. They are exactly the places where people need relief from heat the most. The challenge is that in many of these locations, there simply is not enough green space to plant the trees without creating the infrastructure to support them. That's why the bump outs matter. The trees and the bump outs kind of go together, and the bump outs provide benefits beyond trees themselves. They shorten crossing distances, they calm traffic. It's a really big one. They make pedestrians more visible. Another really big one. They create safer crossings for children, older adults, wheelchair users and anyone who moves through the city at a slower pace like me. Over the last few weeks, many of us have spent time talking about participation in our community and what it means for people to feel welcome in public spaces. I would argue that participation starts long before someone walks into City Hall. It starts with whether they can safely cross the street, reach a bus stop, get to a park or parking spot, visit a business or travel through their neighborhood with dignity and independence. The physical design of our city sends a message about who belongs here. Investments like these send the message that Manchester is a city built for everyone. This is one of those rare investments that improves accessibility, public health, pedestrian safety, neighborhood quality of life, and environmental outcomes all at the same time. I

hope you will support the funding and help make sure these trees can be planted where they are needed the most.

Shams Muldad, 287 Weston Road: I'm here in support of the community first budget. I would like to first thank you all for your time, your hard work on the school budget, and listening to students. I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective and hope you will consider my thoughts on the budget proposals. I think many of us are familiar with the condition of our roads. Whenever my dad and I drive to my clubs and activities, we can't help but notice and feel the potholes along the way. They are frustrating for drivers and passengers alike, and I know many other residents share those same concerns. I would also like to highlight the importance of the West Side Library. The community first budget proposal will allow us to keep it open, which is especially important for the many students and families who rely on it for educational resources and internet access in a safe place to learn. Removing the West Side Library would take away those opportunities. This is why I support the community first budget. It accommodates the needs of our city and makes it a better place for everyone.

Yaniel Aponte, 307 Merrimack Street: I am in support of the Community First Budget because I know firsthand, as many of you do, about the bad roads. Every day I take the bus from Central to MST and I sit near the middle or I sit closer to the back. Every time I sit closer to the back, I hit many bumps and I basically fly out of my seat. Recently I was sitting near the back away from people so I can relax after a long three hours of doing hair, and I watch a video while I make it to my class. I was sitting at the back, unknowing of what would happen, and then our bus hit a huge pothole. I flew up into the air and back down to my seat. Startled, I spilled my water everywhere. I know this might not seem like the biggest issue, but if it were anyone else or a disabled student in a wheelchair in the bus, if they hit the pothole, they could have been seriously injured. Picture yourself every day on your way to work or class. You're driving or getting driven. You have to go past the potholes every day. At some point, it could damage your car, your tires, and somehow your engine. I believe if you endorse the community first budget, they will put money towards fixing the roads, making your ride to work, school or ride back home much simpler. I ask that you listen to our young voices and vote for the community first budget.

George Kalipolites, 668 Lake Avenue: There's a handout being passed out and it's really simple. It's about the property taxes. If you go up 12%, the handout will show a 12% increase on a \$420,000 home. At \$8,400, it'll go up to \$9,008. That's an increase of over \$1,000. People can't afford this increase. Foreclosures are up 24% from last year. Bankruptcies are up 42% from last year nationally. If the aldermen care, vote no and stay with the tax cap.

Lou D'Allesandro, 332 Saint James Avenue: I've lived in the same house for 55 years. I pay my taxes every year. All of my children went to the Manchester public school system, K through 12. The people of the City of Manchester and the State of New Hampshire have invested in me for 50 years, sending me to public office. I served in the New Hampshire State Senate for 26 years. I chaired the Finance Committee in the Senate on three occasions. I chaired the Ways and Means Committee on three occasions. We should be angry at the State of New Hampshire for screwing the people of Manchester by eliminating funding. By eliminating the interest and dividends tax, \$340 million was returned to the wealthiest people in the state and withheld from those in need. When you reduce funding from the state, you reduce funding to the city and the towns. The State of New Hampshire has withheld municipal aid for 20 years. We were supposed to be part of revenue sharing. If the state ever paid the revenue sharing that they owe the City of Manchester, we would be loaded with money. So, I ask you, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, to invest in the citizens of the state and invest in our students in public education. The greatest gift that can be given to any human being is a quality public education. Think of it; we are one of the few nations in the world that offers a free and appropriate public education to its population. How could we deny that to our children? Many people sitting around this room, aldermen, you are products of public education. You went through the system. You received the benefits of the system. And indeed, you should be supplying those benefits to the children who are in our schools today. We have the most diversified population in the State of New Hampshire. Diversification is the essence of success. Diversity and culture bring us together and ingratiate us. So, I ask you, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, to be responsive, to invest in people. Investment produces dividends. Dividends are the people who stay in Manchester, the people who work in Manchester, and the people who strive to make Manchester a better place. You have that responsibility. Please live up to it.

Nancy Troupakis, Karatzas Avenue: Let's be honest about what this vote is. Tonight, you are deciding whether to respect the 3% tax cap or to push it far beyond to roughly 12%. That's not a small increase. That's a significant expansion of the tax burden on every resident in this city. The tax cap exists to protect taxpayers, and it only gets broken if this board chooses to break it. Many of you spoke about fiscal responsibility and protecting taxpayers during your campaigns. Tonight is where those words are tested. Your credibility is at stake because this vote is where commitment either holds or it doesn't. I want you to think about the people you represent and their own household budgets. People are not seeing 12% increases in their income. Families are stretched. Yet this proposal asks them to absorb far more than they would ever experience. So, the question is simple. Why are taxpayers being asked to pay more when there isn't stronger accountability for how the money is being spent? We have declining enrollment. We have unacceptable test outcomes. And yet, where is the pushback? Where is the accountability before asking residents to pay more? Because right now the burden is being placed on the taxpayer; it should be placed instead on the system to improve. Also, I want to address something. Many residents are hearing there is a growing concern that some who campaigned on protecting the tax cap may be prepared to vote to override it tonight. If that's not true, this is your opportunity to make that clear. But if it is, that is exactly how trust is broken. Because those votes were commitments, the voters relied on it. And if you vote to override this cap, you are choosing to pass that burden directly onto the residents. If I could leave with one thing tonight, this is a line in the sand. You either respect the tax cap or you break it. There is no middle ground. Many of you made clear promises to the people of this city that you would protect them exactly from this kind of decision. So, let's not dress this up. If you vote to override this tax cap tonight, you are breaking that promise, plain and simple. And you are forcing taxpayers to carry that burden that you are elected to protect them from. Call it whatever you want, but that's what it is. And here's a reality: when election time comes November of 2027, it won't be about explanations. It won't be about process. It will be about who kept their word and who didn't hold the line or be prepared to answer for it.

Mackenzie Verdiner, 181 Wilson Street: I'm 20 years old. I'm a voter. I rent an apartment here in Manchester. One thing I noticed about my community is that a majority of my

neighbors don't own the property that they live on. We rent it. When in conversation with aldermen and I have conversations with you all very often, I hear that we need to protect the taxpayer. But my question is, what is the percent of people who own property in Manchester that actually live here? As anecdotal evidence, I can tell you that all of the landlords that I have had did not live in Manchester. They lived in Massachusetts. So, the last few years, when you voted for a budget that fell under the tax cap, you're protecting people who don't drive on our roads, who don't send their children to schools, and who aren't going to call our police department. I did some research to try and find a number to support my theory that the majority of Manchester property owners do not live in Manchester, and there wasn't any data that showed the number of absentee landlords. But I did find that 35.7% of Manchester housing is detached single family homes, while 59.5% of Manchester housing consists of buildings with 3 to 50 units, showing that there are more renters than homeowners. When you're considering your decision on the budget, I urge you to consider a utilitarian philosophy. What will help the most amount of people? If most people in Manchester are renters trying to make ends meet, then vote for a budget that helps their children get to school, not one that means that their kids will have to walk two miles to get to school. Vote for a budget that makes our roads safe to drive on. I don't want to have to swerve every day to work just to avoid the potholes. I want you to protect the people that live here, not just the people that own property here. As a young person, as a taxpayer, and as a renter, I want you to know that I'm willing to pay a few extra dollars more in rent if it means that our community is taken care of. I'm in support of a community first budget, and I hope that you are, too.

Robert Sternberg, Ward 2: Both our children went to schools in Manchester, at Smyth Road, Hillside, and Central High School, and they're both doing very well. Thankfully, they don't live in the basement. I just want to emphasize the importance of the education department and the education that our children are receiving in Manchester. I want to also point out, as has been pointed out before, the condition of our roads is terrible. And I also want to point out that we support the Manchester Police Department and the Manchester Fire Department, and that's all I want to say. But the important thing is for the Board of Aldermen to come up with a budget that supports all these factors and that takes into account the tax burden as well.

Carol Sternberg, Ward 2: As my husband said, we have two children who are doing very well and who went to Manchester public schools, and we were very happy with their progress through the years. This community first budget might add something to the school system. Obviously, it's going to add some money that we'll all have to be contributing to. But I think education is so important. And I also feel very strongly that our streets, our roads, our sidewalks, very much need to be repaired. You would think you were driving in the country and you're driving in Manchester. And I also feel very strongly that we need to keep that West Side Library going.

Stephen Light, Ward 10: I am a Ward ten resident since 1988. I'm here specifically to speak about the proposed budget cut from Alderman Sapienza and Kantor, as to the \$500,000 budget cut to our city's MTA system. For nearly 20 years now, due to neurological disease that left me unable to drive, I have relied solely, almost solely, on the MTA system to get around for work, medical appointments, various other shopping needs, and having done that on a nearly daily basis, I've seen dozens and hundreds of people probably who are in the same situation that I'm in, or a lot worse. I see people with walkers. I see people in wheelchairs on the buses on a daily basis. They need to be able to get around. They need to have the quality of life that we deserve. And with this budget cut coming up, I believe this is both highly irresponsible and very dangerous to our transit system. Too many people rely on it. We need to have the budget or even higher. This has been an issue for many years in this city. As far as budget cuts to our MTA, it's time we all sit down and figure out a good plan, a logical plan to end this problem in our city and help people regain a better quality of life.

Jeff Kassel, 22 Appleton Street: Is it just me, or is it hard to hear what people are saying? Can everybody hear me back there? Okay, maybe I'm getting a little hard of hearing. I'm old. I actually was Donald Trump's classmate in 1966. Not that I voted for him, I didn't, but I want to take you down memory lane. Around 20 years ago, I was the chairman of the Tax Association in Manchester, and we embarked on an effort to promote a spending cap, not a tax cap, because it was very difficult to cap taxes, but a spending cap. And it was an effort made because under Bob Baines, my taxes kept going up 7 or 8%. I ran into Frank Guinta in Hannaford about two weeks ago. By the way, Frank lost like 100

pounds. I hardly recognized him. And he now works for a lobbying agency that promotes big oil and big gas. I wish I had that job. I'd have a better chance of paying my property taxes, but to go down memory lane, if you remember, when you were in school, there was a teacher that would lecture you in front of the classroom. And we would do it, but we really preferred it when there was a movie or even a film strip that we could watch to break up the monotony, because it's kind of a boring model, a teacher in front of a classroom. Last night I consulted AI about the Manchester school district. Their performance scores, Manchester ranks near the very bottom on performance scores. In 188 districts in this state it's in the bottom 5%. If Manchester produced automobiles or GM or Ford produced automobiles that worked 28% of the time, which is the reading scores, the proficiency scores for our students, they wouldn't be in business very long. In middle school, the reading proficiency scores were 26% accuracy. In math, it's 14%; in high school, it's slightly better at 37% reading proficiency and math at 14%. The schools are not doing their job. They get an F. There are people actually talking about giving them more money. They're out of their mind. That's all I have to say. I love school teachers. I used to be one, but now I'm old and I'm retired, and I don't think we should be spending a quarter of \$1 billion on education.

Nikki Beaulieu, Ward 6: I am here to speak against overriding the tax cap and yet another property tax increase in the City of Manchester. I have owned two properties in Manchester since 2008. I now live in ward six. From 2023 to 2025 alone, I paid the city nearly \$20,000 in property taxes. I recently sold a three-family home on the west side, relocated to the east side. I've lived here since 2004, and I do love this city. My husband and I have settled in what should be our dream home. My husband is retired. He's a disabled veteran. He's on Social Security retirement. I work and our home is paid off. Yet, just to keep up with property taxes, we have to set aside nearly \$900 a month. That's not for mortgage, not for insurance, not for water or sewer, which continues to rise at 9% a year, not for upkeep or repairs. That's just to pay for the tax bill on a home that we already own outright. If we fail to pay these taxes, even though our home is paid off, the city can ultimately take my home. That's a terrifying reality. And if I were to pass away, it's actually questionable whether my husband could shoulder the tax burden and remain in our long-term home. My husband and I have been having conversations. He is nearly 70 years old and disabled, and he may have to go back to work so we can establish a cushion against

the rising taxes. That's not what retirement should look like, and it's not how we should be treating people who have spent their lives working and serving this country. The tax cap exists for a reason. It is a promise to residents that there is a limit to how much government will grow at their expense. Overriding the tax cap would be disastrous for homeowners and renters. I was an owner-occupied landlord for about 15 years in the city. I did see my rents going up in response to property taxes going up, and it is passed on to renters. Many families are already struggling, and I do feel people are going to be pushed out or priced out. I urge you, do not override the tax cap. Live within the means that Manchester residents are forced to live within. Find efficiencies. Set priorities and respect the limits that taxpayers are already hitting.

Brittany Ping, 199 Putnam Street: I was going to read Victoria's comments, but she said she's going to try to sneak back in if you call the roll. She had to go back to work. I live on the west side. It's the best side. I'm here to ask you guys to not override the tax cap. We had a budget tabled at the last meeting. There are more budgets that are being rumored to be presented. You know, we're listening to everybody talk about the things that we want for this city. Somebody said, this jug of orange juice was this amount and now it's this amount. And that's the reality of every single person, no matter what we believe, no matter what we're asking for, those are the decisions that our family has to make every day. You just don't buy orange juice, right? You buy Great Value. You buy the Minute Maid frozen, and you make it from concentrate. You make sacrifices. I didn't know those were bad things to instill in our children. I didn't know those were bad things to expect from our public officials. Those are things that I have to do every single day as a mom, as a wife, as a friend, as a business owner, as somebody who dedicates my time for non-profits throughout the city. Somebody that is trying to lift up people around me, shares my time, my treasure and my talents. And when the city says, I need more from you, Brittany, I need more from you, it's once again saying, if that's what you want, if you're going to override our taxes and you're going to, somebody said, I'm happy to pay more in rent, \$50 a month. Let's pretend we get a 10 to 12% override after the assessments. We're looking at minimum about a \$50 per month on an average rental in the City of Manchester, directly passed on to the next tenant. Now, maybe their lease is good through next fall. I'm about 75 days ahead in terms of leasing. So, we have people that are going to get the benefit. But then what does that tax increase look like next year? What are they going to

do to us next year? Because it's never enough. So, to say it went from \$5 to \$11, let's figure out how the heck to make some cuts and afford that \$5.

Jessica Spillers, 73 Jobin Drive: I'm here to support the community first budget. It's not the budget that I would have liked to see, but it is a good compromise. I've heard a lot of people here suggest that if you don't like what's happening in the public schools, send your kids somewhere else. Spend \$15,000 and send them to Trinity. Where am I going to get \$15,000 to send my kid to Trinity? I should buy concentrated orange juice? I already do. It is not easy in this economy for anyone, I get that, but there are 116,000 of us in this city, and if we all contribute a little bit, we can benefit a lot because the majority of people, just like me, send their kids to the public schools, and they deserve a good education just as much as those kids who go to Trinity, just as much as the kids who go to Saint Anthony's. And it frustrates me to hear people say that they are trying to live out their golden years, the best years, but they are somehow struggling. I understand that. I don't want to dismiss that, but it dismisses my reality as well. I'm in my late 30s. This should be a time when I'm at the peak and I am paying \$4,000 a month for childcare for my three children. And if I say that I am willing to pay \$50 more so that my kid can have a good education, so that their teacher can have supplies provided to them and they don't have to pay for it out of pocket, I think we can all figure that out. I am willing to sacrifice my peak so that my kids can have theirs, because at this point, that's what it's going to take. I hope that you will all keep that in mind. As you decide and you discuss this budget tonight, figure out what it is that we can do as a city because we can afford to do more. We have 116,000 people living here. And when we all come together as a community, we can be exceptional.

Melina Marescia, 181 Wilson Street: I'm here tonight to speak about my concerns regarding the proposed budget cuts and what they could mean for the children who rely on school transportation. My house is currently a bus stop for students attending Hillside Middle School and from where my house is located, the walk to the school is a long one. However, my concern goes beyond distance. It's about safety. Most, if not all of you, have children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, or other young people in your lives. Would you feel comfortable knowing your middle schooler had to walk nearly two miles to and from school every single day? Would you worry about their safety? The issue doesn't only

affect middle school students. It affects all children of all ages. Some parents do not have access to a car. Some leave for work before their children leaves for school. What happens when a third grader has to walk home alone and gets lost? What happens if another child is injured by a reckless driver while walking to or from school? In addition, did you know an estimated 38% of children who walk to school go missing? About 15% of those children are abducted by someone they know. So, I ask again, how would you feel as parents, teachers, neighbors, and community members? We trust our elected officials to make decisions that keep our children safe. Transportation is not a luxury. It's a necessity for families. When we talk about cutting bus routes, we're talking about placing additional risks and burdens on children and families throughout our community. I ask you to consider the real impact these budget decisions will have on our students. How would you feel if your child had to walk every single day alone? I urge you to protect our children's safety and preserve the transportation services they depend on.

Ken Harver: I'm going to speak loudly because I'm an old person. I know there's a lot of other old people in the room. As a sufferer of ADHD, and anybody who is familiar with it, you can understand the struggle I'm having trying to keep on one subject without these 20 squirrels running through my head at the same time. I'm going to avoid being political and I'm going to deal with factual logic. The school budget and the city budget, if I'm correct, are both about 80% fixed wages, benefits, maintenance costs, supply costs, things like that. I spent 20 years on the budget committee of a large adjoining town, and I learned that there are very few discretionary decisions that you can make. I checked this afternoon and I found that the CPI, while it sounds good, is an average. And the way averages work is you have outliers on both sides. And the issues that might be of interest and importance to the school district would be the cost of fuel and operation. I think your CPI is set at 3%. The cost of heating oil is up 75%. Your CPI is 3%. The cost of electricity is 12 to 17%. That's not political. That's facts. As much as you may want to, what control you have over this budget is absolutely minimal. I think it's important for people to understand that government is not a corporation. It's not run like a business. What government is, is a service industry. And as a service industry, it is heavily reliant on human beings, teachers, police, fire, DPW, janitors, all sorts of maintenance. That's fixed. That's not going anywhere. So, for people to tell me or say out loud, why don't you run it more like a business? I didn't get a chance to look at the school budget before I came

here. If you look at the school budget or the city budget, you will find that they're tight. They're about as tight as you can possibly be. My experience in Londonderry, it is so frustrating dealing with people who just don't understand the reality of the situation. You cannot cut costs and you cannot control overruns when fixed costs are going up, triple the size of the rate of inflation.

Rob Chebook, Ward 4: I think it's funny that everyone's saying a tax cut. There's no tax cut. The budgets that are being proposed, we have a tax cap which the citizens of Manchester voted for. So, we're not cutting taxes. You're just raising them by what the tax cap was. I've lived here in my house 26 years, lived in Manchester over 30. I don't think I've ever seen a tax cut. If I'm wrong, someone let me know. There's never been a tax cut in Manchester. So, we have to stop playing games with words here. With the school, everyone's saying that we want to take money away from schools. No, no one's taking money away from schools. But we're consistently losing enrollment every year. We're down about 2,000 kids in the last ten years. So, at some point they should be able to balance their budget because they're losing kids every year. And it's funny because I saw an ad today, Manchester School District, they're complaining about vans that they have to bring food from the commissary to the schools. They weren't complaining because the vans were run down or they don't have them. They're complaining because they're plain white. So, they're holding a competition and it's great, they got the kids involved. They didn't hire some consulting firm and pay them millions of dollars to come up with a design. I think there's eight designs that they want people to vote on. Then they can have the vans wrapped in a school district that's saying they got to cut money from football or transportation or music, but they're going to spend money to wrap vans because they don't like that they're white. That's like a slap to the face of the taxpayers. Seriously, that's what we're looking for. We're looking for just good spending. That's what we're looking for. We just don't want you wasting our money.

Laura Burns, Ward 4: I'm a ward four resident for over 30 years. I am not right wing, I'm not left wing, because my wings are broken. I'm here to implore you to take the time needed to look at budget options that don't override our tax cap. Otherwise, why set a cap? Mayor, I voted for you solely because of your promises that you had made. Now they don't seem to mean too much, which has made me realize I can no longer trust you.

I understand it's not an easy job and a hard decision to be made. But you took the job and you got the job by making promises to people like myself. I feel I was lied to. Please, board and mayor, work hard to find ways to keep within your spending limits. Skate park? No. Hanover Street redo? Really? Really, redo Hanover Street? It's beautiful. Engagement center? No. New school? No. Oh, the poor kids don't have windows. Really? Eyes should be all up front. Ears should be open to learning. The heck with what's outside. Maybe the test scores would go up. Line by line, item by item, get out your big red pen and keep your word and cut spending. Get a grip on the school board that is out of control in producing poor results. What happened to the local meetings with aldermen, police departments and the mayor? I don't see those happening anymore. Why are people allowed to be intoxicated in public? The people that choose to urinate in business doorways, pass out, or fentanyl freeze on our sidewalks that are also falling apart, they are all allowed to defecate and use drugs in our parks, our cemeteries. Why are they not arrested? I bet if they were arrested, I bet if arrests start to happen and they were not allowed to use their self-medication for an overnight in the clinker, they would stop parading around our beautiful city. Whom of you up here in front of all of us in this city, are willing to make the hard choices, to stop and cut and stop spending? I went to the library Saturday and I parked next to a sign that said no tents. And when I opened the car door, there were three tents at my feet. Why waste money on a sign if you're not going to enforce it? Just like children understand that their punishments are never really going to happen, they can rule the roost. There are no ramifications for their behavior. I feel this is the way our beautiful city is being run. Please look at this budget carefully, cut line by line, and stop wasting the city's money in foolish ways. The bike lanes? Nobody uses them. But we paid to have those paved. Nobody is using them. I've never seen a bike in the bike lane.

Mark Mackenzie, 319 West Erie Street: I am the Democratic representative from five wards in the City of Manchester. I can tell you what's going on here is the result of what happened up there. So, make no mistake about that. There is a consequence for what has happened over the last couple of years in Concord, but I'm not here to talk about that. I want to say how good it is to be with people who are engaged in the community, whether you're on one side or the other, you're here and you're fighting for what you believe in. And that's an important component of the City of Manchester. I've lived here my whole

life, my whole adult life, 50 years. I was a firefighter in the city. I worked in the city. I raised my children in this city, and it's a great place to live. I think we're all struggling with how we get to the place we need to be. The thing I wanted to mention today is the issue of the roads in this city. Over 50% of the roads in this city are either fair or poor. We have reports that have been done. We know what the issue is. We know it needs to be done within the City of Manchester. And if we don't do it, the only thing that we are going to end up with is more costly repairs to the roads than actually repairing the roads. You can't ignore the request that has been put in for \$12 million to start bringing these roads back up to place. If you don't do that, then you will end up with a bill that is much higher, and you're going to end up with a whole group of people who are upset when they start bouncing around this city and potholes are all over the place. The people in the highway department are doing the very best they can, but they can't do it without the resources that are necessary. And make no mistake, if we don't move on this, if we don't do something, if we don't increase that budget, then you're going to end up in a position of having to spend a whole lot more money.

Sara Shannon-Yost, 435 Westwood Drive: I wrote a speech, but I figured we'll just go rogue. I'm not from Manchester originally. I moved here ten years ago from western Pennsylvania. Our school district is roughly the same size. But a few years ago, we had to choose to close schools. We had to find buildings that we could absorb to turn into schools that we could use so that we didn't have to spend millions and millions of dollars, that we didn't have to make a school much like how the charter schools do. I heard a lot of people talk about our school district and I have two sons. One is in the seventh grade at the Founders Academy. The other one is at Highland Goffs Falls School. My little guy at Highland has an IEP. He is autistic. The reason I didn't send my older one to Southside is because the last time I spoke here was to stop the fifth grade from being moved. The reason we're building additions onto schools now for God knows how much money is to facilitate those children. I chose not to send him there, because it would have been the second year that that fifth grade was. In the first year, there were marijuana vape pens being taken out of the fifth graders, there was a boys fight club in the bathroom, and that was not a safe place for my child. Now I was told, and I drank the Kool-Aid that your kids are safe when they go to school. Well, I didn't feel safe sending my child to that school. Sorry, but I wasn't. I am now in a predicament where I have to choose where to send my

little guy. And unfortunately, I was told by the school district that we're not sure if we can have services sent to his charter school, because we may not have the funding for that. As a mother, I have to make that decision to send my child into a school that I was promised, and all these other parents were promised, when you guys sent the fifth grade into these middle schools, that they were going to be in a wing by themselves. That's not true. I implore all of you to go take a little visit, because there's seventh graders walking with fifth graders and the seventh graders that are in the little pods outside, some of them are going to be in the pods, but some of them are going to be by the fifth graders. That doesn't make them feel well. Also, I looked up the tax cap and I looked up why did you guys make a tax cap. Why are we sitting here even talking about it? Why did you make it in the first place if you're not going to stand by it? My house is worth \$550,000. You know how much money that's going to be? I can't take my kids on vacation this year because we're living paycheck to paycheck. I'm sure all of you are as well. And I think that everyone in this city is as well. I don't know what you guys are going to do, but I think somebody said \$50, it's not going to be \$50 for me. And most people that own a house, it's not \$50. So, I can shop at Aldi's all day long, but when I'm told that my special education child may not have services because I don't feel safe, there's a problem with our district.

Richard Girard, 283 Orange Street: It's time to bring some honesty into the budget discussions, which thus far have been fundamentally dishonest. The budget floated by Aldermen Terrio, Vincent, and Thomas, uses the same deceptive tactic deployed in the Democratic budget by comparing their proposed tax rate, which is based on a much larger tax rate to the current one, which is based on a substantially smaller tax base. They're misleading the people about the impact of the nearly \$17.7 million tax increase their budget contains. When the denominators are made the same, which is basic elementary math needed to compare two numbers, one discovers that the 22.8% tax rate decrease shown on their budget sheet doesn't exist. It's a 10.14% tax increase, and while that's not much better than the proposed 11.8% increase in the Democrats' budget, I have a question for Aldermen Terrio, Vincent, and Thomas. Can you, with straight faces, tell the same voters you promised you wouldn't override the tax cap, that there's an emergency that requires you to do just that and hand them a double digit tax hike that you tried to hide in a revaluation? I expected that from the Democrats, but not from you. In 1988, this city's tax base was \$4.6 billion. When I took over as the mayor's budget director in 1995,

it was \$3.6 billion. We lost over 22% of the tax base. Not only that, we had millions in uncollected property taxes from cash strapped taxpayers. Elm Street and the millyard were practically abandoned. And the overlay account, that might as well have been a Pez dispenser. Somehow, though, we figured out ways to meet the needs of the city and make some of the very big changes that the first lady who spoke mentioned without layoffs, without disabling the everyday services this city relies on. And the tax hikes over those years didn't come anywhere near close to what's on the table now. Were there changes to how things got done? You bet. And here's the truth about government: it's a beast. Feed it continually and it will grow out of control just like it is now. Starve it and it will change. It's time to put the beast on a diet. Everything you're struggling with budgetarily, by the way, is of your own making. A big part of the non-tax city revenues the city lost is because you allowed the schools to use emergency reserves as one-time revenues for the specific purpose of avoiding spending cuts required by the tax cap. Also, last year, you padded spending with millions in one-time revenues from the phase one permit fees that were paid to the Planning Department. I don't know what happened at DPW, but their revenues cratered. You created this revenue hole. The board voted to approve budgets that added \$4.7 million to the general fund by transferring dozens of positions created with one-time Covid grant funds to the operating budget, and greenlighting the massive increase in pay and benefits that came from recent compensation studies. This was on top of the \$11 million in raises for teachers and other school employees in year one of their contract alongside a \$20 million increase in annual spending for the ridiculously unnecessary phase one facilities plan. Either the mayor's budget or the Sapienza-Kantor budget will work for the city, and based on my personal experience in much harder budget times, I say that with complete confidence. Whatever you do tonight, I pray for this city's sake it's not a tax cap override. Double digit tax increases aren't good for anybody, especially perhaps for you Republicans that vote for them or fail to veto them.

Grisselle Glenn, Manchester: I'm off subject again, but equally as important nonetheless. I'm not going to repeat myself. I'm going to give some facts today, sourced facts. And then I'm going to tell you exactly what I expect you to do about them. Chief Marr and the mayor, listen carefully. After Nickenley Turenne was killed on December 6th, Baliko, Chan and Lambert were placed on administrative leave. Chan was back on patrol in nine days. Baliko, 18 days. Lambert, 34 days. The AG investigation is still open. No findings, no

determination. No footage released. When reporters asked the New Hampshire Department of Justice why those officers were back on the street, Michael Garrity, the director of communications for the New Hampshire DOJ, said in writing, published in the Manchester Ink Link on April 23rd, returning an officer to duty is a decision made by their specific department. It is not a New Hampshire DOJ determination and does not mean that the investigation is complete or that the force was ruled justified. Not the DOJ's decision. Not the AG's decision. Yours. Manchester PD Public Information Officer Heather Hamel confirmed it in writing to the same outlet. The officers were approved to return after an administrative review completed by the department. She said they all returned. We followed our policy. Your policy, your review, your approval, Chief Marr. Now let's talk about consistency. On May 6th, Officer Ketchum stomped on the back of a handcuffed man on video. He was on administrative leave the next day. The Public Integrity Unit, a division of the New Hampshire Attorney General's Criminal Justice Bureau, was called in. A second officer in that same video punched the same handcuffed man in the legs and in his hands. And that officer is not on leave. Same video, same department, same chief. Three officers killed a man back on the street, 9, 18, and 34 days. One officer stomps a handcuffed man, leaves the next day. The second officer punches the same handcuffed man in the same video and nothing is done. So, Chief Marr, you make these decisions, not the AG, you do. And mayor, I need to address you directly. After I was removed from this room last time, you stood at that podium and said, you have full faith and confidence in Chief Marr and the men and women of the department, and that they do an extraordinary, difficult job. I want to be clear about something. These officers applied for this job. They were hired. They are paid by the city by taxpayer money, including mine. Difficulty is not a shield for accountability. Every person in this room who works a job is accountable for how they do it. And I would also note that it is very easy to have full faith and confidence in the department when you are not the one on the receiving end of the decisions. When you don't live in the neighborhoods they patrol, when you don't look like the people that they stop, chase, and shoot. That kind of trust is a luxury. The Turenne family does not have that luxury. This community does not have that luxury. The city charter places administrative authority in the city in your hands. The chief answers to you, which means every one of these decisions has your name on it, too. Here's what I'm demanding. Remove Baliko, Chan, and Lambert from active patrol pending the outcome of this investigation. Release the

body camera footage to Nickenley's family now and explain publicly on the record why your policy treated a stomp differently than a killing. You have always had the authority to act. The question is whether you have the integrity to use it.

Kathleen Paquette: I'm a New Hampshire state representative representing Manchester ward five. I'm here tonight to respectfully ask this board to pass a responsible, tax compliant budget. I serve on the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, and I fully support funding the police contract. But the police contract should not be used to justify an entire budget that asks struggling taxpayers for even more. The proposal from two weeks ago included many other areas where spending could have been responsibly trimmed. I frequently receive calls from constituents who struggle because their taxes are already too high. People are scared. They're looking at rising costs of groceries, utilities, insurance, rent, mortgages and property taxes, and wondering how much longer they can sustain it. I'm sure many of you have heard the same concerns from your constituents. We are already facing a serious affordable housing crisis. Raising real estate taxes will only make that worse. Those costs do not stop with property owners. They get passed along in rents, and the people least able to absorb that extra cost are often hit the hardest. The tax cap exists for a reason. It's a protection voters put in place because they wanted accountability, discipline, and limits on how much more the government can ask from them. Manchester residents are desperately asking their leaders for relief, and a proposed budget ignores these pleas by shifting the burden of a bloated budget onto taxpayers who are already struggling to keep up. Several members of this board have spoken clearly in the past about protecting taxpayers. Alderman Trisciani commented in Manchester Ink link, I will respect the tax cap. Alderman Dan Goonan said as alderman, I will respect the tax cap and work tirelessly to keep taxes low, Alderman Terrio has said I support the tax cap because it's important to keep real estate taxes under control. I also have quotes from Alderman Thomas, Alderman Vincent, and even Mayor Ruais, that says they will protect the tax cap, use grants, efficiency surpluses. Dana Dexter, Dan O'Neil, words matter. Manchester heard them. Voters relied on them. Tonight, Manchester residents are asking this board to honor them. We can support public safety. We can support our schools and essential services. But we also have to support the people who pay the bills. Mayor Ruais said on WMUR at the end of every budget line is a family that has to pay for it. Tonight, I ask you to remember those families. Respect the tax cap.

Hannah Kesselring, Ward 12: I'm 12 years old and I live in Manchester ward 12. Thank you for giving me the chance to speak tonight. I know I'm younger than most people who speak here, but the decisions you make today will affect my future and the future of other kids growing up in Manchester. Over the last few years, I've spent time sitting in BMA meetings and learning about city budgets and bonding. I've learned that when a city issues bonds, it's borrowing money that has to be paid back later with interest. That means decisions made today can create costs for taxpayers in the future. As someone growing up in Manchester, that matters to me. One day I hope to buy a home, have a family and build my life here. But I worry that if spending keeps growing, borrowing keeps increasing, and taxes continue to rise, it may be harder for young people like me to stay in the city we love. Everything already costs more than it used to. Housing is expensive. Groceries are expensive. Energy bills are expensive. Families are doing their best to keep up. If taxes continue rising because of increased spending and borrowing, my generation will eventually be the ones helping carry that burden. I understand that the city has important responsibilities. We need safe roads, public safety, and services people rely on every day. I also believe that just because the city can borrow money doesn't always mean it should. Borrowing now means paying more later. I think the city should focus on priorities, spend taxpayer dollars carefully, and try not to place unnecessary debt on future generations whenever possible. I'm wearing an American flag pin on my blazer. The reason we have the freedom of our flag is because men went to war to get it. There was the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, and, of course, the Revolutionary War. I think the city should focus on priorities. The choices you make tonight won't only affect people living here today, they will affect kids like me, who will one day inherit the responsibility of paying for them. Please keep Manchester affordable, keep taxes under control, and don't break the tax cap.

Steve Kesselring, Ward 12: I don't really normally follow my daughter, but this is a different one for me. I serve as a state representative for ward 12. I live on Hackett Hill Road in Manchester. So, before this meeting, I asked a couple constituents that have been emailing me over the last few days, and they said a couple of things that they've been feeling the pressure from, not just the property taxes over the last few years. They felt the pressure on the increased water and sewer that's coming, and they're scared about

what's going to come from that. They said that the cost of energy, one person mentioned it was over 35% this year, that she had to increase the rent because one of them is a renter, has gone up 10% year over year, every single year. Insurance costs, car insurance. Every single thing is going up. I understand that there's costs that have to go up with every single budget. I see that at the state level, I see all the things that have to come to us. So, what I'm saying tonight, and I want to say this very bluntly, think about those people, think about all of those things that have to be paid for and what your increase would look like for those people. I want to end with two things. One, we have a lot of things to be proud of here in Manchester. We are ranked number one in a lot of categories, but do we want to be ranked number one in the highest taxes in the state? I think you need to think about that tonight when you talk about the budget, and I want to end with this. I'm about to not make any friends at DPW, but download the app SeeClickFix and everybody take pictures of those potholes because I do it in ward 12. And if you drive around, ward 12 has a lot of potholes that are all filled in and within 24 to 48 hours, they normally fill them in. So, take some pictures on SeeClickFix.

Daniel Mowery, Ward 6: You all know who I am. I live in ward six. I'm very popular with this board and with the city of Manchester. I am the Pickle Man, which we are winning thanks to Senator Sullivan and the House Representatives and the State Senators. I work for Turning Point Action, if any of you know what that is. For the last five weeks I have been out door knocking in ward six and in ward four. I have heard complaints, Mr. Mayor, that all you care about is the homeless. That's from a lady on ward four on Maryland Street. I've heard a lot of thoughts about our Alderman, Crissy Kantor, about how well everything's doing. But the thing is, I hear complaints about the bus drivers. This young man back here said he almost hit the ceiling of the bus. The bus drivers have got to slow down. We've complained about it in our ward. We've had town hall meetings. That's why every one of you are invited to my town hall meeting, so you can see what a community does to get together. Because we're sick and tired of wasteful spending. Another thing is when the member at large for the school board, it's amazing how she says that these kids going to parochial school are being bussed by the city of Manchester. Those residents pay taxes, so they deserve a bus ride to the parochial school, charter school, wherever they go, because they're paying for a better education doesn't mean they should have to pay for their own transportation. So therefore, I ask the Board of Alderman and mayor, do

not overspend the tax cap. Your constituents have plastered you over social media. Tell the truth. Do what you promise. I know ward six will, because we have a common-sense alderman, that's why she has beaten other people for 2 or 3 elections now, and we plan on keeping her. Oh, by the way, happy Sacred Heart of Jesus month, not pride month. God bless you all and have a good night.

Rick Soule, Ward 1: Thank you all for your service. Please don't override the tax cap. The skateboard park is nothing if you can't afford a skateboard. A swimming pool is no good if you can't afford swimming lessons. Please don't override the tax cap.

Pat Long, Ward 3: Last week I attended this Football Scholar Athlete Award. There were 38 recipients. I was proud that one of them was Jacob Eli Henry from Manchester West. The only person from Manchester West. Very proud of him. He's distinguished himself in the classroom and on the field of play. That's something that I've heard people talk about. Manchester schools produce nothing? He is something that's highly produced; a leader. The budget is time consuming with conversations that happen with the department heads, the aldermen, and the mayor. That's what makes a good budget. You can hear from me on what I think should happen on your budget. You hear from individuals what should happen on their budget. That is your decision. Your decision; only your decision. You do the due diligence. Every budget that I looked at, and there's three proposals I looked at, they all increased taxes. Hearing that people's rents are going up 10% a month, I don't recall our budgets going up 10% a month. I'm dealing with elder women that have left their apartments because they went from \$1,400 to \$2,200 a month. They can't afford that. One of them is living on somebody's couch. That's what I'm dealing with. So, in my opinion, rents are market based. If I'm a landlord, I'll get what I'll get, whatever I can get. There are some landlords that don't do that. They try to stay within a reasonable fixed cost. And that, I appreciated. But there's way too little of that. Two weeks ago, I heard an increase would raise rents. We had a child speak two weeks ago. I'm hearing that the increase in taxes, people aren't coming here. People are coming here. There was a child that spoke two weeks ago. Their parents bought a home in Manchester from Auburn. So, my HOA, my condo association, three people bought condos. I spoke with them. None of them were from Manchester. Why did you move to Manchester? Because of what Manchester offers them. That's why they moved to Manchester. That's what we have to

keep up. I have thirty seconds. Thank you, Deputy Clerk, I waited to hear that thirty seconds. I should have heard it more when I was on the other side of this aisle.

Kathy Turgeon, Manchester: I will be 80 years old in 20 days. I am retired. I'm on a fixed income. However, I expect you and the board to come to an agreement that will see you supporting the Police Department, improving our roads and sidewalks, and making sure that teachers who go back to school this fall will have the supplies they need to teach our children. A gentleman spoke earlier saying that our schools do not send children to college who need a year of remediation. My daughter, a product of Manchester schools K through 12, went to college on a presidential scholarship. Her daughter, a product of Manchester public schools, valedictorian of Central High School, just completed her first year at Dartmouth with straight A's. Now, how can a child from a bad school system do that? It also not just teachers, it's parents. It's the whole community. And let's talk about losing students. That doesn't mean you're going to lose a principal, an assistant principal, an aide for the special ed kids that you have in class, an interpreter for the diverse population you have. One year, I had 33 first graders that I taught. The parents complained when they came to open house and had to sign their names on the board and wait for their turn to speak to me. I said, imagine then, how your first grader feels if they have to wait for 33 other kids. Let's have some common sense. Let's look forward, not backwards. And please try to make Manchester the best that it can be.

Elaine Dallaire, 361 Hayward Street: I'm here about the ADA sign. It's an update. I have had several unwanted confrontations with angry YMCA members and others inside and outside of the facility. I've documented for the future how my car was vandalized in a heavily populated area. No one called the police, I'm sorry to say, but I continue my campaign of taking pictures because it's a positive tool. I'm trying to get inclusion policies for all Manchester residents. That's the right path to go. I let Dana know what happened to me, and he advised that I go to the police and report a threat against me, and I have. This is what the police officer viewed and said about the ADA ramp and Stark Street. The officer asked me why the Planning Board was adding to the problem on Stark Street. All I could suggest was the city was resistant to change. The officer wanted to know why the parking enforcement department was not going to the street and stopping people from parking beyond their time limits. Same answer. Officer wanted to know why the YMCA

did not help me, and I told him they did not care about getting directly involved in lessening my hardships. I am suffering ever escalating retaliation by the same people who looked the other way. As tensions rise, employees from the YMCA, only a few, are writing me out where there was no pattern to suggest any harsh treatment against me. I'm afraid that one by one, my accommodations are now going to be systematically removed. I'm trying to clarify one of those complaints. All are part of the record for anyone to review. I wish to submit very humbly to the board tonight, calling a series of special meetings, addressing the officer's observations. I think we need a forum of our neighbors to be able to debate discussion, inclusion rather than fear.

Deb Roux, Ward 12: Before I begin, I just want to ask you to please stay underneath the tax cap. It's there for a reason. I want to say that I urge you to support and I want to thank Alderman Kantor and Sapienza for doing the work and making a budget that works for everybody. I appreciate it, and I'm holding this sign here because I'm trying to educate everybody on the founding of our country and the principles our country was founded on. And our founders believed in God, and they trusted God, and they followed God in all of their decisions. And I don't know if anyone saw that on May 17th in Washington, D.C., there was a 9.5 hour to rededicate America as one nation under God. And one thing our founders believed was that our inalienable rights come from God. And one of those important rights was the right to own property. When our founders first started this country, everybody was kind of going in the same building, planting and doing everything as one area. But then that wasn't working because people weren't pulling their weight. And so, they gave everybody their own property. And as soon as they had their own property, things started to prosper. And in trying to keep your own property these days with rising taxes, and what I'm trying to say is that when you have your own property, it's supposed to be your own property. You're not supposed to be taxed out of it and be able to take your property from you, because that's one of our rights that is so important for all of us in this day and age to have. And when you have to go and pay for something that you've already purchased over and over again, it's just not right. And our schools need to be held accountable. One of the things our founders also said was that they believe passing debt onto the next generation was a sin. And as Hannah nicely stated, that if we keep borrowing and having to pay, all that interest rate is going to cost the next generation more money. I'm urging you to hold the schools accountable. Make them increase the

grades for our students and just be more fiscally responsible so that we don't, as taxpayers, have to keep paying more than necessary and eventually possibly losing our homes because of it. These biblical principles and what our founders created was what made America and our nation so prosperous, so generous, and so innovative. I ask you to keep that in mind as you go to vote tonight, that we are paying so much for something that we have the right to have.

Kathleen Carswell, Ward 4: I've lived in Manchester my 64 out of my 66 years of being here and I grew up here. I went through all the school systems. I went to Ash Street, Pearl Street, Hillside and Central, and I graduated. I didn't go off to school. I worked for my family's company, but I saw hardship. Why don't we take the little gravel pit next to the soup kitchen, build a ten story building there, put the engagement center on the first floor, have the homeless come there that want the help, and if they don't want the help, give them a bus ticket to where they came from. I'm tired of paying. I pay rent and I'm getting rented out basically. I can't afford to be where I am. I'm going to be homeless and that shouldn't be. I worked, I put in my time. I put in my hours. We can save money. Do that. Why can't we do that? I don't understand this. We spend millions of dollars on all these different buildings that you rehab that two years down the road, we got to turn around and find another building. That money we can put towards schools. We can put towards police departments, roads, we can put towards our needs we need in this city. I love the city. I don't want to have to go anywhere else. I can't afford to go anywhere else. I can't find a place to go. I'll be living in a tent in the park with people I don't want to live with. We got pedophiles like there's no tomorrow. Homeless in the city of Manchester. I don't know if there's a notice going out to these people, but every time I look on Facebook on these predatory groups that follow these people, we're getting more and more here. We're getting more and more homeless. I'm tired of picking up needles in my neighborhood. I shouldn't have to be going around and picking up needles so that the kids don't pick them up or touch them because you don't know what's in that stuff for these kids. And they shouldn't have to pay to play a sport in high school or any school. I was lucky enough I didn't have to pay. I played tennis and volleyball in high school. I had to walk all the way up to Webster Street from Central High School to play tennis. I played with my father's wooden tennis racket. I'm a proud citizen of Manchester, but it's getting to be to the point where it's not physically and financially supporting me or my friends, who are all elderly

here. A lot more elderly than you think. And we're building these so-called affordable apartments. They're not affordable. They take up our paycheck before we can pay anything else. How are we supposed to live on that? We can't. We have to start thinking about resources here instead of spending foolishly.

Serena Mackay, Ward 4: I am a junior at the Founders Academy. It is a charter school here in Manchester. Same time last year, I remember my peers and I standing before this board writing the same speeches to advance student calls for better facilities that reflect the true potential of Manchester's students. First, I would like to thank those who have played a major role in the improvements that we have seen recently in Manchester schools. These changes would not have been possible without thoughtful leadership and the proper allocation of resources to our schools. But too often, budget discussions become centered on numbers and percentages, and we forget that behind every single dollar allocated or cut are real people, students, teachers, families, and community members whose lives are directly affected by these decisions. When these schools receive the support that they need, students are actually able to learn in environments that are safe, that are functional, and conducive to success. But when we don't take this into account, how are we supposed to build a Manchester that is livable? We don't want to hear it from parents who can afford to send their kids to private school. We don't want to hear it from those who don't have to walk the hallways of these schools. How to see your teachers pay out of their own pockets, wishing that people cared about the future of this city. We cannot have a Manchester, a place where families have relied on and resided in for generations, become something that disregards the very backbone of its community. It's unfair, and frankly, it is un-American. And it needs to change. The choices that we make in this room shape the future of our city, of the Manchester that we all know and love. We urge this board and the people in this room to support the community first budget. Why? Because we believe in investing in the students, the families, and the public services and servants who make Manchester strong. Let's put community first.

Dylan Torres, 622 Lake Avenue: While I appreciate the proposed \$2 million increase to school budgets, I really don't think it's a good idea to pull funds from other parts of our city, especially when there are complaints all over from lack of funding. I'm in support of the community first budget, even if it means a tax increase. Our roads are covered in

potholes and while I was working as a flagger, I left the city from just about every prominent exit. And in many of them there were potholes that made me feel like I hit a curb. And I have no doubt it contributed to the wear on my car's suspension, not to mention the lack of flagging work in Manchester already on account of the roads almost never being repaired. Changing out my suspension is going to cost me thousands. Not even mentioning potential damage to ball bearings, rods, or my alignment, far more than any tax increase would impose. This is something that all drivers will have to deal with. Why is it that our city is one of the most prominent in the state, yet we have to compromise even further between the education of our students and acceptable road conditions? I'd feel a lot happier about where my taxes are going if I didn't have to wiggle my car through a minefield, or have to worry about the conditions of our schools and their facilities properly accommodating students. If we're going to be taxed anyways, I want it to at least properly fund the city.

Sue Corby, 2094 Elm Street: I am here to support the budget that was presented at the last meeting, May 19th. That's a compromise budget that doesn't fund the schools or the city departments as much as requested or as much as needed. But it does keep our wheels turning. It necessitates overriding the tax cap. Overriding the tax cap is not something anyone takes lightly, but I and many others believe it's necessary this time. Not every year, but this time. Yes, the tax cap is there for a reason, but also for a reason there's a provision for overriding it in certain situations, and I think we're there right now. Specifically, we need to fund the police so they can fill their roster and compete with surrounding towns to hire really good policemen who know how to work in an urban environment. We need to provide funding for repairing our streets, our sidewalks. We need to fund our schools, keep a decent teacher student ratio and provide opportunities for our arts, athletics and academics. These things keep kids in school and out of trouble. We need to keep employing community health workers because they provide important health information and services to people who might not otherwise get that information or those services. They are really crucial. We need to keep the West Side library open again. This is a compromise budget. It doesn't fully fund city departments or the schools. There is lots of talk about protecting the taxpayer. But who is the taxpayer? The taxpayer and the consumer of the city services that the taxes pay for are one and the same. It's us. We protect ourselves by limiting the taxes as we have, especially in the last two years. Maybe

too much. Maybe it's causing us problems now. But that's one way we protect ourselves. We also protect ourselves by providing ourselves with services, and we need to keep us safe, healthy, and educated. We should be looking at this budget not in terms of a punitive negative tax, but in terms of contributions that we all need to make to pay for the services that we need.

Ken Tassey, Ward 6: I'm a former school board member in Manchester and the chairman of the Manchester Republican Committee. I'd like to address the budget and the tax cap debate, but I'd first like to express my concern over statements made by some of the aldermen. Two weeks ago, in the previous BMA meeting, 2 or 3 aldermen had made comments intended, in my opinion, to intimidate anyone who opposes their views, accusing those who don't think the way they do of being against our police force. That's dangerous rhetoric. It's insulting and it's a lie. Now, all the while, they are disregarding the substance that's been given tonight by many giving testimony here tonight about the hardships of being a retiree, living on a fixed income, and being taxed out of their homes and maybe taxed out of the city. There was a mention tonight also by one of the younger members giving testimony tonight about rent, and rent for a two-bedroom apartment five years ago was \$1,200. Now it's over \$2,000 and that is directly related to the cost of taxes by the people who own those buildings. So please, if discussion ensues tonight on this particular matter, I ask those people to please hold your tongue and be respectful to those who don't believe the same way you do about how to move the city forward. I'd also like to mention a school board member of high rank recently went on record in the Union Leader, stating that the time has come to give our school board full autonomous taxing authority. And that basically means that everyone in the city who owns a property would get two tax bills, one from the city and another one from the school district. That was developed, that was put together on the whim of tax and spend committee members. Be careful what you wish for because the pendulum swings both ways and we don't want to remove that system of checks and balances. Finally, on the tax cap, I'll ask you to humor me while I give just a quick personal analogy about what compromise is. My wife is about this much shorter than I am. When we walk together, she walks a little faster. I walk a little slower. And that's something that we agree on, that we own. But you don't own the taxpayers' money. The tax cap itself is already a compromise. It's something that the city

and the people of the city have already agreed on. It's a slow increase in taxes. Please vote to not exceed the tax cap.

Angel Brisson, Ward 8: My family are Manchester taxpayers, including my in-laws, who are seniors on fixed incomes. I'm here to implore the board to not override the tax cap. Instead, the responsible decision, the solution that respects taxpayer wallets, that respects our financial limitations, is to adopt either the mayor's budget or Alderman Sapienza and Alderman Kantor's budget. Some compromise there in those budgets, increase our taxes by just under 3%, around 3%, versus the unconscionable and untenable 12% tax increase wanted by the Democrats or the equally unacceptable 10% tax increase proposed in the Vincent-Thomas budget. Those unacceptable, 12% and 10% increases, will more than double our property taxes, bringing our taxes to almost triple what's allowed under the tax cap. I personally don't know anyone who has received a 10% or 12% raise this year. You have a fiscal responsibility to your constituents to uphold the tax cap. That's what we voted for. The tax cap exists to put reasonable limits on spending. Why have a tax cap if the board is just going to override it when it pleases, thereby betraying the public's trust? We taxpayers have to live within our personal budgets, making allocations, reallocations, sacrifices, changes, choices without a constant influx of new funds from someone else's household. And the city should manage its taxpayer funded budget as well. Again, the solution is to hold the tax cap by adopting a budget that does so.

Bob Fuller, Manchester School District: I'm a very long-time teacher at Memorial High School teaching social studies. I'm here tonight to give a simple message. Elections have consequences. I'll explain. A majority of this board has presented a budget that at least more than half agree to. The school board recently voted by a majority vote to not remove teachers. When I came in the next day, I ran into a lot of people who were very grateful that they had not lost their lifetime dream to then teach kids and for the school board, personally, professionally, I'm very grateful for the stand they took. A majority of you have expressed support for the schools and for other important city services like roads, police and fire. Because that's what a vibrant community needs to have. When I was born in the city over a half century ago, and seeing all the things that I've seen and what the school board did, and I could be wrong on this, I've never seen a stand like that. If you have a

stand like that, you know that something really is going either right or wrong. Right or wrong is a pretty simple thing. Now, when it comes to this and you hear all the things about raising taxes and everything else, what's being talked about tonight is a revenue override. It's not taxes being raised. It's a permission to use excess revenue. And where that revenue come from, that came from a reevaluation of property. Now, where did all that money come from? A revaluation of property. You know where it comes from. People move here for schools. That's the number one reason why they come here. That's why they do the work they do. Because that's how you build a great community. That's how you get economic growth. You get it through the schools. That's where growth comes from. So, it's a pretty simple proposition that that money, which is the people's money, which was raised through a lawful reevaluation, of which again, in between, people have had a chance to actually have an election and elect people, because the last budget cycle, this room was different. Some of you were the same, some of you were different. But there's a lot of different people here because people wanted a change. They wanted support for schools, police, fire. Looking at one of the other budgets, you have a massive decrease in schools and roads. Now why are you going to do that? I mean, I've worked in the city now for almost 30 years. For a time here, when the roads were in really bad shape, my car would literally tell me I was in Manchester because there's potholes everywhere. It's the pothole tax. So, you either pay a little bit now or you pay a little bit later. So, as you're looking at this, yes, you have a very tough decision here. I get that. But remember, elections have consequences. I implore you to support the budget that a majority of you actually support.

Sue Hannon, Manchester Education Association: I am the president of the Manchester Education Association. Understanding that, hearing all the sides of this argument and debate tonight, I certainly understand the reticence of people who are looking at increases in their taxes and what they have to provide to the city. I think we need to remember that when we're talking about prices that are going up for gas and water and electricity and rent and so on, are other entities in the city having to deal with that as well? I can speak as far as what I know about the school district. We have to pay all those things. We don't get water and electricity for free. We're paying for buses that have hundred-gallon tanks. And imagine the insurance on a school bus full of children. People speaking tonight, in some cases, made the city sound like it was the worst place on earth to be. But I have to

disagree. I don't live here, but I love coming to Manchester. Manchester is awesome. Manchester provides so much for the people who live here. So much activity, so much fun, so much excitement. But it also provides education. It also provides the things that we need in a city this size. Obviously, taxes are going to help you with being able to continue to provide those things. We may have some low scores in the Manchester school district. Absolutely, but those scores come from tests that make us act like we are testing 12,000 of the exact same students. They are not individualized. The education our teachers provide is individualized. It's very different. We have students who move on to amazing careers, students who attend Ivy League schools, students who earn full rides to schools. Please understand that the district the school district has lost 10 to 15 positions per year since I've been doing this due to attrition. The thing that is not talked about all that often, where we are losing staff, just as we're losing some students. And that's something you all need to talk about as far as attracting people to come here. We are losing staff on a continual basis. And please make no mistake, the school district itself did lose 2.5% last year. Taxes were cut by 2.5% in the district, so we need to make some adjustments here. But a budget that is funding what we need to do in this city is of utmost importance.

Ronald Rose, Ward 2: I'm the aquatics director of the Manchester, New Hampshire YMCA, and I am a selectman for ward two. Our YMCA has been a community partner for Manchester for well over 100 years. Our building nearby City Hall struggles to serve some members of our community because of a lack of parking spaces. Handicapped parking spaces on Stark Street are very limited, and the YMCA members who need them find them unable to use our facility. The YMCA wants to continue to serve our community, and we're asking that some handicapped parking spaces be added to Stark Street at the earliest convenience.

Ryan Drohan, Ward 7: It seems a large majority on this board hold a belief that taxpayers have deep pockets. And yes, that is true that taxpayers do have deep pockets. It is because they have a hole in their pockets. Taxpayers are struggling with inflation and food, gas, childcare, housing, health insurance and sewer rates in Manchester being raised by 19% every year from 2025 through 2028 and 15% in 2029, for a grand total of a 96% increase. Property taxes going up exponentially will affect renters and individuals

on fixed incomes. The effect is they will become destitute and homeless. I support Aldermen Sapienza and Kantor's budget passing tonight. It's an excellent balance for the city and the taxpayers. Don't break the tax cap.

Troy Micklon, 29 Ode Way: I'm here once again to urge the board to reject the budget proposal by Alderman Burkush and Trisciani, as well as the other tax cap busting budgets being presented tonight. The tax cap was adopted by Manchester voters for a reason. It exists to ensure that government spending grows at a sustainable pace and that taxpayers are protected from excessive increases year over year. Families across Manchester don't get to override their household budgets when expenses go up, they have to make difficult choices, prioritize needs over wants, and live within their means. The city government should be expected to do the same thing. Furthermore, these alternative budgets are being proposed with a lack of transparency and details. If taxpayers are being asked to pay more, we deserve a clear explanation of exactly where the money is going and why the board should be able to explain each line item increase and the reasons behind what's driving them. We should also be provided with a better understanding of what the genuine needs are versus discretionary wants. I also want to point out that later this evening, the board will receive an update by the updated financial projections from the Finance Director. Those projections will show an anticipated FY 26 general fund operating surplus of approximately \$1.9 million. This is another increase in our surplus since the last meeting, showing that the city's financial position is in better shape than some others would have us believe. This board also has two other budgets to consider. The budget proposed by you, Mr. Mayor, and the one by Aldermen Kantor and Sapienza. These are both under the tax cap and help keep Manchester on the right path. And I urge the board to consider them. And finally, Mr. Mayor, I want to address one more thing. The Union Leader recently referenced a member of this board, where he suggested that citizens who come here and speak against the tax cap are somehow threatening. Respectfully, the only real threat is that we'll remember at the next election who voted to override the tax cap.

Glenn Ouellette, Ward 3: As important as these discussions are, as you notice that it is 9:30 p.m., my curfew is at 9 p.m. I hope they let me in tonight. I will say that my rent last September went up \$845. You tell me if 48.9% increase in rent is an affordable rent. It is

not. I will also tell you that so far this year, since January, I have expended \$7,000 out of my pocket for medical attention besides insurance. So yes, costs go up. The good news is I'm getting back on my feet. So, you have to spend sometimes to make things go. But I don't like waste. And we have a past in this city where we wait till things are so broken up that we're going to tear them down and start back from scratch. That's what we've been doing in the past with our schools. Do you know how many times we've changed our administration of the school in the last 20 years? Too many times. \$7.5 million in the last ten years. We're not thinking. But this is what's important. We now have a budget in the school system that is \$400,000 short for occupying and educating our special ed. Shame on us. You have too many administrators in the school system; assistant superintendents, it is just too many. We need to find ways to cut the budget and it shouldn't be on the students. The other thing I say about education is public education is based on equality for every student in this city, and to have sports or other activities like music, to only go to kids whose parents can afford to pay, is not a public education, and that is unconstitutional and it should not be tolerated. So, make sure that when you do your budget today that those holes are filled in. There are ways to cut the budget. The last thing I will say is that our police department, if you were to hire those police officers that are now not in office, you wouldn't have to pay a million and a half or more per year in time and a half. That is a waste of money. Our money is better put in having the manpower, getting their regular wages.

Roger Bleau, Ward 1: First of all, I feel sorry for all of you politicians. You're taking so much crap tonight. I feel really bad for you. This is going to be tough. But first of all, I just want to say I support your budget. I think that's reasonable and I think it's necessary. I'm all for the kids. That's the first thing I always think of is the school system. That's what I care about the most because I care about the kids the most. I remember years ago they had the GI Bill when soldiers came back from World War Two, they invested in the newly released soldiers, and we boomed after that. So, education is the most important thing, I think, of taxes as revenue, not as a burden. I really do. I think it's necessary to keep that in mind. What we're doing is we're putting revenue for things we think are important. And also, I think swill falls downhill. Our federal government under this administration has cut money for education, among other things. Our state government has violated the New Hampshire Constitution by not providing enough funds for our city. We're only getting a

little over \$4,000 per kid. And the Constitution said we should get at least \$7,000. Unbelievable. So, we're not doing that. I saw a thing once, a while ago, and they said, in a real good society, you don't need charity because the government should figure out a way to take care of everybody. It means increased taxes, but it's worth it. The other thing I want to talk about is Governor Ayotte is always talking about don't Mass up. Do you know if you compare Massachusetts in every department, they are doing better than us because they're willing to pay for their kids, their teachers average \$92,000 a year, because that's a priority for them? I think it's good if we work on that. The other thing is we have inflation. It's unbelievable. The current president broke his promise about not going to war. How much money are we spending on that? The current president promised that he'd reduce prices on day one. So, the school budget, the police, everybody is under tremendous pressure because that administration caused inflation. So, if we don't raise the tax to just cover the increases in cost, then we're just definitely going backwards. And my honest opinion, inflation is not 3%. It's at least 10%. The amount of money I spend on gas and heating oil and food, it's unbelievable. I recommend you vote for June Trisciani's thing. I think it's important and I think it's good for the kids and it's good for the city.

Kay Emery, Ward 3: While I understand and can appreciate the intention of trying to remain under the tax cap, I find the originally proposed budget unsustainable and antithetical to the intention of keeping Manchester running as is, let alone improving it for current and future residents. As an active young resident who frequently runs and bikes around the city, in fact, I biked here tonight, I was particularly shocked by the lack of funding for our Department of Public Works and equally disheartened to see our education department so under-supported. As I contemplate starting my own family in the next couple of years, it pains me to imagine that I may have to leave the city and my community here to be able to provide my child with a strong education. I also find the decision to withdraw from the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission to be a clear mistake, as the Commission has been critical to several improvements in the city, including securing funds for improvements in numbers that make the cost of their annual fee a strong investment. I fear that the withdrawal from the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission will cripple Manchester's ability to competitively apply for and receive funds from the federal government programs such as the Brownfields Redevelopment Program that must be utilized if we truly wish to improve the city while

attempting to be creative about how we are funding these improvements. Looking at the mayor's originally proposed budget, I feel a sense of dread that I might need to begin planning for a future somewhere else. I hope that the leadership in this room understands that safer sidewalks and streets, strong, well-funded public education, and planning for increased resilience in this city is a non-negotiable for someone looking to start a family and put down roots here.

Elyza Agosta, Ward 2: I'm here to speak today to speak in favor of the compromise budget and overriding the tax cap. I'm a young person in Manchester who owns a home and works here. I'd like to live here for many more years as I found a strong and welcoming community. I'd like to send my kids to the Manchester schools, walk downtown on sidewalks, and be able to drive or bike without worrying about potholes. To be able to have a future with those basic needs met, we need to properly fund our city government. It's that simple. I strongly empathize with those on a fixed budget. This is the main issue with relying so heavily on property tax. Property tax is a flat tax across the board. Unlike a tax with brackets, we cannot separate high earners from those on fixed incomes. This means that as the New Hampshire population grows older, on average, we are funding our city less and less while needing to provide more and more. This is unsustainable. If exemptions need to be made for those on fixed incomes or a different taxation system needs to be put in place, I would support that. However, that is not the choice we have in front of us today. We need to fund our city government this year. Everyone knows that prevention is the key. If we don't come up with the necessary maintenance, we will end up with future issues that are much harder to fix. I challenge anyone who thinks we can trim the fat and get rid of excess waste to actually sit down with a city staff member and see what they do on a day-to-day basis. I've seen it being on the Planning Board, MTA board, and the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission Board. I've never seen people do so much with so little resources. I work at a private company and I've seen waste and inefficiencies. The city staff works to find creative ways to offer necessary services while being constantly underfunded year after year. Mayor and Aldermen, by underfunding our city year after year, you are holding Manchester's future and my future hostage. Please consider voting for the compromise budget and overriding the tax cap.

Jess Harkness, Ward 3: I'm here tonight to express my concerns relating to the originally proposed budget. It's disheartening to see proposed reductions in many crucial public service departments. A community that does not reliably invest in the next generation and their educators will not have a bright future. Nearly everyone here has cheered for the students who have spoken tonight. We love to hear from passionate and intelligent young people. But evidently many of those cheering will still choose to advocate for policies that undermine their futures and undermine the livelihoods of their educators. The proposed budget devalues the immediate everyday needs of our communities, like having well-maintained roads, safe sidewalks, strong local transportation systems, and a well-supported public education system. These are not luxuries that people are asking for. These are basic needs for a safe and functioning community with rising fuel costs. Many people, myself included, are traveling more by foot, by bus, and by bike. It is your duty as public servants to see that the infrastructure of our communities can meet those demands. I strongly urge you to vote in support of the proposed compromised budget, which would restore funding to some of the aforementioned community services. I'd like to add that personally, I use the bike lanes nearly every day. In fact, I used them to get to this meeting tonight.

Leslie Want, Ward 4: My husband and I moved here in 1991 and I have lived here for the last 35 years. We have loved living and raising our two children here and sending them K through 12 to the Manchester School District. Manchester is a big, beautiful tapestry, diverse of cultures, arts, arts venues, beautiful parks, libraries and a humming downtown. And perhaps most importantly, vibrant public schools that serve our city's little ones and teens, helping them to enter college, the trades, and or military service. That beautiful tapestry called Manchester, needs funds to support every aspect, to continue to be a city that people are drawn to. By failing to fund the things that make our community strong, you pull the threads of this community tapestry and you cause it to be less beautiful, less able to serve the people of our community. I ask you to think about Manchester 10 to 20 years from now. What do you want it to be? What do you want your legacy to be? Do you want the beautiful tapestry of Manchester to continue, or will you let the city tapestry become shabby and worn through lack of investment? I ask you to please support the budget.

Nick Want, Ward 4: So, it's sort of interesting sitting here listening to the comments. And I've spoken before and I'll be reiterating a couple of those. So, the issue that we have with the tax cap is that we're not abiding by the tax cap. We have people back here with signs being held up to defend the tax cap. The tax cap has multiple purposes. One of them and one of the big ones is to prevent overspending by the government and by our officials. Absolutely. Totally agree. We don't want people just to raise our taxes to a large amount of money based on whims. So, the ability to limit the spending is a good thing. However, it also provides a guide. It is based on an index related and attached to inflation. So, it is a guide for those people who don't understand budgets as well as to what they should in fact spend their money on. And so, this mayor woefully underfunded the last two tax budgets that we've had. So, we have people here to defend the tax cap. I agree; defend the tax cap. But if the tax cap is telling you that you should be spending 4.5% as we should have done last year, but instead we spent 2.4%, we failed. You failed. You let your leadership fail us. This is why we're in the predicament we're in today. Your last two budgets were supported by members of this Board of Alderman. A number of them are not here anymore. So, when people talk about votes mattering, votes do matter because those people aren't here. Who supported you? You have the option to appropriately fund our city. If we had not underfunded the last two budgets, we would be sitting here today talking about where will we come up with a \$1 million difference. Instead, the main difference that we have in our underfunded budget is because you led us down this path. You have the option, Mr. Mayor, to understand and realize what we have done here and to fix it. You have a new board that's been replaced by some of the people who supported you before, because people realize this is not the path that Manchester wants to go down. Schools are important, but also our roads' situation, our DPW, the fact that you underfunded our DPW by \$6 million last year, and most of the people who wish to defend the tax cap also mention we have terrible roads. Yes, we have terrible roads because you underfunded it by \$6 million. And so, this year we need to compensate and adjust and make up for the revenue that you failed to provide to this city to support it. The tax cap also supports not just the taxpayers, but it supports the city. It provides the city that we all want to live in. You need to fix this, Mr. Mayor. You made this mess. You have the option to lead the solution.

Karolyn Gomes, Ward 6: Crissy and I have talked numerous times, and I do support her budget. First of all, I want to say that I do support the Manchester Police Department and Fire Department. I say thank you even in stores when I see them. The roads are horrible. I drive on them every day. And we do pay \$5 on our car registration to fix and repair the roads. If you want to talk about the budget, the teachers and administrators pay is outrageous. While sitting here, I googled what the superintendent makes. She makes \$203,359. Do you make that, mayor? I don't think so. Do I make that? I don't think so. And sure, maybe she works the whole year. But the teachers, if you look at their pay, it could go anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year. But they're not working a year. So, I think we really should look at the bottom line. The schools have touch screen TVs that are not used. I know this for a fact because I had two kids in the school district, and I still have one that's still in the school district. 90% of the teachers don't teach. They give out packets and say, go do your assignments. I know this for sure because one of my kids has a teacher that gives out packets every day, 20 pages long, doesn't teach. The school buses are always late. I get texts every single morning. Thank God I don't need a school bus right now. The scores that everybody says Manchester is so low, they're false. I know that because when my kids were in elementary and even in middle school, they just want to get through it. They pick any old answer without even reading it. Teachers are not doing their job. I spend a lot of time on i-Ready with my kids. Not worth it. Good old-fashioned teaching should be there. I really think we should look for people that can run a budget like moms. We go to the store. I think what Victoria Sullivan said a few weeks ago, live within our means. Yes, I support Crissy's budget and we really need to look at it. If the people want their schools and everything else and support the override, let them donate the money to invest in the city. We don't have it. I'm a single mom.

Austin Bouchard, Ward 2: Tonight is not merely a budget vote. It is a test of principle. For months, this chamber has debated the size of the bill while refusing to confront the failures that produced it. The evidence is everywhere, if this chamber would only consent to see it, the schools. Manchester has declining enrollment, rising spending, and academic returns that remain unacceptable. Yet the district remains committed to Common Core and the costly architecture beneath it. Coachs, interventions, support systems, staffing layers as though complexity itself were achievement. The question is not whether taxpayers should be continuing to fund the model. The question is why this government

refuses to question the model at all. The same refusal appears in the facilities; the district's own prior studies raise questions about under-used buildings, yet phase one moves forward with additions to underfilled middle schools and a new Beech Street school this city does not need and cannot afford. That is not reform. That is construction in the place of courage. And beneath it all is a broader direction of the district. Community schools, wraparound services, rolling lunch debt, and expanding non-academic obligations layered on top of education itself. Manchester is not being asked to fund education alone. It is being asked to fund an expanding theory of government that has not proven its results, disclosed its full costs, or justified its destination. The same is true of homelessness. Manchester has not merely responded to homelessness; it has turned emergency into institution. Shelters, encampment cleanups, police calls, fire calls, public work hours, strained neighborhoods, and citywide costs pushed onto residents. Where is the full accounting? Not the line item; the whole cost. What financial obligation does the Manchester taxpayer have to permanently fund services for people who are not from this community, but came here because Manchester made itself the landing place for failures of other communities and systems? That is not cruelty. That is the question responsible government must ask itself before it reaches into the homes of its own people. We are told this is compassion, but compassion without accounting is sentimentality. Compassion that depends on legal force is coercion. If a resident cannot pay, the city can place a lien on the home. Do not call that mercy. This is bad governance wearing a halo. And now public safety is asked to carry the weight. I want a fully staffed police department as much as anybody else. Visible, active, accountable, transparent, trusted and free to enforce order. But residents have been told before more money would close the ranks. The taxpayer has carried the burden before and still vacancies endure. So, before the city converts hope into appropriation, it must ask the question it has evaded. What precisely is different this time? Is crisis the only compensation? Or have we built a city that consumes the very servants it praises? Teachers, police officers, firefighters and public works employees are being asked to carry accumulated weight of civic disorder, social failures this government has refused to confront honestly. Love for Manchester is not measured by one's willingness to fund every failure. It is measured by the courage to tell the truth while there is still time to change course. Do not ask Manchester to finance your refusal to reform. Do not mistake legal power to raise taxes for the moral authority to do

so. No to unreformed systems, no to unanswered questions. Tonight, hold the line. No tax cap override.

Jeannette Lund, Ward 4: I am not in favor of raising the tax cap. I've lived in this city all my life except for 13 years. I'm 72 years old and my income doesn't substantiate my lifestyle, so I have to go out and get a part time job. I came to that reasoning with common sense. Does anybody here on this board have common sense? We have water and sewage bills that are going up for the next three years at 19% rate. The following year is 18%. The prices of food, the prices of gas, everything is going up. We elected you people to sit on this board. It's a privilege for you to do that. Have you forgotten that we pay your paychecks with our taxes? You're supposed to be accountable to us. Do you even care about senior citizens? Did senior citizens get a 10% or 12% increase in Social Security this year? I think not. I ask you, I implore you, to look deep into your heart and your conscience and vote against tax increases to the extent that you're asking for. It's ridiculous and deplorable.

Jane Haigh, Ward 1: I have grandchildren that live in ward two, and I had a great opportunity today to go to the concert at Smyth Road School with the band, the strings ensemble and the third-grade and the fourth-grade chorus. So that was a great way to start the day. I think that the schools here are doing very well. I haven't lived here all this time, but my son in law graduated from Central High School. He's doing very well. And you know, I really appreciate the service all of you are doing here. This is really a no-win situation. I would like to ask you to support the compromise budget. That's also called the community first budget. We have a problem here that taxpayers are on the hook because of budget decisions in Concord and Washington, D.C. I'd like to emphasize it's a compromise that doesn't fully fund the city or the schools. I would hate to have to see kids pay for sports or a failure to provide adequate funding for our teachers or our police or our firefighters. I think you have to keep in mind, I'm a taxpayer, I'm not enthused about paying perhaps an extra \$70 a month in taxes. The cost of everything that I have to pay for certainly has gone up because of inflation. But this also applies to all the supplies needed for the schools. And when we talk about streets and potholes, first of all, if we don't keep up with fixing the streets, it's only going to get worse. We're not going to have fewer potholes next year because we don't fill the ones that we have this year. And if

anything's going up, it must be the price of asphalt to fill the potholes because that's an oil product. And so, the whole thing is complicated. We're not going to be able to hire new police officers, which we need if we can't match the wages that other towns and cities are paying. And if we refuse to raise their wages, then we're trying to balance the budget on the backs of the policemen and the firefighters and the school teachers who aren't getting the raise that they need to deal with inflation. So, in short, you have a difficult decision, but I urge you to go with the compromise budget, keeping in mind that it is a compromise.

Richard Dichard, West High School: This is my 20th year as a school administrator in the Manchester School District. Currently, I'm the principal and have been for the last ten years at Manchester High School West. I come before you tonight out of deep concern for this city's future, a place that I have dedicated virtually all of my career to in education. My concern is for our learners, and my concern is for the well-being of every citizen who calls Manchester home. I'm just going to throw out some things. We've heard a lot of things tonight. But my understanding is the city has a formula. I guess I have a question for everybody. Have we followed or has this board followed that formula for schools in each of the last two years? I believe the answer to that question is no. Now, a lot of people have said we need an audit. Is the school district spending exorbitant amount of money even though we see a decrease in enrollment? Well, I can tell you, as principal of Manchester High School West, nine out of the last ten years, I will operate my building with less people than I had the year before. That is nine out of ten. Again, I hold myself accountable to the taxpayers of the City of Manchester. When our numbers have to be a certain thing, I take care of that and we respect that. I take it extremely seriously in terms of what's at stake here tonight. Transportation, your honor, you and I, of course we walked two miles both to and from school, uphill both ways in our day. Well, that's going to be on the table tonight, ladies and gentlemen. 55% of the students at Manchester High School West are on free and reduced lunch. On the table tonight is those students will have to pay to play sports. Now, if you follow West sports, you know we've got some teams that are in the running. I know some of you have been to our games and we're on the move. I can assure you that will end. To put it plainly, these cuts are very impactful. They are real and they will hurt kids. What are the root causes? We've heard it tonight; chronic underfunding from the State of New Hampshire leaves Manchester to fill the gap. It's why you all have this decision before you tonight. Rising health care costs for city employees.

I just want to also support our Manchester police officers as well. I appreciate your indulgence in over the three minutes. We have got to have a competent police force, a full police force. I understand that's on the table tonight. So please do that as well. I forced my wife to take on our health insurance. I'm doing my part to bring our costs down here in Manchester. The City of Manchester will no longer have to pay health care costs to a certain extent that they have over the last few years. I encourage this board, please, these are our students we're talking about and we are West High.

Victoria Sullivan: I apologize. I had to leave earlier. I work with some of our most vulnerable people in our city, and this budget impacts them the most. I've heard a lot tonight about downshifting from the state. And I will tell you that the City of Manchester has received more funds from the State of New Hampshire now than they have previously. The meals and rooms tax that you received, \$11 million, is a 108% increase over what you received in the past, and your education and special ed funding has increased. I was at a town hall meeting with Jim O'Connell, our school board member, and he was talking about funding as well. I reminded him that a few years back, Manchester received over \$20 million more than they were expecting from the state. And I asked him if at that time, somehow the taxpayers got some relief if some money was sent back to them. And he admitted that, no, they actually increased the taxes yet again. So, there is no amount of money that is the magic pot that is going to make this board decide that they're not going to raise taxes on people. I understand that. But we have to mitigate the damage that you're doing to these folks. We talk about the children. We hear it's all about the children. Even with the tax cap budget. I do appreciate Alderman Kantor and Alderman Sapienza for bringing forward their budget. And mayor, your tax cap budget as well. Even that is going to hurt people, but I understand where we're at. That's the best we can do at this time. But when we're talking about investing in the children, what about those families that want to invest in their own children and you decide that you're taking money off of their table? You're deciding that they can't spend as much money on food. You're deciding that they can't buy clothes. They can't afford to play sports. You're making those decisions. You're not letting them invest in their own children. And somehow you think that taking money from those families and giving it to the government and then making those families more reliant on the government is helping them in some way. It's so bizarre to me to listen to this, and it's very disheartening to hear this be called a

community first budget. There's no community first in this. There's no community coming together to solve these problems. You're going to the taxpayers and stealing from their kitchen tables. That's what you're doing. If you want community first, what happened to the private and public partnerships that we used to have in this city? \$7 million skateboard park. Why aren't the businesses paying for that? \$2 million downtown sidewalk that doesn't need to be repaired when, by the way, the one right here on the corner has a piece of metal sticking out of it that I tripped over coming in tonight. But we're not going to address the problems that we have with sidewalks. We're going to rip up the pretty one because somebody's got a partial grant and didn't care that that's going to put the taxpayers on the hook for the other \$1.5 million of it. So, there are serious problems that we have in this city and right now, with the tax cap. The community first tax cap budget, it puts community first, I guess all the organizations that you're going to fund, but it doesn't put the families first. And then we're going to have more families that owe more for lunches and put a bigger burden on the taxpayers because they can't afford to feed their families. It shouldn't be community first. It should be taxpayers and families first budget that you put forward tonight.

Avery Cyr, Ward 3: I just wanted to quickly say, as someone who's run for alderman of ward three and got 45% of the vote, I think there's a lot of people in ward three that would be heartbroken if there were any cuts made to the school district. And that's all that I have to say on that.

Mayor Ruais asked if there was any one else present wishing to speak.

There were none.

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

Mayor Ruais recessed the meeting at 10:09PM.

Mayor Ruais called the meeting back to order at 10:15PM.

CONSENT AGENDA

Accept BMA Minutes

2. Minutes from the May 19 Finance and BMA meetings.

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

3. Sidewalk Petition (Residential):
 - 78 Riverview Place
 - 722 Chestnut Street

Information to be Received and Filed

4. Communication from the Highway Chief Engineer advising the Board of the conversion of the South Willow Street/Sheffield Road intersection to an all-way stop condition.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTS, ENROLLMENT AND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

5. Advising that the update on the Revolving Loan Fund has been accepted.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Alderman Vincent who was absent)
6. Advising that the Finance Department reports:
 - Accounts receivable over 90 days
 - Aging report
 - Outstanding receivableshave been accepted.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Alderman Vincent who was absent)
7. Advising that the Monthly Financial Report (unaudited) for the first ten months of fiscal year 2026 has been accepted.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Alderman Vincent who was absent)
8. Recommending that Ordinance Amendment:

“Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Manchester by creating §35.0353 Welfare Reserve Account establishing a non-lapsing reserve account designed to offset unanticipated deficits in the Welfare operating budget.”

ought to pass and be Enrolled.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Alderman Vincent who was absent)

COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS

9. Advising that it has upheld the decision of the Office of the City Clerk to deny a peddler license to Real Rights Enterprise LLC.
(Unanimous vote)

COMMITTEE ON LANDS AND BUILDINGS

10. Recommending that the request from the owner of 281 Bodwell Road to purchase city-owned land at Lot 885-1 be received and filed, and further that the property not be deemed surplus at this time.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Alderman Sapienza who was absent)

JOINT SCHOOL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

11. Advising that the Manchester School District Priority I status and financial report for April 2026 submitted by LeftField has been accepted.
(Unanimous vote with the exception of Alderman Thomas, who was absent)

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

REGULAR BUSINESS

12. Communication from Lee Ann Provencher, Assessor, advising the Board of her intent to retire, effective July 31, 2026.

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

13. Communication from Denise van Zanten, Library Director, advising the Board of her intent to retire, effective August 1, 2026.

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

Mayor Ruais: We have our July meeting where we'll thank you properly. But just on behalf of the city, thank you so much for your service to the City of Manchester. It is deeply appreciated. Thank you.

14. Nomination:
Central Business Service District Board
Jacqueline Botchman to succeed herself as an at-large member, term to expire May 1, 2029
(Note: Pursuant to Rule 23 of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, this nomination will layover until the next meeting of the Board.)
15. Confirmations:
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

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

16. Communication from JoAnn Ferruolo, Assistant City Clerk, submitting the warrant for unlicensed dogs to be committed to the Chief of Police.

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

17. Communication from Attorney A. Eli Leino, on behalf of client GCS QOZB LLC, requesting subordination of the City's lien on the property at 31 Central Street.

A. Eli Leino, Bernstein, Shur, Sawyer & Nelson: I appreciate how long an evening you've had tonight. Several of you were here last year when we came before you with a similar request. Now the building has been completed. This is a request on behalf of our client to transfer from construction financing to a longer-term loan, which is a standard process at these not working on a draw, etc., to pay contractors and subcontractors. Now it's just standardized funding. The city, as part of 79-E financing, has a lien on potential for insurance proceeds in the event that there's a casualty loss at the building that is then not

rebuilt using those insurance proceeds, then the city has a lien. So again, it's sort of an attenuated process on what your lien actually is here. I'm sure you're aware in getting a lien, a lender wants to be in first position, which is generally first in time, first in priority, so that if they need to draw on the collateral, they have the first right to do so. No lender is going to lend the amount of funds that are being talked about for this beautiful new building. To keep this brief, we'd ask for your willingness to subordinate the city's lien on this so that we can achieve the new financing, which is scheduled to close.

Alderman O'Neil: Everybody's been paid? Because that was a hang up here at one point; subs didn't get paid. Everybody has been paid?

A. Leino: Yes, we cleared that.

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

18. Communication from the Board of School Committee requesting to transfer excess revenues of approximately \$1 million to the Special Education Trust, and for permission to use approximately \$1 million from the Teaching and Learning Trust to fund the Special Education shortfall.

*On motion of **Alderman Trisciani**, duly seconded by **Alderman Bonilla**, it was voted to approve.*

19. Communication from Sharon Wickens, Finance Officer, regarding an update to the FY26 General Fund operating surplus.
(Note: Provided for informational purposes only; no action is required.)

Sharon Wickens, Finance Officer: The letter was just informational. The surplus increased to \$1,000,969. I just wanted the board to be aware of that if they were using it in their proposed budgets.

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

The Committee on Human Resources/Insurance respectfully recommends, after due and careful consideration, that the request from the Water Works Director for the following changes to the department's complement:

- Addition of one (1) full-time Custodian (Class Code 5000, Grade 101);
- Addition of one (1) full-time Accountant I (Class Code 2030, Grade 108);
- Elimination of one (1) Accounting Technician II (Class Code 2020, Grade 107) once an Accountant I promotion is granted

be approved.

*On motion of **Alderman Burkush**, duly seconded by **Alderman Goonan**, it was voted to accept the report of the Committee and adopt its recommendation.*

The Committee on Human Resources/Insurance respectfully recommends, after due and careful consideration, that the request from the Chief of Police for the following changes to the department's complement:

- Reclassification of one (1) filled Accounting Technician I (Class Code 2010, Grade 104) to Accountant I (Class Code 2030, Grade 108);
- Reclassification of one (1) filled Accounting Technician I (Class Code 2010, Grade 104) to Customer Service Representative III (Class Code 1040, Grade 108)

be approved.

*On motion of **Alderman Burkush**, duly seconded by **Alderman Barry**, it was voted to accept the report of the Committee and adopt its recommendation.*

The Committee on Community Improvement respectfully recommends, after due and careful consideration, that the Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$25,000 for CIP C300040626 Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) be approved and referred to the Committee on Finance.

*On motion of **Alderman Burkush**, duly seconded by **Alderman Goonan**, it was voted to accept the report of the Committee and adopt its recommendation.*

The Committee on Public Safety, Health & Traffic respectfully recommends, after due and careful consideration, that Ordinance Amendment:

“Amending Section § 32.153 Composition; Terms; Officers and their Duties; Conflicts of Interest of the Manchester Code of Ordinances in regards to the Lead Exposure Prevention Commission.”

ought to pass and be referred to the Committee on Bills on Second Reading for technical review.

Alderman Fajardo: I would like to ask my colleagues to suspend the Board’s rules, place the Ordinance Amendment on its third and final reading, and Ordain. And the reason for this is by the time this Ordinance Amendment makes its way through the gears of government and our summer schedule, it will prevent the Commission from meeting until November. So, in order for us to continue our work, I would respectfully ask that you support my motion to override.

*On motion of **Alderman Fajardo**, duly seconded by **Alderman Vincent**, it was voted to suspend the Board’s rules, place the Ordinance Amendment on its third and final reading, and Ordain.*

21. Ordinance:

“Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Manchester by creating §35.0353 Welfare Reserve Account establishing a non-lapsing reserve account designed to offset unanticipated deficits in the Welfare operating budget.”

*On motion of **Alderman Trisciani**, duly seconded by **Alderman Terrio**, it was voted to waive the reading by title only.*

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

22. On motion of **Alderman O’Neil, 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 Terrio: I'd like to refer to committee the BMA exploring the disabled and elderly tax exemption for the future to increase it.

Alderman Sapienza: Veterans?

Alderman Terrio: And veterans, too.

Alderman Trisciani: The veterans we just did an upgrade. We want to evaluate the elderly and the disabled because we want to make sure that one, we're at a rate that's fair given the increases that they've seen. And the other thing we talked about too was if there's any play and I didn't get a chance to check in with the state statute, but if there's any play to maybe open that up earlier than what we do today, which is they have to have an application in by April 1st. So, if we can get that, I think Ross and I were thinking that's the Administration Committee.

*On motion of **Alderman Terrio**, duly seconded by **Alderman Trisciani**, it was voted to refer to the Committee on Administration/Information Systems a review of the disabled and elderly tax exemptions, with the intention of increasing it.*

Alderman Sapienza: You've all had a chance to look over the Sapienza-Kantor budget. I'd like to go over a few main points. Maybe more than a few. It's based on the mayor's tax cap compliant budget. It increases health insurance funding by \$1.5 million, increases funding to the casualty and general liability by \$425,000.

Mayor Ruais: We have to take it off the table in order to discuss.

TABLED ITEMS

- 23.** 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.

- 24.** 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.)

*On motion of **Alderman Sapienza**, duly seconded by **Alderman Kantor**, it was voted to remove the Budget Resolutions from the table.*

Alderman Sapienza: Here we go again. I'll take it from the top. You've all gotten the information. I'll go over a few key points here. Maybe more than a few. It's based on the mayor's tax cap compliant budget. It increases health insurance funding by \$1.5 million, increases funding to casualty and general liability by \$425,000. That's \$400,000 to overlay, which is the abatement process for the revaluation. Now you might be asking, where's all this money coming from? Net new construction, the \$58 million providing us with \$1,177,952 in new tax revenue that's allowed under the cap under the charter. Basically, that's permits, new building permits, and new buildings. There are cuts to ARPA positions, \$107,000 in cuts to MEA, for MTA, the Manchester Transit Authority, that's the buses, cuts of \$1 million. The reason there is round and round those buses go, they're basically empty or almost empty. What it amounts to is a 2.8% increase in the tax rate. That's approximate. It's something like 2.76%. Let's just round it off and call it a 2.8% increase in the tax rate. And the tax rate increases taxes by \$8,750,242. The reval doesn't figure into this at all. We're not looking at the revaluation at all. The tax cap looks to the past revenue, not the future. This has basically nothing to do with the reval. And it funds

schools at, again, the mayor's figure of \$234,981,749. I'll be glad to entertain any questions, comments or concerns.

Alderman Terrio: The cut to MTA is because you said there are empty buses. Would we have any bus service?

Alderman Sapienza: Yes, it gets it down to about a million dollars. It'd be some but certainly there would be a lot less bus services. And the reason for that, like I said, is they're pretty much empty or next to empty. It's just something that the city should not continue to fund at the present rate, in my opinion. I didn't talk to everybody under the sun. I made a decision to cut the MTA funding.

Alderman Terrio: If the city cut your budget by \$1 million, how much would you lose in federal funding?

Mike Whitten, MTA Director: We would lose \$1.3 million in matching federal funds.

Alderman Terrio: So \$1 million from the city and \$1.3 million cut from the federal government, so \$2.3 million. Would that cut you down by 90% of bus service or half of your budget? How much?

M. Whitten: It's half of the budget. The city contributes just under \$2 million right now, so if you cut it in half, the city matches 50/50 with FTA for operating money. So, you would be looking at a cut of half of the transit service. You could do it in one of two ways. You could double the frequency so buses would go from running every hour or two to every two, three or four hours. Or you could eliminate half of the routes. Neither is a good option.

Alderman Sapienza: I appreciate the information. I've got some information of my own. It says as Manchester bus ridership collapsed in the last decade, city spending on bus service soared. The spending on the bus service has soared and ridership has collapsed. That's the reasoning behind cutting the funding.

M. Whitten: Respectfully, the increase to MTA this year in the mayor's budget and in our ask of the city is zero.

Alderman Sapienza: I'm taking the long view here.

Alderman Terrio: So, how many people a year ride the bus?

M. Whitten: Over 300,000.

Alderman Terrio: We heard an article that said it collapsed. Two or three years ago, how many people were riding the bus?

M. Whitten: I don't know the article that he's referring to.

Alderman Terrio: Your numbers, how many people?

M. Whitten: Our fixed route ridership collapsed by about 90% during Covid. It has been coming up every year from 2021 on.

Alderman Terrio: We're up to 300,000 a year.

Alderman Barry: Mike, when Alderman Sapienza and Alderman Kantor reached out to you.

Alderman Sapienza: No, we didn't reach out to him. I never reached out to him.

Alderman Barry: Oh, I'm sorry.

Alderman Sapienza: I admitted that up front. I didn't reach out to every person under the sun. I put the budget together.

Alderman Barry: I thought you would have.

Alderman Sapienza: No, I didn't.

Alderman Barry: Can you explain who takes the buses?

M. Whitten: Sure. There are really four big groups. Folks that are riding the buses are looking for a ride to work, they're looking for a trip to the doctor's appointment, they're looking to buy groceries at the store, and they're looking to get to class. Those are the four big tranches of our ridership, and it goes across all of the routes.

Alderman Barry: Are veterans going to the VA hospital?

M. Whitten: Yes. One of our lowest ridership routes would be route number one that services the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Clinic and the VA. So, if you were going to just go by raw ridership, that would be the very first route in line to be cut.

Alderman Barry: So, what would happen if we voted for that \$1 million cut?

M. Whitten: Then half of those routes, the routes outlined in the in the handout, would be eliminated. Six of the bus routes would be gone July 1st.

Alderman Trisciani: Under this budget, it looks like you are cutting a police community coordinator. Can you tell me what that role is and what the cut would impact?

Alderman Sapienza: Yes. The police community coordinator coordinates with the community, so we decided to cut it.

Alderman Trisciani: I think we're a little bit different there.

Alderman Sapienza: Of course, we're different; I never claimed we're alike.

Alderman Trisciani: That position, my understanding is it is the person who not only manages the Fusus system, which is key in investigating and getting videotape to keep people off the streets and know when something happens, it is also the sole source, which

I personally think we should grow, but a sole source for our CPTED program, which is crime prevention through environmental design, which is something that is widely used throughout the city for our housing, for our churches, for our retail operations. This person is extremely busy constantly out trying to help people create the environment around their buildings to keep our community safe. I would be dramatically opposed to doing away with that.

Alderman Sapienza: So noted.

Alderman Kantor: I just wanted to share how we came up with this. There are a lot of ARPA funds that were used to create positions in Manchester, and those were supposed to be used as one-time funds and there were a lot of positions. So, we went over a couple, such as the homeless coordinator. We are about getting rid of the ARPA funds. They were supposed to be used for one time funding. There were other vacancies, which I know it's an important position, but that can be funded through the police department with other vacancies, period. As for the buses, I do have \$1 million in more ARPA funded positions that were created during the Covid crisis that is no longer here. So those shouldn't have been added as an expense because there's other positions available within the city that they can switch over to another job. As for the buses, if you drive around, just in two days I've driven from South Willow to Hanover Street and I've snapped pictures. I've been a little bit of a maniac capturing pictures of buses with no one on them. What is this? Aren't we supposed to be reducing our carbon footprint? One bus? One. How many buses are there? I would rather take the funding for that and give some vouchers for Uber rides. It's a lot of money that's being wasted. The buses go around and around and we need to fund the police. There is \$1 million in extra ARPA funded positions that can cover the contract for the police that is going to be coming forward eventually. Eventually, the contract is going to come around. So that's where we came from is being smarter as a business. Why should we be marketing a bus system that no one wants to ride on? If you look at the study that I had sent you earlier, you know that the ridership is down. I mean, pictures don't lie. I can show you all the pictures that I have of no one on the buses. Give me a break. That should be funding MPD. Period.

M. Whitten: In response, I would point out bus ridership is almost impossible to get at a single point in time. What you want to do is what you joined us for. You joined us with several aldermen for a ride on a bus and that bus, my understanding, was packed from the pictures that were on social media and everything that was shared. If you want to see what a bus does, you have to ride the entire loop. Everybody doesn't get on at Veterans Park and then get off at the mall. It's on and off, on and off, for the duration of that hour. That's what you have to do to see the impact that it has. You can't just pick one intersection and see who's on.

Alderman Kantor: Well, our whole idea was reducing it until it's utilized more, and then you can add more routes again. So, that's where we were coming from, period. And as for the ARPA money that was supposed to be one time use, it shouldn't have been added into the actual general fund as expenses, period.

Alderman Kaw-uh: I want to note that you cannot improve ridership by cutting service; that just does not work in a public transit agency. I also want to note that it is impossible to trust a budget where you refuse to discuss these topics with the subject matter experts, the people who are actually running these agencies and these departments for the city. I have a question, though, for Alderman Kantor and Alderman Sapienza. Since you care about parking downtown, how many parking spaces do bus riders take up?

Alderman Kantor: Oh, please. Not many people want to take a bus.

Alderman Kaw-uh: Improving public transit in the city is a great way to reduce the number of folks who have to park downtown. So, that's all I really wanted to say on that topic. I also wanted to flag that it seems the West Side Library is not funded in this budget, and I wanted to know why.

Alderman Kantor: We were following the tax compliant budget of the mayor. We were going off of his because he runs the city, and he knows best. So, that's where we came from and that's how we rolled. And we do back MPD. It's just a matter of finding the right things.

Alderman Sapienza: As I stated, it's very similar to the mayor's original tax cap compliant budget. I know you put a lot of time and effort into that, and I commend him for it. We just made a few changes. And now your question about how many parking spaces, what was the question about the parking spaces and the buses?

Alderman Kaw-uh: How many parking spaces do people who are riding the buses take up downtown?

Alderman Sapienza: 741.

Alderman Kaw-uh: Wow, that's great. I'm sure you have that number, Mike, but I don't.

Alderman O'Neil: I don't support this reduction in bus service. People rely on bus service to get to work to begin with early in the day. Citizens rely on the ability to get to Dartmouth and to the VA with bus service, to the hospital. It's a different route, but they rely on it to get to grocery shopping. I can't support this. Did you call the chief and ask him about the CPTED position?

Alderman Sapienza: Chief who? What are you talking about?

Alderman O'Neil: The chief of police, that you cut a position out of his department. Did you call him?

Alderman Sapienza: No. Like I said, I didn't call everybody under the sun. I made some decisions. It wasn't easy.

Alderman O'Neil: It is probably one of the most important positions within the city.

Alderman Sapienza: I just went ahead and made some decisions and kept this budget within the tax cap.

Alderman O'Neil: Well, I can't support your decisions.

Alderman Sapienza moved to approve the Sapienza-Kantor budget for Fiscal Year 2027. **Alderman Kantor** duly seconded the motion. Alderman O'Neil requested a roll call vote. Aldermen O'Neil, Terrio, Burkush, Barry, Vincent, Thomas, Kaw-uh, Goonan, Dexter, Fajardo, Bonilla, and Trisciani voted nay. Aldermen Sapienza and Kantor voted yea. The motion failed.

Alderman Burkush: Your Honor, in working with some of the members of the board, some Republican members of the board, we shared some cuts to our compromise budget that we would like to propose. We discussed some concerns and we would like to reduce our compromise budget by \$993,318.28. That's a cut of a commercial appraiser, a small cut to library which would still allow it to be open, a purchasing manager from DPW, retirement by \$30,000, MFD by \$150,000, a solicitor's position by \$171,000. We would reduce the PHAST and ROAR team allocations, understanding that the balance would come from the reserve. So that would reduce our proposed budget, and the fact sheet shows 7.78% tax increase, which is far away from a 12% tax increase.

Alderman Burkush moved to override Section 6.15(c) of the City Charter for the sole purpose of utilizing approximately \$13,469,772 of the anticipated \$185.5 million revenues available, with a new increase in assessed values of \$5.6 billion. **Alderman Bonilla** duly seconded the motion.

Alderman Bonilla: I believe that this budget supports critical road improvements, essential city obligations, school funding, and finally, ongoing police negotiations. I'd ask for a roll call.

Alderman Terrio: I was hoping to put this into a detail sheet so that everybody could review it and I'd like to have a special meeting next Tuesday just for the budget alone. I apologize, but I just don't think it's ready for prime time. I'd like to put everything on a sheet so we can dissect it, we can talk to different department heads, talk to each other, talk to the mayor.

Mayor Ruais: I think we can take a vote on what you just proposed. We can have an opportunity to discuss it. I think Alderman Terrio was talking about the changes that he sent out last night.

Alderman Burkush: We'd like to share with the board our proposed cuts.

Mayor Ruais: The clerk's going to hand out the changes now.

Alderman Sapienza: What is the school funding on that?

Alderman Burkush: We've held at \$238 million. Which is a \$4 million increase. We've held roads at \$1.6 million above the mayor's number. We haven't changed anything. We've reduced our request in those other lines by \$993,000.

Alderman Sapienza: I have a question about the school budget because they came right out and said that they're spending \$8 million from phase one. I would think that the mayor's proposed budget \$235 million would be fine with the \$8 million that they're shifting.

Alderman Burkush: Most of the aldermen have met with school administration numerous times. We visited many schools. As a group we caucused and we felt that the \$4 million was a number that would maintain the walkout, supplies, athletics, and preserve about 18 teacher positions, after going through the schools. Personally, the principals I've talked to, my granddaughter is at Green Acres Elementary School and spent extensive time there, he says he doesn't have any cuts. He can't lose another teacher. All these schools, including Memorial.

Alderman Sapienza: Understood, but they came right out and said that there aren't any pink slips. We're not losing any teachers. They've got all that money from phase one that they're moving around. They came right out and said it. It's public knowledge.

Mayor Ruais: So, Alderman Sapienza, to answer your question, it's funded vacancies. So last year, 28 funded vacancy positions were removed from the school district as a result

of our budget. This year, those two scenarios that the district sent out in light of the updated budget, there was another 35 to 41 positions, funded vacancies, that would be eliminated.

Alderman Sapienza: No pink slips, which is great. That's good news. And they're shifting around a lot of money from phase one. And it's public knowledge. It's not a secret. It's been discussed. It's a shell game; I think that's pretty obvious. I don't see a need to go any further than the \$235 million that you put in your budget.

Alderman O'Neil: Alderman Burkush, in the budget that you're proposing, there is \$4 million for schools. Are there funds, additional money, for roads?

Alderman Burkush: That's correct.

Alderman O'Neil: It funds the contract negotiations with our two police unions?

Alderman Burkush: That's correct.

Alderman O'Neil: And with that, you were able to cut another \$900,000 out of that. And in those cases, you've reached out to the department heads affected by the suggested reductions?

Alderman Burkush: I reached out to all department heads. Chief Cashin wasn't in favor of the cut, I'll say that publicly, but we feel that the number could be managed. We're working with our fellow aldermen who expressed the need to compromise to bring it together. I feel that at this point, we're really close. We're under \$1 million apart on two budgets. So that's where we're at.

Alderman Trisciani: I think in looking at the budget sheet that we received last night, I spent a significant amount of time last evening going through and comparing numbers. There are really four areas where we are different on the aldermen's budget that Alderman Burkush worked on, one of the concessions we made is we were going to cut the purchasing person, which was a salary of \$68,000. The other difference between

these two budgets is the budget we received last night, which I believe was Alderman Terrio, Alderman Vincent and Alderman Thomas, was the 1% cut across departments. We opted to not put that in because that would actually create situations where we would close the West Side library, and some of our departments would be forced to lay employees off and would not be able to sustain their departments. I think if anybody was on Facebook at all today, I think we had a line out the door in the tax office. So, customer service for the city is pretty critical for us. The other two cuts that were a little far off is the Manchester school district. There was in the other proposed budget a \$1.5 million cut, and the roads was a \$1.1 million cut. Those were another two areas that we understand the importance of our schools and we understand the importance of the roads. We heard that from a lot of people that were here this evening. But those were really the only differences in the budgets. I think that's something that we can discuss and sort out today rather than keep this hanging on another week and have to come back.

Alderman Burkush: Well, one of the issues is the library is planning on closing tomorrow. It would be good if we could give them a budget.

Alderman Trisciani: It would be great if we could give everyone a budget.

Alderman Fajardo: I just want to go back to your commentary, Alderman Sapienza. The school district was at a \$15.9 million budget shortfall due to the underfunding in multiple previous budget cycles. So that \$15.9 million gap would essentially get them to the place where they could maintain, kind of keep the lights on. We are requesting \$4 million of the BMA to contribute, and yes, we did go back and request that the school board shift money around to help cover that gap as well with that \$8.6 million. So that \$8.6 million is basically the max amount that they could move around, and that still left them with a gap. So, between the school board, the school district, this board, and also the unions agreeing to go back and look at some retirement contracts, everybody's trying to come to the table to get that gap closed down. And so yes, they are spending that \$8.6 million, which was allocated for something else. They are coming forward to do their part to try to close that gap down. So ultimately, us trying to meet them part way, way less than half way with \$4 million, is about as low as I think we should go.

Alderman Barry: People need to know, people on this board, people in the public need to know, that when we were doing this budget, we started March 27th, the day after you proposed your tax cap budget. Immediately, we sent out correspondence to all of our city departments for their input and we wanted to know how your budget would impact them. We sat down with them. We called them on the phone. We invited them in. And we had a great reception. Some of them did not like what we were cutting, and some of them pitched in. Anna Thomas, our health director, \$250,000, she was able to try to find in different pockets of ARPA funds or whatever she could use. And she's hoping that she could use reserves. We're going to need ten people to vote on that. But she's doing her job. She's doing what we expect her to do and what every department head should do. I think it's important that when you do a budget, when you present cuts, at least have the courtesy and respect for our department heads to reach out to them and ask them what the impact is going to be on their department. We did that. Some of them didn't like it, but unfortunately, they understood and they all pitched in to try to get us to a point where we could pass a reasonable budget.

Alderman Dexter: I just want to point out that we heard a lot tonight about pay to play. We heard a lot about the distance that the students are going to have to walk to schools. It's my understanding that this budget, that this proposal that we have in front of us right now, does not require pay to play. It does not require a change to the distance that students walk. It funds our police department. It funds the contract that we think will be fair and equitable to them. It funds the West Side Library. It funds all of those things that we were hearing about tonight. It does not fully fund our roads, but it gets those potholes to a point where maybe we're not driving all over the road to get around them. I think those are important points for all of us to consider tonight.

Alderman Kantor: I just want to bring up the fact the citizens made the tax cap and our goal, I've been hearing since I've been an alderman the past three years, has been all about affordable housing. We've been giving tax breaks to developers to create affordable housing. Is that housing really affordable? No. Not really. I know that there's a lot of places that are marketing their places and it's overpriced. So, they've gotten a tax break; this to me is so crazy if our goal has been affordable housing and safety. We heard from so many citizens they cannot afford it any more. So, to go above the tax cap, just because

a department says they need this much, no, they need to cut back. They need to cut back, period. We all had to cut back. We had to cut back and change our ways. City government has to cut back and honor the taxpayer and respect the taxpayer. It's totally out of control. So once again, we say our goal is affordable housing. That is a shenanigan word as far as I'm concerned. There is no affordable housing as soon as we raise it. 3% is the tax cap. Now you're going to raise it up. Even if you're saying it's 7% or 8%, it's still even higher. That doesn't make it affordable for anyone. So, we are actually doing the opposite of what we've been trying to do, which was make affordable housing. So now we're going to tax all of our senior citizens. It's hard enough to buy a home because we need all of these things. And do we really need everything? No, I don't think so. No, we didn't need to take away a park from Beech Street. A principal said to me, you take away a park and what do you do? You give them guns and drugs. Do we need that? No, we don't need that. We don't need that. And we need to protect our all of our citizens. And I 100% back the blue. But the way we spend money in this city is disgusting. So, you know what? Hold the line on the tax cap, period. I didn't call him on the bus. I just saw; it's common sense. It's not being used. But guess what? We are calling the police and we do need you. But we don't need a bus ride or a bus with empty seats. Give me a break. Where is the common sense?

Alderman Fajardo: I would like to just point out that you're right, Alderman Kantor. We have not respected the tax cap for the last two budget cycles. We all are getting walloped, in year three, what could have at least been a little easier to absorb over the course of three budget cycles. Instead, we're all getting hit all at once. And you know, I think that we do owe it to our senior citizens to create and set aside a fund for them. We have our affordable housing trust. I agree with you, we did not steward that money well because it went to a series of developments. It was used kind of just willy-nilly. We didn't really have a strategy. I think the people who really need the support, we know it is our senior citizens. It is the people who are on fixed incomes. I think we should also consider revisiting our affordable housing trust fund and see if we should consider replacing it with a senior housing trust fund to help keep them where they are. I hope that this board will continue to look at these types of questions as we get past the budget cycle. Obviously, we have a decision in front of us. The clock is ticking. Our fiscal year is going to end on June 30th, but I don't think our conversations should stop. We should absolutely, as a board, and

Alderman Terrio, you made a great motion earlier to start looking at what we could do to make improvements to the current system that we have. I think we should also continue to look for new and different ways to support the people in our community who are most vulnerable. I again would just repeat, a responsible way to manage tax increase and cost of living increase and inflation is to at least try to do it incrementally and to not slam people all at once. And with the exception of the people who weren't on this board in the last term, we are all responsible for that. Some of us didn't vote for those budgets or in favor of those budgets, but that's the budgets that passed. And so, we're all responsible for this. To all the community members who are going to get hit, it's going to be everybody and it's going to be really hard for some and for the people who show up and say that they're willing to put more in, or they're willing to make more sacrifices for the benefit of the collective community, thank you. Somebody talked about a donation fund, I don't know, maybe there's options. I hope we can really, honestly, put our heads together and think about creative ways to support the whole community as we attempt to essentially absorb underspending and underinvestment over the last two budget cycles.

Alderman Dexter: I just want to point out we heard it a lot tonight and Alderwoman Kantor pointed it out. Her statement about the tax cap being voted in by the voters is technically true, but it's incomplete. That measure they supported, they didn't just support creating a tax cap, they also created a process for overriding that cap when necessary. And both provisions were adopted together by the voters of the City of Manchester.

Alderman Kaw-uh: I know that there's been discussion about trying to find money wherever we can and what is possible to reduce. I am not 100% sure on this particular suggestion, I think it's just in our ordinances and not in the charter, but if folks don't want to support the budget that Alderman Burkush reported out some adjustments tonight, if we don't want to support that then I would request that anybody else who's trying to put together a budget, remove the aldermanic salaries as well, because we make \$4,000 a year. Why are we doing that if we are so cash strapped as a city that you want to cut and cut and cut? It's just a random thing. I don't know what the process is going to be for that. But if anybody does not want to move forward with this budget tonight, I hope to see that in your future proposals.

Alderman Kantor: I just want to go over when it comes to the tax rate, we have to remember we can't compare apples to bananas. And that's a fact. An apple is not a banana, and both of the aldermen's budgets are based upon the revaluation number, which is \$18.9 billion. Your budget, mayor, and Ed and mine, is \$13.3. So, it seems like they're coming in at a lower tax rate, but they're not. I think it's really important that everyone knows how we all got our numbers. Our numbers aligned with the mayor. He runs the city, and you guys ran with the revaluation numbers when we're supposed to run with last year's numbers. I just wanted to bring that up.

Alderman Sapienza: \$55 million. That's how much the schools spent on phase one with liquid cash. They've yet to float the \$290 million bond for phase one. They say that \$55 million is coming off the top when they finally float that bond in November. But really, it remains to be seen. They have every legal green light to do the whole \$290 million. We don't know. They say that the \$55 million, verbally, that it's coming off the top. That's \$55 million liquid cash that they spent. And now we're hearing that they're underfunded, and we need to give them \$4 million over the \$235 million figure that the mayor proposed. I commend you, mayor, for all the hard work you put into coming up with that \$235 million figure. I think that's the figure we should stick with, perhaps separate out the two votes. Do you remember when a while back, I asked a couple times about phase two? This whole building project with the schools is phase one. I asked about phase two, which basically had to do with the high schools. The idea was they were going to close the high school. I was told phase two, we'll get to that after we have this discussion about phase one. When we finally got to a decision about phase two, you know what? You know what the answer was? We're not doing a thing. There is no phase two. You can forget all about phase two. So that's why I'm a little hesitant. I'm a little critical when I hear about how we're underfunding the schools and all this and that. I think the \$235 million would probably be sufficient.

Alderman Burkush: You can vote against it.

Matthew Normand, City Clerk: Just for the record, as I understand, the question is overriding Section 6.15(c) of the City Charter for the sole purpose of utilizing

approximately \$13,469,772 of the anticipated \$185.5 million revenues available, with a new increase in assessed values of \$5.6 billion.

Alderman Sapienza: This is the whole thing? This is city and school?

M. Normand: This is the override. We have to still deal with the other resolutions if this passes.

Mayor Ruais: The override is the first vote, and then you take the votes on the budgets.

Mayor Ruais called for a vote. Aldermen Bonilla, Trisciani, O'Neil, Burkush, Barry, Kaw-uh, Goonan, Dexter, and Fajardo voted yea. Aldermen Kantor, Terrio, Sapienza, Vincent, and Thomas voted nay. The motion failed.

*On motion of **Alderman Burkush**, duly seconded by **Alderman Barry**, it was voted to table the Budget Resolutions.*

Alderman O'Neil: Next Tuesday is, under the charter, the last night we can approve a budget.

Mayor Ruais: I would build off of what Alderman Terrio was saying earlier. I know that there are good conversations that are continuing to be had on the board as we speak. June 9th, yes, under the charter technically, but as we know, if I were to veto a budget, we would go to the end of the month. One thing I would caution on that, I think the importance of getting to June 9th is the implementation of MUNIS. The Finance Department is going to need time to run the traps on that. But yes, June 9th to me is important.

Alderman Sapienza: The other thing is I just realized I have to take my dog to the vet next Tuesday so I won't be available. So, I don't think that's a good idea. We have the default budget. Your budget would be the default budget, right?

Mayor Ruais: My default budget does not cover police. It does not cover the health care or overlays, CGL.

Alderman Sapienza: That's why when the mayor puts his tax cap budget together, to me it's a serious thing. It's not a joke. And fortunately, we have that to fall back on until we meet again in July.

Alderman Terrio: You're required to do that by ordinance, right?

Mayor Ruais: I'm required to put together a tax cap compliant budget; correct.

Alderman Terrio: And I'm assuming, you're not happy with it.

Mayor Ruais: Not when it doesn't fund our police contracts. No.

Alderman Trisciani: I think, Mr. Mayor, another thing to point out is now everybody on this board is complicit in closing the West Side Library branch.

Mayor Ruais: No, I had a conversation this morning with Denise, and I asked her directly if there was progress made, if I talked about the draft numbers that were sent out last night, if that would be enough of a signal that the board was continuing to work in a positive direction to get towards the budget, if that would be enough to continue to keep it open through another week.

Alderman Kaw-uh: But there's been no progress; the vote just happened again, the same way as it did.

Mayor Ruais: There has been progress with additional commentary coming forward from Alderman Terrio and others.

Alderman Kaw-uh: What is his commentary exactly? Can you remind us?

Mayor Ruais: Did you get his email?

Alderman Kaw-uh: Yes, I did. Is that coming up for a vote right now?

Mayor Ruais: So, presumably it would next week.

Alderman Kaw-uh: So, you waited until the middle of June to bring forward a budget?

Alderman Sapienza: Can I interject? I have a great idea to make a lot of progress. Why don't we just go ahead and have a vote on the \$234,981,749 school budget? It will at least get that out of the way tonight.

Alderman Kantor: I'll second that.

Mayor Ruais: The complication with that would be on the tax cap.

Alderman Sapienza: Well, that's the tax cap compliant figure that you came up with. That's the lowest one of the three.

Mayor Ruais: But we don't know what the city side would be when the police contracts are factored into it.

Alderman Sapienza: I understand that. I'm not saying this is going to solve the whole enchilada. What I'm saying is if we could get the school side taken care of tonight, that would be a little bit of progress.

Alderman Kaw-uh: Do you think anyone's going to actually vote for that?

Alderman Trisciani: I think at this point we're kind of devolving really quickly. We're not going to make any additional progress this evening. I think at this point we have spoken to Alderman Terrio and Alderman Vincent in the back room. Alderman Burkush and I have agreed to sit down, put our heads together, and figure this out and make some forward moving progress.

*There being no further business, **Alderman Trisciani** moved to adjourn. **Alderman Sapienza** duly seconded the motion. Alderman Kaw-uh requested a roll call vote.*

Alderman Kaw-uh: I don't think our work is done. But if you all want to go, you can. I'm going to vote no, though, and I want a roll call.

Aldermen Kaw-uh, Fajardo, Kantor, and Sapienza voted nay. Aldermen Goonan, Dexter, Bonilla, Trisciani, O'Neil, Terrio, Burkush, Barry, Vincent, and Thomas voted yea. The motion carried.

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

City Clerk

*Meeting Start Time: 7:00PM
Meeting End Time: 11:34PM
Minutes Prepared By: Michael Intranuovo*