

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION)
October 5, 2021 at 6:30 PM**

Mayor Craig called the meeting to order.

The Mayor called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman Barry.

A moment of silence was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Cavanaugh, Stewart, Long, Roy, T. Sapienza, Sharonov,
O'Neil, Levasseur, Terrio, Shaw, Barry, Gamache

Absent: Alderman Hirschmann

The Mayor advised that the purpose of this special meeting is a public hearing to receive comments on the resolution for a supplemental appropriation. The Clerk shall present the resolution, following which comments will be heard.

Resolution:

"Authorizing the utilization of an increase in State Adequacy and Relief Aid for a supplemental appropriation of \$10,847,571 to the Manchester School District pursuant to Section 6.05 (a) of the City Charter in Fiscal Year 2022."

The Mayor advised that the meeting shall be open to public comments. Each person when recognized shall come to the nearest microphone, state their name and address in a clear, loud voice for the record; that each person shall be given one opportunity to speak and comments shall be limited to three minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak.

Mary Heath, 76 Island Pond Road, stated:

I serve on the Finance Committee Division 2 which deals with education funding. Last year Covid caused extreme fluctuations in school enrollments across the state. The DOE by law

had to collect enrollment numbers on October 1 and from those numbers establish the adequacy funding coming to our city. To Manchester, the loss was over \$10 million. On HB2, legislators recognized that the deep declines were due to the impact of Covid and voted within HB2 to use 2019 enrollment numbers. This change was not effective until after July 1, hence the need for a supplemental appropriation. I am here this evening to ask you to approve this action and use the funds as intended, that being for our Manchester public schools. As a member of the Finance Committee and a member who fights constantly for school funding, it makes it very difficult for me to make my case when the Board of Mayor and Aldermen retain the funds at the city level. My colleagues in the House say to me, Mary why do you bother because Manchester is just going to use the money at the city level. Don't make them right. Make the right decision this evening. The HB2 enrollment correction to 2019 numbers is helping schools across the state. The formula allocated \$10.8 million to Manchester based on 2019 enrollments. I implore you to vote yes to send those funds to the schools and our students. They have gone through a devastating Covid experience. Don't make it worse. The district has used \$5.5 million in ESSR funds or the federal dollars that came to the school district targeted to make up the loss from the enrollment declines. HB2 corrected that and has brought the funding up by \$10.8 million. ESSR guidance allows funds to be used to address enrollment declines as an acceptable use of funds, however, with the extra \$10.8 million in adequacy funds I believe that ESSR guidance is no longer met. To continue to use those funds for that purpose now becomes an unacceptable use of federal dollars. I ask that you please send the \$10.8 million to the schools as they have been designated by the state. Manchester has an obligation to our schools. Adequacy dollars are intended to supplement local funds, not replace them. As I fight for education dollars for education, let me use this as an example that Manchester will use these dollars appropriately to support our schools and our children. Thank you.

Kathy Cook, 150 Heather Street, stated:

I am here to speak to you this evening about the \$10.8 million in funding from the state that as I understand it is designated for education. A lot of people are probably going to talk to you tonight and I know you have already seen the paperwork and had conversations and

presentations about what this money is and how it can be used and why we are getting it. What I want to talk to you about is our kids. Some of you may know that I have been involved in Manchester Proud but I am really here to talk to you about what I have seen in my day job. I work for the Norwin & Elizabeth Bean Foundation and as I have reviewed grant applications over the last 18 months, I have talked to people who run non-profits or are staff members for non-profits, educators, people in youth organizations and housing organizations, and immigrant organizations all across the community. As I talk to them about not just their grant application but how they are doing as the pandemic is obviously impacting everybody, our non-profits I have to tell you have been amazing. They have adapted no matter what they did to try to meet the most urgent needs of the people they were serving. Sometimes it was food and sometimes it was shelter and sometimes it was helping them sign up for government opportunities that they didn't know how to access but without exception, I believe every single organization that worked with kids and families expressed their concern about how our kids were doing through the pandemic. Our kids are falling behind and that is kids from every background who are having trouble but as you know it is our kids from the most at risk backgrounds that are suffering the most. Many of those kids were behind already and they are getting further and further behind. Those are the concerns that I heard over the first 12-15 months and now they are talking about mental health concerns for a lot of our kids. The reason I am here tonight is to ask you to please, when you consider how this money is going to be spent, put it in education for Manchester kids. They are our kids. We have a responsibility to these kids. They have been in a really tough 18 months and they need all the support they can get. Frankly, they deserve it. Thank you for your time.

Christine Fajardo, 472 East High Street, stated:

I am a candidate for alderman in Ward 4. I am here to urge the Board, especially my alderman, Alderman Roy, to vote in favor of the supplemental appropriation for the Manchester school district on tonight's agenda. These funds for additional adequacy and relief aid are part of the state budget which was passed after the city budget and are intended to serve our neediest students. Over the last several weeks as part of my campaign efforts, I have been going door-to-door meeting with constituents in ward 4 and

learning about what is truly important to them. The consistent and resounding theme is concern about the lack of investment in our schools. This sentiment is universal amongst the many types of residents that I have met; older people whose adult children are no longer in the system, couples who are child free like myself but who recognize the connection between strong schools and a thriving local economy, individuals who just implicitly understand that Manchester's young people deserve a bright future and of course the parents of our students whose concern is most prominent. Across the board, regardless of their specific connection to our schools, residents in ward 4 are in support of investment and this isn't just limited to ward 4. In a study published by Manchester Proud, over 62% of surveyed Manchester residents felt that a healthy school district has a direct correlation with an improved quality of life in our city. That is nearly two out of every three people underscoring that investment is a top priority for your constituents. I would like to conclude by referencing a similar vote the Board was asked to consider last year when the state allocated \$7.5 million in additional funding earmarked for education. This body had the opportunity, at no cost to taxpayers, to allow these much needed funds to benefit our students. Instead, the vote was to give money to taxpayers. The logic being that they needed it and would benefit from it more than our schools would. By the time you broke it down across all of Manchester's taxpayers, the refund was minimal; hardly a game changing amount in the way that it could have been for students. You have the opportunity this time tonight to vote in favor of our students, again at no cost to the taxpayer. Our students both need and deserve these funds. They will make a real difference and the residents of Manchester agree. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mary Georges, 18 Blodget Street, stated:

I am the founder and the executive director for Victory Women of Vision and we are focused on strengthening families of refugees. As a community leader, I give all of my time to be an asset to the City of Manchester. I have been here for a long time and I will always stand for the best for our city. I think this is a good moment and a good opportunity to support education. I stand here for education and I understand that if we want the best for the city then we need a good education for our kids. That will give us a better city. If all the kids have a good education, then we are going to have a good city. It is their future and

they are going to stay here. We are going to leave but the kids are going to stay and get married and have children. We don't know. That is why I would like you to support this opportunity for education as an investment in the kids. I know when Manchester Proud started doing their research and asking questions, I went around Green Acres asking questions of the people and knocking on doors. Most of them said that they had a bad education because they didn't have any fun. It is tough with Manchester. Everywhere I go, they know Mary Georges. When I was on the school board I wasn't enough for...I told them that I am running for Alderman At-Large and they said for Manchester, you are strong. I am asking you to please think about the kids and think about the population we have and how we can make our kids better for tomorrow. Thank you for supporting education.

Barry Brensinger, 400 Whitford Street, stated:

I am here to speak on behalf of the council of Manchester Proud and urge you to approve the request \$10.8 million supplemental allocation to the Manchester school district in its entirety. Our support acknowledges that the dollars requested are coming to Manchester from the state based on the needs of our students in schools and that this appropriation remains within the fiscal year 2022 tax cap and your approval will not increase taxes. Our district has recommended rational and responsible uses for these funds; uses that are focused on the learning needs of our students addressing Covid disruptions in the learning and opportunity losses of the past 19 months. We believe that without deliberate and properly funded interventions, many of our students will be educationally disadvantaged for years to come. Since their education ultimately impacts all of our lives and all of our futures, investing in closing these educational gaps is the right choice for Manchester. We are sometimes asked what is Manchester Proud and it is actually very simple. Manchester Proud is citizens from across our city and across all political, social, economic and racial spectrums. The one single thing we share in common is our belief that our public schools are the place to make the best possible future for everyone in Manchester. Issues that this Board addresses month in and month out like economic development, public health and safety, homeless, civic engagement and on and on are all linked to the education of our populous. Consider the long-term implications of the growing problem of workforce. Every

one we talk to, including the city, is already finding it difficult to hire needed workers. A thriving economy, one that lifts all of us, requires educated and skilled workers and workers that build our businesses, pay our taxes, vitalize our cultures, vote and become our leaders. There are only two possible sources of workforce. Our own Manchester educated students and our ability to attract regional, national and global talent to our city. Both of them depend on the quality and reputation of our public schools. If Manchester is to realize the future we all want, we must all be committed to making exceptional public schools. This is not an us versus them or a yours versus mine issue. The Manchester school district is all of ours. We all need to learn more about it and get involved and invest in it responsibly with pride. Thank you very much.

Christopher Potter, 470 Silver Street, stated:

I want to urge you to accept this money from the state, the state adequacy funds, in full. As you probably know, the state adequacy funds are not actually adequate which is a violation of the NH Constitution. It is not nearly enough to fund our schools and support our kids properly. As Representative Heath alluded to, if we turn this money down what message does that send to the state legislature? This increased adequacy aid could be one of the most important ways to better support our students in the future if the state will expand it. I served in our schools with City Year for five years and I can tell you that I saw urgent needs for funding. We had no substitutes or very rarely would we get substitutes because we don't offer them enough money. On those when a teacher was absent, we would take the class, split it in half and put them in two different classes; 50 kids or 60 kids in each class and nobody would learn anything that day. The year after I was a core member, my teacher didn't get another one. She had 28 kids in her class and only had a couple of hours with a paraprofessional a day. A lot of the students had behavioral issues. Those kids I don't think got a proper education that year and it wasn't her fault. We need more paraprofessionals and we need to pay our subs more. Can we taken this money and give paraprofessionals a sign-on bonus? We need to pay our teachers more and we need to hire more teachers. If you don't take this money to do at least one of those, come on. We need this. It is urgent. These students are the future of our city. You all talk about ending homelessness regularly. It comes up at almost every meeting. I am sure you know that we

have hundreds of homeless students in our schools. What is the future of those students if we don't invest in them? If you want to end homelessness but you turn down this money or don't use it on our kids, you are sawing off the branch you are sitting on. I urge you to accept this money and send it to our students where it is badly needed. They are the future of our city. Thank you.

Robert Kliskey, 80 Sentinel Court, stated:

I am here to give a public comment on the resolution for the \$10.8 million supplemental allocation in question. The question is pretty simple. Provide tax relief for the residents of Manchester or give the school district more money on top of their already overinflated budget. I am not sure if the whole Board is aware, but the property revaluations are causing a lot of grief for the residents of Manchester and specifically my ward. My own alderman, Alderman Shaw, has stated that she was in shock and brought to tears when she saw her revaluation but also voted to override the tax cap. That feeling is what we were all feeling when we opened those envelopes. I don't personally own a property. My parents still live here. I see my neighbor's rents skyrocketing. I stayed in the same apartment for three years now and it has gone up \$20 in rent. Next door is more than double what I am currently paying. If that is a sign to see, that is probably not good. Manchester residents cannot afford this for much longer. You either use these funds to provide relief for the residents of Manchester or people will be forced to move simply because they cannot afford to live here anymore and, therefore, would not be able to send their kids to school here. Thank you.

*On motion of **Alderman Cavanaugh**, duly seconded by **Alderman Long**, it was voted to take all comments under consideration and refer the resolution to the Committee on Finance.*

*This being a special meeting of the Board, no further business can be presented and on motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman O'Neil**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

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

City Clerk