

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC HEARING – REDISTRICTING)
December 7, 2021 at 5:30 PM**

Mayor Craig called the meeting to order.

Mayor Craig called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman E. Sapienza.

A moment of silence was observed with Mayor Craig asking everyone to keep Robin Uber Meechan, a teacher at McLaughlin Middle School and Patrick Gagnon, a 25 year employee of the Department of Public Works in their thoughts and prayers.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Cavanaugh, Stewart, Long, Roy, T. Sapienza, Sharonov, Terrio, E. Sapienza, Shaw, and Barry

Absent: Aldermen O'Neil, Levasseur, Gamache, Hirschmann

Mayor Craig advised that the purpose of the public hearing is to hear those wishing to speak in favor of or in opposition to the proposed Ordinance Amendment. The Clerk will present the proposed Ordinance changes for discussion, at which time those wishing to speak in favor will be heard, followed by those wishing to speak in opposition. Anyone wishing to speak must first step to the nearest microphone when recognized and state his/her name and address in a clear, loud voice for the record. Each person will be given only one opportunity to speak, comments are to be limited to three minutes and any questions must be directed to the Chair.

The Clerk presented the proposed Ordinance Amendment:

1. "Amending Section 12 City Ward Lines by revising the descriptions to create wards of equal population as practicable."

Mayor Craig requested that Jeff Belanger, Senior Planner, make a presentation.

Jeff Belanger, Senior Planner, stated I know that the main purpose of this meeting is to hear comments from the public so I will keep my comments pretty brief. Before I start, I do want to introduce Kristen Bixby who is another Planner in our Planning Department and who has worked closely with me to help create all of the documents you have in front of you. Between the two of us, we will do our best to answer any questions that the Board or public may have. Before getting to those questions, I just want to say a few words about redistricting in general and about the maps you have in front of you. The reason we are discussing redistricting and having this public hearing is because the city charter requires that every 10 years after the US Census releases its data, the aldermen are supposed to review the ward lines and determine whether or not a redistricting is necessary to comply with statutory requirements for equalization of population. In August and September of this year, the US Census released its 2020 data and it showed that Manchester's population increased by 6,079 people from 2010 to 2020. That population increase was not equal among the wards. There were some wards that gained hundreds of people while other wards gained far fewer. For instance, Ward 12 gained over 1,000 people and Ward 2 gained less than 100. These unequal population gains resulted in some unequal population totals among the wards. That is where the equalization of population comes into play. There is a provision in the NH and US Constitutions dealing with the one person one vote principle and that is a requirement that needs to be followed by all jurisdictions throughout the country and Manchester is no exception. I get into the details of the math and the law on that in my report and I won't belabor the details now. Basically, to summarize Manchester's wards as they are today are within the bounds of constitutionality but not by a lot. They are bumping up against those boundaries so it is the recommendation of city staff that the aldermen undertake a redistricting to better equalize the population and bring it more comfortably within constitutional bounds. The maps that you have in front of you are an attempt by the Planning Department and the City Clerk's Office to try to achieve just that and bring the population more equalized and make it more comfortably within the Constitution. As an example of what that looks like, if you were to take the ward lines as they are now meaning since the 2011 redistricting, you would find that the top ward and the lowest ward have a difference in population of 867 people. If you were to look at the top ward and the bottom ward for population as they are in the proposed map, the

difference would be 93 people. It is a drop from 867 to 93 and that is a pretty significant drop and when you are dealing with a city of over 115,000 people, a difference of 93 between the top and bottom ward is pretty close. That was the goal of our effort. Our primary focus was trying to equalize the population amongst the different wards. It was not, however, the only goal. We had some other considerations that we had to think of as we were drafting the map. One of those considerations was there is a state law that requires that all ward boundaries adhere to readily identifiable physical features. Those are things like rivers and streets and we held closely to that. Another consideration that we had was we wanted to make sure that all of the aldermen, BOSC members, state reps and senators and polling places remained within their same wards. Another consideration that we had was with regard to census blocks. The census block is the smallest geographic unit of data that the census reports. They don't report anything smaller so you cannot split a census block with a ward line because you don't know how the population will be split by that ward line going through the block. That creates an issue sometimes because census blocks can range in size and shape and have some strange shapes. We had to make sure that we adhered to those boundaries as we were drawing the ward boundaries as well. As you can imagine, with these different parameters it is a bit of a puzzle to distribute the population equally amongst the whole city but the map that you have in front of you is our best effort to do that. That is a summary of how we got to where we are. As you know, the Board first saw these maps on November 16 and you voted to bring them to a public hearing and that is why we are here today. In the interest of starting that public hearing, I will end my comments here but Kristen and I are available to answer any questions you may have. Mayor Craig called for those wishing to speak in favor of the proposed Ordinance Amendment.

There was no one present wishing to speak in favor.

Mayor Craig called for those wishing to speak in opposition to the proposed Ordinance Amendment.

Nicholl Marshall, 26 North Reading Street, stated:

For the last 14 years I have been an election official in Ward 2. Six years as Ward Clerk from January 2008 until January 2014 and for the last eight years I have served as Moderator. The proposed map changes the ward boundary so that is no longer the length of Wellington Road extending all the way to the Auburn line. Instead, the ward boundary changes so that I have been redistricted to Ward 6 even though last month I was re-elected to a fifth term as Moderator of Ward 2. There was an article in the NH Sunday News which mentioned that Ward 2 had the smallest population gain of any of the 12 wards. One would suspect that Ward 2 would be expanding its territory and not diminishing its territory any yet this map does precisely that which makes it very awkward for me because I cannot perform the job to which I was elected. I am already known to the Elections Office in the NH Department of State. In fact, they just mailed to me the election calendar for the next two years which is what they do for all election officials throughout the state. My humble request is that you preserve the boundary between Ward 2 and Ward 6 for Wellington Road to extend all the way to the Auburn line to preserve four houses – 2002 Wellington Road, 2090 Wellington Road, 2104 Wellington Road and myself at 26 North Reading Street. Not only is Wellington Road a natural boundary between the two wards but it would allow me to continue the job to which I was elected only five weeks ago.'

Mayor Craig stated typically this meeting is just for public comment but if the Board has questions for Mr. Marshall I would allow that.

Alderman Shaw stated on the map that was handed out, the proposal that I put forward is not on it but I wish to speak on the change that I am requesting. The section of my ward just south of Interstate 293, the Kenberma Street area and both sides of Brown Avenue through Frontage to the highway has been in Ward 9 for as long as I have been elected which is 12 years. What I am asking is to retain that section. Mr. Belanger and Ms. Bixby worked on a plan that would change the border and even the Ward 9 and Ward 8 population. Right now, Ward 9 has 9,622 people and Ward 8 has 9,627. With the change that I am asking for, Ward 9 would have 9,604 and Ward 8 would have 9,645. I am okay with that. The section that would be restored to Ward 8 which at one point was part of Ward 8 is from Doris Street over to Holly Avenue to the east of South

Lincoln. It would be a swap and I am requesting that it happen. Wards 8 and 9 don't have the highest or lowest population. We are kind of in the middle and there are changes that occur. I sprung this on my colleague in Ward 8 two minutes ago and I apologize for that. I forgot to talk to him ahead of time.

Alderman Terrio asked do you have a map of the proposed change.

Alderman Shaw replied no. I am just reading what it says.

Mr. Belanger stated I have the map change and will have the Clerk hand it out.

Alderman Shaw stated it is a small section from Doris Street down South Hall and Shasta and across South Lincoln.

Alderman Terrio stated okay I understand.

Alderman Shaw stated it flows with the ward line.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated the gentleman that spoke about four houses in Ward 2, is that accurate.

Mr. Belanger responded I haven't looked into that so I don't know exactly how many houses there are but I know there is a total of 20 people within that little triangle that he is referring to. As for the number of buildings, I would need to look into that and get back to you.

Alderman T. Sapienza asked are either of the wards that would be changing one of the minimum or maximum wards.

Mr. Belanger answered they are. I believe Ward 6 is the minimum ward but 20 people in a city of over 115,000 won't make much of a difference either way.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated we have an elected official who is getting bounced out of his ward and I think that is pretty serious.

Mr. Belanger stated we looked at a certain range of elected officials. There are obviously a lot of them so there is only a certain number we could get our arms around but staff is happy to accommodate whatever changes the Board would like to make.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated I am not criticizing but I am just wondering how easy it would be to put it back. It seems pretty easy.

Mr. Belanger responded yes it would be pretty easy.

Alderman Stewart stated I would just like to echo Alderman T. Sapienza's comments. I can only imagine how much fun it must be to try and do this across the whole city with 12 wards. I don't envy you that task. With that said, I would ask my colleagues to reinstate the area there north of Wellington Road. I do believe the four properties number is accurate. Wellington Road is a main road in the city and to coin the exact phrase you used Jeff it is a readily identifiable feature I think. It seems to be a natural ward line and I would appreciate everyone's consideration on that.

Alderman Roy stated I agree that 20 people is no big deal. The other one, however, with a population of 400 sounds to be like it is going to be a little more difficult to try to jockey. Don't we have a time constraint here as well with the state looking for us to do this as quickly as possible because they are trying to do their redistricting as well?

Matthew Normand, City Clerk, replied that is correct. The state is looking to have our final boundary lines by the end of this month and it would be a stretch to get it there in time as it is.

Alderman Roy stated I think you did a good job on this and it is unfortunate that it is not perfect for everybody. I don't have any problems with the 20 people but the other one I think will take more time than we have to correct things.

Mayor Craig stated from a process perspective, tonight this information will go to Bills on Second Reading.

Alderman Sharonov stated I wanted to address the first request and since it affects my ward I wanted everyone to know that I have no objection about keeping that area in Ward 2.

Alderman Terrio stated as you recall in the last meeting I was going to make some changes to Ward 7 but for the ease of the process I am going to drop that but I do support the change in Ward 2. It seems like the city has done a good job in honoring Alderman Shaw's request. At the end of the day, I think the number is only a 40-person difference. I think the map makes sense and it is not gerrymandered and 40 people again is not a lot. I am not going to make any changes to Ward 7 but I will support the change in Ward 2 and Alderman Shaw's request. At the end of the day, 40 is not a big difference from the original map.

*There being no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Roy**, it was voted to refer the Ordinance Amendment to the Committee on Bills on Second Reading with reports to be made to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen at a later date.*

*This being a special meeting, no further business can be presented and on motion of **Alderman Cavanaugh**, duly seconded by **Alderman Long**, 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

