

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION)
December 7, 2021 at 7:00 PM**

Mayor Craig called the meeting to order.

The Clerk calls the roll.

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

Absent: Aldermen Gamache and Hirschmann

Mayor Craig advised that the purpose of the special meeting is to give residents of Manchester the opportunity to address the Board on items of concern affecting the community; that each person will be given only one opportunity to speak, all comments shall be limited to three minutes and any comments must be directed to the Chair.

Mayor Craig requested that any resident wishing to speak come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized, and give their comments.

Sara Beaudry, 1069 Union Street, stated:

I have been employed at Intown Manchester for almost 10 years and as of recently there have been quite a few things being said about Intown. Since we have not been asked to come and speak to the aldermen and all of the meetings about Intown have been in private, I felt it really important for me to come and speak. Recently I was told officially that the Planning Department has oversight of Intown and has had for the past 20 years. Like past directors, I submitted quarterly reports in order to receive our assessment dollars. I have never been asked for anything else. I am not sure why things have gotten to this point but I will tell you that Intown is behind in our audits. I take full responsibility for this. This information was provided to the Intown Board and to my knowledge in the 10 years I have been there has never been requested by the city. In 2019 we had a major sponsor not come back and that hurt us greatly. Obviously our goal was to replace this sponsor with new sponsors in our 2020 event series and

banner program but before that could happen, Covid hit. Intown has not had any revenue generating events since December 2019 and this has crippled us. I do want to point out that we have stayed true to our mission. We kept all aspects of beautification and the cleanliness of downtown on point. I also want to be clear that we do have debt and our board and I had a plan to solve this debt which was finishing out our contracts and proceeding with our programming but our board was told that the mayor wouldn't speak with us. Mayor Craig, I feel as though you have made this very personal and in your dislike of me you have dismantled this organization. Peppy Edwin and Nancy, our maintenance team, are the hardest working people I have ever met. They literally pick up our streets littered with needles, crack pipes and human filth like I have never seen before, especially during Covid for which we received no Covid relief from the city even though we were working with biohazardous material daily. I do believe the City of Manchester is in breach of contract with Intown and to my knowledge there has been no updated contract with the city since 2012. This is the responsibility of the city. Since 1997, I have worked in the city and put on some of the largest events the city has ever had. I have had the absolute pleasure of working with different departments like the City Clerk's Office and Health Department. I was a Parks Commissioner for six years and got to work with Kevin Sheppard, Andy Vachon, Mark Gomez and Tom Mattson. It was one of the most rewarding boards I have ever been on. I want to say that working with our incredible businesses and property owners has been amazing. Unfortunately, they have not been part of the equation when you decided to freeze Intown's fund that are funded by the property owners nor was the CBSD Board consulted and they are, in fact, the governing board of Intown. I want to thank you aldermen for everything that you have done. Thank you Alderman Levasseur for asking question and Alderman Long for being our biggest cheerleader. I thank you all for your dedication. It really has been a pleasure working at Intown. I do want to say that as the city proceeds with whatever bid they decide, if you are going to drive the Intown bus drive it. Don't come in when it personally suits you. Manage the CBSD Board and talk to the property owners and businesses. Collaborate don't intimidate. This downtown has so much potential. I hope to see it grow and be recognized as the amazing downtown it is. Thank you and Happy Holidays.

Patrick Mills, 950 Elm Street, stated:

I am the owner of Bonfire Country Bar. I am speaking today on behalf of Intown and the mission that they have been doing for us. I am here to say that we cannot play politics with the downtown once again. We cannot go through what we have in the last three weeks with the Intown staff not cleaning up downtown and leaf blowing and picking up the trash. We have gone through enough with Covid as it is and that little bit that they have given us with clean sidewalks and streets is a very valuable part of the downtown. We went through this with the barriers before playing politics with the downtown and now we are playing politics again with Intown. We just need to stop it and get back to the downtown. We need everything we can get to bring customers back downtown. As a business owner, I am struggling with the homeless and the needles on the ground and people not wanting to come downtown. It is a fact. Intown provided a clean place to come and it really helped us.

Glenn Ouellette, 112 Auburn Street, stated:

Twenty years of Intown and we have had a Board member on this board for all of those years and we have had several Boards since then and several mayors. I don't understand. For 20 years there was a contract or subcontract or whatever you want to call it and there was never an audit. If the audits were to be done quarterly every year, why had they not been done. That is number one. That part should be on the city. Somebody missed the ball. It has to work both ways. If I have a contract with the city, I have to follow my end and they have to follow their end. It is a two-way situation. Number two, Intown has done a lot of good for our city. They provide parades and concerns and they clean the downtown and beautify it with flowers and everything else and they created a new park on the corner of Bridge and Elm Street. That money came from the citizens that went to the concerts and bought tickets to pay for that park. That is all positive. Like the guy before me said, we need to stop playing politics. It has to stop. The downtown is the fabric of our community. Another issue is the homeless and crime. Crime may have gone down but violent crime has not. For the last eight weeks we have either had shootings, stabbings or both every single weekend. It has to stop. It is no longer just downtown. It is in every area of our community now. We have to find a better way to deal with the drug problem. The drug problem is the biggest reason this

is happening and mental health. We need to do a better job with mental health. I have worked in Maine and NH a lot with mental health and if you don't get them early, it is harder to rectify. You are now changing your records and you are creating a system that will begin to deal with the mental health. Please do not go back to the other way. It is too important for our community. These people are humans as well. The last thing I want to say, and I have said it before, is if I shoot up on Elm Street I will get arrested but if a homeless person shoots up we say oh leave them alone. Everybody has to follow the rules. It is the same thing as housing. Everyone should have their property inspected if that is the law, including those that have rehabs. Shutting them down is not going to solve our problem. They need a place to stay. We need to enforce the law. Thank you and Merry Christmas.

Richard Tango-Lowy, 98 Hollis Street, stated:

In May 2017 I was asked to join the Central Business Service District Board, the CBSD, which seems to be somewhat mythical but we have always been around. The CBSD is made up of five business owners and tenants of the downtown Central Business District. Our job, as we understood it and have done very diligently since that time, is to evaluate the service that Intown or some similar organization provides the city and make sure that the funding they are provided will fit what they require in order to do so. We basically looked at their proposals and what they did and made a recommendation to the BMA if we thought it made sense. For us, that meeting happened every few years. The requirement for evaluating Intown funding came up I think every three or four years. It was a great board and I was really honored to serve with the people on it. I think they were all completely professional and did their jobs to the best of their ability. Right now I kind of feel like we were sort of jumped on and left in the dust. I really believe in this city and what it does but the CBSD reports to this body and we were entirely left out of everything that happened. We should have been the first ones consulted. As such, while I appreciate what everyone is trying to do and I believe strongly in what Intown was trying to do although I think we all managed to stay very independent of it, I don't feel I can serve on this board anymore. I would like to submit my resignation this evening. Thank you.

Matt Provencher, 157 Oak Street, stated:

I am the chef and owner of Red Beard's Kitchen and I am here to talk about Intown. I was born and raised in this city. I have watched it rise and fall and now I am just watching it sink. Myself and my wife who is sitting behind me are slowly taking over a restaurant and every day we step over needles, crack pipes, and human waste. It is to the point where I don't want to bring my three daughters down to help me because they don't need to see this. This is not the downtown that we should be trying to build. We should be trying to revitalize it and bring it back to what it was. It is not. Somebody once said that if all the good people leave this town will never make it and I am watching as all of the good people are leaving. I think Intown should be brought back just to help clean and organize the downtown. All the stuff they do, I don't think it is worth the fight and the nonsense. Thank you.

Ashley Poulin, 184 Oakdale Avenue, stated:

I am going to start by sharing what a homeless friend of mine recently shared with me. Her name is Tricia McQuade and she couldn't be here due to her recent hospitalization from Covid. She wrote to me today "I want them to know that FIT put me in a hotel because the lift broke. When I returned within three days the lift was broken again and again I had to sleep in the dining area with everyone coughing and sneezing and all of that stuff going on around me and now I have ended up in the hospital with Covid. Right now they are looking for a hotel for me in which I have to pay \$1,000 out of my own pocket but the hotels are not accepting people with Covid so right now I have nowhere to go. The doctor would have released me but is using my inadequate oxygen levels at night while I sleep as an excuse to keep me until I complete the requirements of my quarantine stay." This could be a bed if any of us get in a car accident on our way home that is being held just because this woman doesn't have anywhere to go. Her doctor is stretching the rules. This is how we are messing up our resources and it is systemic. This is how it affects us. Don't act like you are not that far away. Hospitals serve us all. Tricia is our neighbor and her story is just one of many that shows us how one failure can lead to a ripple effect of negative and preventable consequences for our houseless friends. We need to have more beds in this city. There are many empty city buildings keeping spiders warm instead of humans. We need Section 8 housing to be

built so that vouchers can be honored. In fact, do you know how many people are at the shelter that are sitting on housing vouchers right now and I just read an Ink Link article this afternoon about 77 luxury apartments being built downtown when instead we could have affordable housing to get the people off the streets and get them care and what they need and mental health help and addiction help. Instead luxury apartments that aren't going to be filled and that are going to rot because the good people are leaving because we are not taking care of everyone...as a community member who does outreach, I am amazed and disgusted daily that so many of you will celebrate a story of an immigrant family seeking food and shelter with their child in a manger but you can't feel the same compassion for your neighbors. Oh and I would like Schonna Green to know that she would have to come down to put that ladle out of my hand while I am feeding the homeless. Our own Manchester Homeless Advocate has told several of my friends to not feed the homeless because they are addicts. You will hear from someone who has that story later. Homelessness should not mean starvation and death. My voice shakes out of pain. I am not scared to come and talk to you. You all are my neighbors too. I voted for some of you and others I didn't but all of you are on the same team. Our city is on the same team. I will keep coming back. You will not stop hearing from me and my friends. We are your neighbors and we are your constituents. We would like to see far more action and far more involvement and smarter policies. Thank you.

Sara Tofanelli, 49 Marguerite Street, stated:

My focus tonight is veteran homelessness. Looking at me you would never know it but I am a Marine Corp veteran. I was also a homeless one but you cannot tell what a veteran looks like. Fortunately for me, I was homeless in Boston where there are resources and not here because if I was here homeless I would be dead. I am also an addict in recovery which I say proudly. While homeless though, people viewed me as a no good junkie as if that is all I was despite serving this country. That is why I do a lot of homeless outreach. I provide free haircuts, winter clothes, hot food and most importantly I show up. I am just one person running Mission Unified Impact with no funding. If I can do all of this alone, why can't the city do more? Why are veterans homeless on these streets? Why is nothing being done? All we need is help. I needed

help after being raped by three Marines. My brother needed help after being blown up in Iraq on his second deployment but with no help that is when the drugs helped. That is true for most out there battling untreated PTSD and injuries every day; untreated. Why? Because there are no resources. Why are the rights we fought for being violated every day? Where is the housing for veterans? Why are veterans freezing and sleeping outside? No one sees us as veterans when we are homeless. Is Liberty House and Families in Transition the best you can do? My fellow veteran, Joe Ramer, died in FIT or better known as Unfit. You need to make sure these places are working with the VA and not just saying they are and that all available resources are well known. Where is help for female veterans? I was thrown in groups with 15+ men as a rape victim. I was put in a psych ward because there was no detox for us but there was detox for men. Again, the female room shut down to put men in there. Usually men have more help but right now it seems like we are both equal with none. I have buried so many fellow veterans not because of the war in the Middle East, but the war that they lost here at home on these very streets that you will take home tonight to your nice home and family. Our proudest accomplishment is serving, yet 22 veterans a day commit suicide, including homeless veterans due to feeling disposed of and forgotten. Until you start helping, those deaths are on your hands. I am here today because people didn't give up on me. No one decided if I should be fed because I am an addict. I found resources on my own that should have been provided. It is upsetting that Schonna Green, Director of Homelessness, stated not to feed the homeless because they are addicts. If we are not eating based on sins, then I ask you all to skip your next meal. I am proof that people change. The next time you see a homeless person, know they could be a veteran. Remember me. Take a good look. I am not going away. I will be back and I will be louder and you will not stop seeing me until my fellow brothers and sisters stop dying on these streets. This is just the beginning so how about you serve us now?

Samantha Colby stated:

I am here tonight to discuss my concerns regarding the city's approach to helping the homeless. A woman who is often known as the meatball lady, and I am not using her real name to protect her privacy, runs an organization that operates in various cities

across NH and Massachusetts to distribute food to the homeless. When she first decided to come to Manchester, she spoke to a friend of mine who is experienced in homeless outreach. They were recently in contact discussing the needs for day and night shelter space in the city. She has been looking to bring in resources to address additional shelter units. Meatball lady was recently in contact with the city's Homeless Coordinator, Schonna Green. The meatball lady was disappointed with the results of this conversation. She was told that there was no additional need for day shelter services or for night shelter beds. Ms. Green stated that the services of FIT, 1269 Café and NH Hope for Recovery cover the needs at present. The meatball lady asked why there are still so many homeless people outside when she is providing food for them. Ms. Green stated they were outside due to "drug issues" and discouraged her from providing food. Now this feels like the wrong approach. Substance abuse disorders are categorized as a mental illness and people need to eat regardless of what may be going on in their lives. Another aspect to look at are the barriers at the shelter. In my personal experience, I have seen people kicked out for non-drug related issues. Some of these weren't even violence related but merely a victimless violation of a policy. Perhaps they went out for a cigarette at the wrong time or raised their voice. Perhaps they had so much as a single unopened beer. There is still a need in the city for low barrier shelter. I have seen people in camps and I have seen people turned away. 1269 Café is approaching capacity at night. To my knowledge there are around 190 beds total between FIT and 1269 last year. This year, FIT has 139 beds. There are about 38 non-bed warming spots at 1269. Last year there were times when every FIT facility was at capacity. Now we have even fewer beds but statistics show that we have an increasing homeless population. A point in time study was done by the NHCEH in July 2020 that showed a 21% increase in homeless from the previous year. The eviction moratorium was recently overturned, which predictably will lead to an increase in homelessness this year as well. We have a Homeless Coordinator that is not in touch with the needs of the city. Statements made by Ms. Green previously are not congruent with the reality the homeless population faces. The best course of action is harm reduction. Feed the homeless. House the homeless. Drug addiction is a multi-faceted issue not a reason to point fingers. Thank you for your time and have a good evening.

Dam Wright, Cartier Street, stated:

I would like to start by thanking the folks that were just up here speaking. They do such a wonderful job on the streets of this city every night trying to help every which way they can with what is going on with the homeless community and shelter situation and everything else. We also heard before that from several business owners speaking about what is going on in front of their businesses with crack pipes, needles and human waste. These are the byproducts of not dealing with the types of situations that we are talking about. This wouldn't happen if everybody had a decent place to go. Right now, there are a few concerns that we are particularly focused on, one of which is the continued need for a winter shelter. As you just heard, the numbers and I have seen those numbers myself as I worked in the winter shelter last year and 190 is what they could do between all three shelters when they had all three going and there were nights when that filled up. It is going to be worse this year because there are only 139 beds. The warming station, which I visited several times already on my outreach excursions, is doing a good job and they should be complimented for that. They are doing everything they can but it is not beds and it is not a safe place where people know they are going to be the next night and they are already coming very close to their capacity. We can see how quickly that is filling up. These are things you see when you are out there every night. It doesn't necessarily always jive with the numbers that are being presented. As we were watching FIT turn away over a dozen people, they were still telling the city that they had plenty of beds. Right now we are about to come to a crisis pretty soon where we are going to need more beds. We need better day shelter services even with what 1269 Café and HOPE for NH Recovery are doing, people have to leave at 7 AM. They are not allowed back in until 12 PM and that is only if they are okay with going to bible study. It is not a solution that fits everybody. We need to address the winter shelter needs and we also need to continue to talk about improving conditions and barriers at the existing shelter. That has had minor improvements and we have certainly seen recently that they are deciding to make some changes in their management which is a great start. Where they go next is what needs to be watched. We need to make sure that they are choosing to put harm reduction as their first priority above other things such as liability prevention and other things that really don't get it

done as far as people being able to live with human dignity. We also do need to have more affordable housing, more barrier housing and more pathways to get in. As we heard, people are sitting on vouchers for a long time. We heard tonight from all sorts of different angles. We heard about veterans. Every time you see somebody on the street, that could be a veteran or somebody with some story you never imagined. Overall, I think we need to stop worrying about stigmatizing the homeless and shaming them and chasing them out of everywhere and find a real place for them to go. I think the city needs to back that and get on board and I hope that upcoming discussions that we are hoping to have will provide what is really needed. Thank you.

Roger Priney stated:

I have been here about two months. I am from Bath, Maine. Recently I was living in Dover and Rochester. I came up here and saw Manchester and I said that is going to be my city. This is the most wonderful place. I remember 20 years ago. Twenty years ago I came through here and it was nothing like it is now. You have done a wonderful job. We have a big problem though and it is called people sleeping in doorways and it is called people not having proper care and it is people who are intelligent. You wouldn't believe this but some of them are college educated. They are incredibly talented and they need help. I call myself an advocate for them. I go out every morning at 4 AM or 5 AM and if I find food, I bring them food. If I can find them an extra blanket, I bring them an extra blanket. I have an inspirational book called Joy and I sit and read to them. Something has to be done. These people are good people. They hit a little bump in the road somewhere. It could be their parents. It could be a teacher. It could be anything. They are smart. There is a certain part of that population that got into Fentanyl. Cocaine just gives you a nice soft feeling. It doesn't affect your heart. Fentanyl on the other hand is cheap to make. They make it out of kerosene or something like that. They make it in a sink at home. Well they don't but their dealer does and they sell it cheap. They can get a whole day's worth for \$20. They can go out and panhandle and get \$20 in half an hour. The cocaine used to be like \$100 or \$150 for that same kind of feeling. Now it is \$20. The cops can't catch the dealers because they are doing it right in their home. It is not the old time trailer type situation that you see on TV. It is a bright and educated person who just looked up the formula on the

internet and found out that it is just simple as can be. In Dover they call it a snowball and it is \$20. If you ever had a homeless person on the street ask you for \$20 and I have time after time, that is what they want it for. They want it for that day's dose of what they think is cocaine. It is cocaine somewhat. They mix it. It is the Fentanyl that gets your heart beating like crazy and you see them going down the street not being able to control their legs and arms. They are like dancing down the street. That is their heart going boom, boom, boom. If you talk to the cops and you ask why don't you arrest them they say why that is exactly what they want. They are cold and wet and don't have a bathroom.

Mayor Craig stated that is three minutes. Everyone has three minutes to speak so I am going to have to ask you to stop now. Thank you.

Mr. Priney stated I will just finish. The Army has a ton of Quonset huts and barracks and stuff like that that they give to cities and they send the Army to set them up for free. We have the park that is behind the Library where there are hardly any monuments or anything like that that is flat and level. Some of the homeless found that park as being a nice safe place. I propose that the city, through Senators Shaheen and Hassan, and our reps who have already gotten my proposal and think it is great petition the Army and ask them...well actually Senators Shaheen and Hassan could petition to get one of these Quonset huts or barracks. They could set it up in the park. The key to it is the homeless people would have to take care of it themselves. If you put a cop in there or you put a city official in there, it isn't going to work. They don't do well with discipline but if you let them have an election to come up with say five people to run it that would be answerable to the police and to the city, that could work.

*There being no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of **Alderman Cavanaugh**, duly seconded by **Alderman Long**, it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.*

*There being no further business, 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