

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION)
December 21, 2021 at 7:00 PM**

Mayor Craig called the meeting to order.

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

A moment of silence was observed with Mayor Craig asking that everyone keep the Dutile and Fremeau families in their thoughts and prayers.

The Clerk called the roll.

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

Absent: Aldermen Shaw 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.

Mandy Lafond, 412 Notre Dame Avenue, stated:

The so-called leaders of this city have utterly failed to address the epidemic of houselessness facing Manchester. I am speaking now to you and you directly. We can see your contempt for the poor. We can feel it. In 2020 in the midst of a deadly pandemic, this government has still failed to adequately address and against the recommendations of the CDC, you the leaders of the city ordered the residents...your policies have made homeless to be forcibly removed from the campsites where they

sought refuge not just once and not just once or three times but over and over again. Who were they hurting? Does the shame of your failed policies, the prioritization of profit over human life trouble you so much that you can't even bare to look at them? Do you think that they go away when you can't see them or do you hope that they just die out of your view? You can remove the eyesore but in reality you are just subjecting them to more suffering, more displacement and more death forcing them away from the minimal services provided in the city center. When the encampment at the city courthouse was evicted in November 2020, your hired goons slashed tents, threw personal belongings in the trash and forced people to leave behind the very few things they managed to scratch together in the face of your callous, oppressive policies. Where were they told to go? To cramped overcrowded shelters to catch Covid and die. As long as you get to go home to your warm house with your family and your full belly and your full wallet then that is all fine. You care more about the landlords, business owners and donors than the people in this community who struggle every day to pay rent; the people who are on the streets starving, grappling with addiction, struggling to overcome mental health issues that the city provides no care for; the people who are forced by you to live in tents in the biggest city in one of the richest states in the wealthiest country in the history of the world. You don't think of them as your constituents. To you they are an annoyance at best. If you had ever spoken to someone who lives on the streets who was made homeless by your gutless murderous policies, you would know that if they can't be provided housing, which should be a right, that they just ask to be left to camp in peace. Leave them alone if you refuse to help them. Meanwhile, you ask us to keep our heads down, to be exploited for our labor, to work jobs that don't pay enough in conditions that are now deadly to our health and to shut up while we do it. Our friends and neighbors are dying. No, our friends and neighbors are being killed and you are killing them. Every victim of starvation, neglect or the cold is a murder. You have weighed their lives on your balance sheets and found they are not worthy enough to save. Profit over people is class warfare. No more. We will be a thorn in your side for as long as it takes. We are the voice of the voiceless so while you enjoy Christmas in your warm house surrounded by your smiling families, gifts and abundant food, remember this. 1,500 people will be out on the street in the cold on

Christmas in a city of 115,000. You have condemned 1,500 to this. There is blood on your hands. So have a Merry Christmas if you can forget your crimes.

Joy Marshall, 412 Notre Dame Avenue, stated:

Tonight we are here to commemorate those who have been murdered by houselessness but equally we are here to condemn those truly responsible. Our elected officials hate the poor. This body of city officers are guilty of murder by exposure. It seems that they have nearly bottomless contempt for the poor and unhoused because they view the individual as the only deciding factor in their own lives, therefore, they blame or congratulate us for our successes and failures. These officials will never convey a class analysis or the system barriers to employment, housing, health care, education, child care, substance use and mental health services and the total inadequacy of these services as they currently exist because it would be explicitly against their interests. They present the poor and unhoused as cautionary tales. They view us as a basket of deplorables; members of an expendable surplus population. They don't mind too much if we die quietly in sub part housing or in a tent fire trying to stay warm in the brutal New England winter. They increase the police budget every year while cutting the shelter budget. They don't do anything to stop landlords from increasing already bloated rents. They are more interested in harassing people in poverty than supporting them. They view the role of government as a fan club for landlords and business owners. Well I don't know if they are aware that the majority of us are neither landlords nor business owners. The majority of us are tenants and wage workers who are one paycheck, one lay off away from joining the unhoused portion of our community and they are part of our community. I don't care who you are. No one deserves to spend their days on the streets begging for the bare minimum to survive only to be shunned and shuttled into overcrowded pest infested shelters during another upswing in this pandemic, which should be pointed to as another massive failure at every level of this corrupt, broken government. They are more worried about election cycles and campaign donors and the people they were elected to support. They want us to sit down, shut up, work for scraps, pay our bloated rents and keep quiet while

more and more people are being crushed. We are dying. Our friends, families, and community members are dying. What are they doing about it? Well beyond the sham memorial that they put on earlier and this holiday, it doesn't seem that they are inclined to do anything at all. People demand housing as a human right; nothing less. Much poorer countries than the USA have eliminated homelessness by making housing a public service where no one spends more than 10% of their income. They did it by abolishing landlords and parasitic extraction of tenant's hard earned pay. Yet here in the wealthiest country in the world, all we get our vigils to honor the dead that are leaders failed to protect. Aren't we tired of the same old song and dance? Isn't it time that we stopped playing spectator to this game of death and demand action? Aren't we tired of going with empty bellies to feed a system of exploitation which pillages any nation or community for land, resources and labor to feed its endless hunger? We need leaders who are unafraid of political backlash. We need leadership that will actually do something and we need leadership that is willing to make decision that are unpopular with the exploiters that builds power for the workers and the dispossessed. If our elected officials want to continue their sycophantic appeals to landlords and businesses, then it is our right as citizens to fight them, to ruthlessly criticize them and break their power on their rock of a united working class. There is no Christmas ghost coming to haunt our dear collection of Scrooges. We have to be the ones to dredge up the past, decry the present and fight for the future. The dawn is ours and the rising sun is ever the comrade of the least of us. We are already a legion. We have yet to realize our own power. It is time that we stop hoping for change and start demanding it.

Eva Castillo, 733 Bryant Road, stated:

I am here to speak in support of the nomination of Jason Bonilla to the Manchester School Board for Ward 5. I have known Jason for about 10 years. He would be a terrific addition to our school board. He works at City Year inside the schools so he can bring a fresh perspective that the school board really doesn't have right now. He not only knows the issues from the inside but he hears the voices of the students and the teachers and he can see what is really going on in our district. He has that experience and life experience that nobody else on the school board has. It is about time that we

start reflecting the diversity and bring some young voices to the table. We are all getting old and it is hard to let go of our seats but it is about time that we hear from somebody who can really connect with the youth that we so desperately need to serve. I encourage you all to think about it and give him a chance. It is time to renew Manchester and bring the young voices to the table. Thank you and Feliz Navidad.

Mariana Beer, 252 Willow Street, stated:

Although I am not a resident of Manchester, you don't have to be a resident of Manchester to love and support the city and that is why I am borrowing hopefully two and a half minutes of your time. I am also here to support Jason's nomination for the school board. I met Jason while working at City Year and if I may echo Eva's voice, he is the perfect fit and the perfect candidate for just invigorating and energizing the school board. This is the type of person that the community, any community needs. Again, not as a resident of Manchester, I still think it is important for all of us to come out and support those who believe in the city and the work that he is doing and understand the level of service and sacrifice that needs to happen to get some of these things done and that is why I am supporting Jason. Thank you.

William Farley, 3 Warren Street, stated:

I am here speaking in support of Jason Bonilla for nomination to the Board of School Committee. I also know Jason through City Year. He is the reason I came to Manchester to serve in City Year in August 2019. I served at Parker-Varney Elementary School and then at Gossler Park Elementary School. I now serve at the NH Food Bank. Jason understands the work that needs to be done inside the classroom to support our young learners and he also understands the work that needs to be done outside the classroom to support our young learners. He knows that if our students are houseless and our students are food insecure that that is just as important a barrier to address as a lack of academic materials in the classroom. It is for that reason that I support Jason Bonilla for nomination to the Board of School Committee. He will bring a fresh perspective to the Board of School Committee and an understanding of the work that needs to be done to build up our students and the community that they live in. He brought me to Manchester to serve here because he was able to convey to me the

struggles that the city faces but also the hope and the resilience of the city. I think that is something that needs to be represented on the Board of School Committee in the policies that the committee creates.

Kelly McAndrew, 290 Cartier Street, stated:

I have been on the streets of Manchester on and off for the past 12 years. I am currently housed and am an advocate for the current houseless community. I volunteer for Healthcare for the Homeless and give them input on how they can better serve the houseless. Let me tell you how you can better serve the houseless, leave them alone. Leave the people out there in tents camping alone. Stop moving them around. This is Cody. I just left the Homeless Memorial Day as I believe the Mayor declared today but couldn't bother to show up for. Cody wasn't the only one. Other people had their bags. I didn't get to put Chandell's bag up there. You know Chandell the one that was in the RV the other day? She was one of my best friends that I have to bury now because once again her camp got moved and she had to figure out where she could go and ended up in an RV that was unsafe. Her blood is on your hands. I am so sick and tired of burying my friends. Stop and leave them alone.

Zach Palmer, 468 Spruce Street, stated:

I am here to talk about the representation of black and brown people in Manchester and specifically on the school board. I am here to support the nomination of Jason Bonilla who I have known from my four years in Manchester as well. I met him through the Equity Leaders Fellowship, a program funded through the NH Endowment for Health. It is a program to help black and brown millennials and people of color and professionals get on non-profit boards and serve their community and help make a difference and make a change. As a lot of people have already said about Jason, it is time for new ways of thinking and a new voice. I forgot to mention that I am also a Ward 5 resident and homeowner and I expect my tax dollars to be spoken for specifically on the school board. I would greatly appreciate Jason being that person.

Ashley Poulin, 184 Oakdale Avenue, stated:

I am not going to share my own words but I am going to share something that I hope all of you have access to. It is online as well for anyone behind me. It is called the State of Homelessness in NH Annual Report 2020. It is released by the NH Coalition to End Homelessness. On the bottom right it says "including a special report on the intersection of unsheltered homelessness and COVID-19 in NH." While this is a rich report full of data, I am going to just skim through important parts of the Executive Summary because while this is a report on NH, it has been mentioned before and we are all well aware that Manchester is our largest city so we attract a lot of people.

In 2020, the state of homelessness annual report provides a compilation of data and resources shedding light on what homelessness looks like in our state over the past year. While this report is produced annually, the impact of this year's analysis is even more significant as we witness it through the lens of a global pandemic. Unlike in prior year's the report includes yearlong data from NH's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). This data is captured by homeless service providers who have at least one encounter with an individual or family who is homeless. The decision to transition to HMIS data is due to its ability to give a more accurate and unduplicated scope of homelessness in our state over the course of a year. Due to obvious impact of COVID-19 on homelessness and its fragile system of care, this special report entitled "The Intersection of COVID-19 and the Unsheltered Homeless in NH" has been included in this report to better understand the pandemic's impact on an already large problem in our state. This special report highlights how most regions have observed an increased number in unsheltered homelessness in their communities since the start of the pandemic. In addition, the pandemic caused providers in all regions to experience new barriers in meeting the needs of those unsheltered. Many professionals also reported an increase in substance use and mental health substance abuse within this population. Sadly, one thing the data shows the most is that children and families were among those most impacted. While the state experienced a significant increase in single adults living unsheltered, we cannot ignore the 1,500 people and families who experienced homelessness during the course of the year. Since this information is gathered mostly from families who are connected to homeless service providers including emergency shelters and transitional housing, we know that this number is grossly understated. Many families who are homeless are living doubled up with family or friends and with little access to social services and often struggling alone to manage their family's homeless issue.

I am a salaried employee and I can't afford rent in this city. I have been a salaried employee in insurance for three years. I live with a friend too.

Those who are often considered the most vulnerable subsets of the homeless population are people who are unsheltered and are chronically homeless. This population's data was staggered this year in many ways. First, the point-in-time comparison data shows there was a 112% increase in the homeless population who are people with disabilities who have been homeless for significant amounts of time. Even before that, we had a 60% increase in sheltered homeless in NH the year before that in the state's largest urban center, Manchester.

A 60% increase. We are in 2021 and this report was released this year which means the data is from 2020. I dread the report they release in 2022 which is just around the corner about the "you know what" kind of job that has happened in this city and this state. These numbers are not going to go down.

Development found in 2019 was a greater proportion of rural and homeless unsheltered people are also coming into urban homeless populations.

This problem is not going away and Manchester is at the epicenter. We need to help our fellow neighbors, not just from our region but from our city. Listen to all of the voices here tonight.

Sara Tofanelli, 49 Marguerite Street, stated:

I spoke last week and I am back as promised. My focus tonight is homeless in the city and Families in Transition. I have been giving back outside of FIT for about six months and I am disappointed. If I ran an animal shelter like this, I would be stopped. We are talking about humans. There are violations from ADA to ethical such as the lift for disabled people being broken for months, not using the handicapped accessible door, not allowing clients to attend these meetings, not identifying veterans for other resources, running out of food and blankets yet they have the money to paint the exterior and tear down the greenhouse. Is that paint going to keep them warm? That is just a few off a long list. I called the Mayor's Office multiple times to be told they can't do anything. The Director of Homelessness Initiatives, Schonna Green, said not to feed the homeless because they could be addicts. You cannot stop these homeless issues but you can help it more sanitary and bearable for those who are homeless and residents alike. You can talk to any addict and you will see that drugs are not the problem but a bad coping mechanism to the real problem. It seems to me that no one

who is in a position of power to do anything will do anything and getting help is like slamming a revolving door. So having lost all of my confidence in you, Mayor Craig, your office, Families in Transition, and Schonna Green, I don't feel unreasonable in asking for a vote of no confidence. With that being said, I would like you to hear from the following people: Joe Ramer, Ryan Fairbanks, Chandell Vanderburgh, Booda Garong, Cindy Galinas, Joe Mellow, Eric Weller, Darrel Thibodeau, Kevin Gamache, Cody Clark, Cindy Pike, and Ann O'Grady. As you wait for them to come through that door, so does their family and they never will. That is just 12 of dozens of people who died in homelessness in this city left in the cold seeking warmth that you go to every night at your home and services. Some even died in Families in Transition due to lack of protocols and staff. I know it is easy to justify not helping these people but I, too, was a homeless addict. Fortunately for me, someone didn't decide if I deserved help or if I should be fed. They helped me because I was a human in need and look at me now. So before Manchester's memorial continues to grow, I hope you all realize how much more you can and should be doing. If I can do all of this as one person giving back, then I have no idea why you all can't step up. I ask you please let yourself be that someone in someone else's story like someone was in mine who helped save my life. Use your hand to reach down and lift them up and not carry the blood of their death on it.

Chris Potter, 470 Silver Street, stated:

I would like to speak to you in support of Jason Bonilla being nominated to the school board seat for Ward 5. I have known Jason for about five years ever since he came to work for City Year. For those of you who don't know, City Year is a very important program in the city providing tutors and role models in our schools especially focused on students who are below grade level in reading and math or who have behavior issues or are chronically absent. They give a lot of the individualized support and the relational mentorship in role modeling that helps kids to succeed and grow up to be successful Manchester citizens. Jason served for two years in City Year in Boston and Washington, DC and then came to NH to recruit people and bring them in to the city. People like William who have since stayed and contributed to the vibrancy of this city. I can tell you that I know Jason is very knowledgeable about our schools. He has been in

the schools and is experienced in working with children. He is dedicated to Manchester and its kids. He is a Ward 5 resident and homeowner. He is committed to equity based on his personal experience and what he has witnessed in three different underserved school districts. Jason is intelligent and hardworking and passionate. You all know what the proficiency scores are in our district. He is not going to let problems slide. He is here to solve problems and to be effective and help our students. I hope that he will be nominated tonight and when it comes time to vote for him to join the board, I hope you will all be supportive.

Dam Wright, Cartier Street, stated:

Thank you for letting me speak again tonight and thank you to everyone who spoke before me. As I said last time, we need a winter shelter. People are on the streets with no place to go. Even those who get into 1269 Café before it fills up can only sleep in chairs rather than in beds or even on the floor. We are working with some of you to finalize a proposal for opening a winter shelter as soon as possible and we hope we will have all of your support when you receive that proposal. Meanwhile, there are still major problems at the FIT shelter. They are still forcing everyone to stand outside twice a day from 7:45 AM to 8 AM and again from 5:30 PM to 6 PM. When I worked there a year ago I told them 20 different ways to avoid that but they still do it. It doesn't matter if it is freezing or if you don't have a coat or shoes. You wait outside twice a day no matter what and they wonder why people get sick all the time. They finally got lockers but they are not providing locks. Many people can't afford a lock and they are going to have to cut a lot of locks every time somebody doesn't show up. When I was in high school, every kid was issued a combination lock that the school had a master key for. They also decided that people can't keep anything in their bunks anymore so they kicked out a bunch of people who couldn't downsize their total worldly belongings into a single small locker. Estimates range from 9-25 people who got kicked out in one night for that. There are lots of more but I have limited time to speak here tonight. They think it is okay to do these things now because these people can go to 1269 except 1269 is not a shelter and it has been filling to capacity most nights. I have been going there. They have had to turn people away. What is worse is if somebody can't get into 1269, they can't get back into the shelter either. The shelter won't let anyone in after 7 PM.

They know that 1269 is filling to capacity and in some cases they are causing it either by kicking people out or just by being less appealing than 1269. They are making no effort to coordinate or adjust their policies so even when they have beds and 1269 is full, it is oops too bad you should have been here before 7 PM. People are getting left out in the cold. Tomorrow, FIT will be receiving an email and they will be informed that we will be pausing any criticisms or actions against them for now, my group, as we try once again to get them to work with us in making their policies and conditions into something that is actually suitable for human habitation. We are asking all of you, our Mayor and aldermen, to please help convince them that working with us is what is best for everyone, including them. Help them to understand that it is a far better option than continuing to work against each other. Help us make peace and make progress so that we don't have people living outside in the cold and so that people don't keep dying. Thank you.

Mayor Craig recessed the meeting to call the regular Board of Mayor and Aldermen meeting to order.

Larry Nice, 50 Lowell Street, stated:

I did speak to one gentleman downstairs. Apparently he is from up north but local now and has some medical needs. I am the Director of Helping Hands Outreach. I don't think he was aware of our program but he will be applying tomorrow morning and we will give him a warm place to stay. We have been doing this since 1993. I used to drive people down from the state prison who used to stay at Helping Hands and I think one of them is an employee for us now. Tonight I am requesting that the \$250,000 for handicapped housing at the corner of Pine and Central Streets be approved. I did speak to a gentleman downstairs just now who is in a wheelchair and liked this effort of course. I have spoken with Allen Villeneuve who did the work for the Padilla Corporation over 12 years ago to make the Homeless Care Center that was in existence back then. He has really whittled his numbers down to try to come within the \$250,000 budget. I do have copies of that budget if you would like to see it tonight. I trust that between us doing some of the work and him being able to focus on maybe not

the most modern HVAC systems and so forth that we could come within that \$250,000 even though it may only mean 8 rooms instead of 12 rooms there at that location.

Maria Perez stated:

I am not a resident of Manchester. I am a representative for District 23 in Milford. I am here to support Jason's nomination for the school board. It is critical because Manchester is one of the cities where we have diversity. We have a lot of different people from different countries and different cultures and I believe Jason can bring what we need to make the people feel welcome in Manchester. I know that Manchester is doing a lot to make everyone feel welcome but I think that adding Jason to the school board is critical to showing the community that we have diversity and including in Manchester as well. Thank you so much for your time.

Matthew Normand, City Clerk, stated I will note that we had one communication that was received and handed out this evening. It was from Brandon Lemay.

Damond Ford, 95A George Street, stated:

First, I want to thank Dan O'Neil for his service to the city. I moved here 12 years ago with City Year and he was one of the first people I met when I did my service as well as Mayor Craig. So thank you for your service. I am primarily here to speak on behalf of Jason Bonilla and his nomination to the school board. I live in Ward 10 and seeing someone who looks like my children and my friend's children is greatly appreciated and welcome in this city that has become more diverse and more inclusive in their teachings and the atmosphere and environment that we would like to have in this city. I strongly support his nomination and I ask you all to move the nomination tonight. Thank you.

*There being no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Cavanaugh**, 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 Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Roy**, 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, sweeping underline.

City Clerk