

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION)**

February 19, 2013

7:00 p.m.

Mayor Gatsas called the meeting to order.

Mayor Gatsas called for the Pledge of Allegiance.

A moment of silence was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Craig, Ludwig, Long, Roy, Osborne, Corriveau, O'Neil,
Levasseur, Shea, Katsiantonis, Shaw, Greazzo, Gamache, Arnold

Mayor Gatsas 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; that comments shall be limited to three minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak and any comments must be directed to the Chair; that any resident wishing to speak come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized, and give your comments.

Ms. Patrice Benard, 31 Aurore Avenue, stated:

I live at 31 Aurore Avenue, Manchester, which is the old entrance to Green Acres School. I come before you tonight because I know, Mr. Mayor, that you're presenting your budget. I ask you all to keep in mind that it is not just money growing on a tree, but it is money coming out of our families' wallets. My

husband has been unemployed for almost 18 months, we are struggling, unemployment checks stopped long ago, there really isn't anymore to give. I know you have seen a lot of people come here before you and ask for more and more. Your Honor, if you take more from me, it means my children can't go to a dance lesson. If you take more from me, it means I can't put gasoline in the minivan to go out grocery shopping or to take Auntie to mass. We really don't have more to give. To quote my favorite morning DJ, "We're all tapped out." So please keep that in mind. They always say it's for the children; my children deserve to have a mom and a dad who are living the American dream, the traditional family, a family where mom and dad have been married for 23 years, dad is trying to go out and support the family, and mom is staying home to take care of those children. We don't have any more to give you if we want to live our American dream. Please keep that in mind as you go through your budget negotiations. Thank you and God bless you and your families, who allow you to be here.

Mr. Glenn Ouellette, 112 Auburn Street, stated:

I want to thank you for the blue barrell. It was actually filled by the next day; that is how important those blue barrells are to this community, actually to our city, if we're going to be increasing recycling and saving money, providing more money for the City to use in areas that they need and having less taxation. Regarding the budget: waste, eliminate 5%. I've been saying this since 2001, and I find ways every time I come in here, but somehow you don't get the message. You're not eliminating it. Big projects that are built and within ten years of they're being bonded, they are either switched, torn down and rebuilt somewhere else, or just torn down or sold. If we didn't need it, why did build it? We spent a lot of money on the west side to build a parking lot for the high school. Not too many years later we sold it. If you sell that school, I know you're planning on closing it, if you sell that school, you're going to sell it without a parking lot. I guess your

philosophy is it will be their problem. The only thing is, whoever buys that won't be able to do anything with it if it doesn't have proper parking because of your zoning and planning. So where are we? I'm not in favor of closing West High School to begin with. I'm hoping, Your Honor, that you're not trying to close the west side library again. It seems to me that when we cut, we always cut on the west side. There are three aldermen on the west side, so they definitely don't get a majority. This idea that people should be walking to the east side; it works both ways. Regarding the airport: I think there's more room to grow. It's true that we're in a recession so we're going through a slump right now, but the airport has been very good to the City of Manchester and to the State of New Hampshire. I really see that coming back as the recession resolves itself. Regarding schools, \$3.2 million you gave to the schools two to three years ago. Ninety percent of those books are going to third world countries because you got rid of the classes. If you didn't need it, you shouldn't have bought them. That is why we need a plan. Have a good week, and work hard on the budget, but please do not take the money out of another budget to find out when you pass your budget you're going to be in a crisis in that department. The City has been known to do that. Do not do that; that is not financial fiscal responsibility. Thank you.

Ms. Leslie Want, 623 Belmont Street, stated:

My husband and I have lived there for 23 years now, and I remember, and maybe you guys remember, quite awhile ago I came and told you how many years that Manchester was voted the number one town or city in the United States by *Money Magazine*. I don't know if you remember on the corner of Mammoth Road and Bridge Street there was a huge sign there, really celebrating the fact that we were number one in the country, and I can't tell you how proud I was and how excited I was to let my family know back in New York that I was living in the number one city and they weren't. We have to worry a lot about what makes a city number one, or even in the top ten or the top 100. What makes a city that kind of city? I

have to say, and you know what I'm going to say, that I think the schools and the education we provide our young people has to be what factors into that. I know you are all concerned about that, I know if all of you could you would give as much money to the schools needed if we had it. I just wish that somehow we could find the money to make the schools what we need them to be for our kids. That is basically what I would like to say. People out there are looking at Manchester, people are deciding where they want to live, and we all know that one of the questions people always, always ask is how are the schools in such and such a community before they're ever going to move there what are the schools like, are the schools good, tell me about the schools. I'm not taking anything away from the firemen or the policemen or the town services, but people don't ask, maybe they should be asking how good are the police, how good are the firemen, how well are the roads plowed, but that is not the question they ask, and all of those things are vital and I know you'll find the money for those things. But I think we've also got to somehow find a way to educate our kids to top performance because our kids are the future. Not only our future as people and humans and adults, but the future of our city. Whether or not our city goes back to being number one, number ten, the top 100 will depend on how good our schools are, and I hope that you all, and I know you all want to help with that, and I just hope in this budget that you can do whatever is possible to make our schools the best they can be. Thank you.

Mr. Howard McCarthy, 52 Valentine Street, stated:

Good evening, Your Honor, and ladies and gentlemen. First of all I just got back from Florida, stayed down there a couple of weeks, I dropped my car down there so I don't have to drive again, it will stay down there. Joe Law, who is photographing this whole thing, did my driving. I drove from here to New York and he drove the rest of the way. It's a good thing he was with me because I don't think I would have made it. I'm back, and I'm going to take my 96-year-old sister

right back to Florida so you won't see me for a couple of months. I know you're going to miss me, but in a way I miss, believe it or not, coming here. I know you're going to give a speech here, Your Honor, and it will probably be, may be, about taxes maybe going up and teachers, I'm just guessing. I haven't been too much in touch with what's going on here. The thing is I think I should probably say something that has to do with a couple of stories. Years ago my bother-in-law was working in a factory in Beverly and they were going through some bad times financially. They were going to layoff a lot of people, so they decided to take a vote and the vote was to work four days instead of five so they wouldn't have to layoff. In other words, they were giving, giving something. I know I shouldn't use this term the "cry baby" teachers. They are doing pretty well; \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 or whatever they're getting, that's pretty good money, so why can't they give up something when this contract thing comes up. I used to work for Eastern Airlines and we were going through a critical period and Frank Bowman came to Boston, he went all over the system and we were going to go out on strike and he said we can't afford to give you anything, but we can't afford not to give you; we're in a bind. All the unions voted to go on strike; I myself voted against it, but we went on strike and a year or so later Eastern Airlines went down the tubes. What I'm saying is you have to give back something. Pretty soon this Charter Commission that's going on about doing things, myself I'd like to see five minutes of talking. Now there are four of us that did this tonight and if we did it all three minutes apiece, that's a big 12 minutes. Now don't you think you can tell that Charter Commission that you'd like to have five minutes. What the heck is another couple of minutes? Are you serious? In three minutes sometimes you can't get across everything you want. I'm looking for five minutes and I hope maybe you can tell them that five minutes is okay. This was all on the cuff about me coming back and saying anything at all. I hope that budget thing comes along. And one other thing, if you just give me another few seconds here, there are seven deadly sins, and they are pride, lust, envy, gluttony, and one or two there, some

with covet and sloth. I don't think anybody has that except one, and that is gluttony. And if you people have to insist on keeping three minutes and you can't give up another couple of minutes, and that's not saying one to five, I'll give you the plan when I come back. Your Honor, that is about the size of it. Thank you very much and good evening.

Mayor Gatsas asked is there anyone else present wishing to speak?

Mr. James O'Connell, Prospect Street, stated:

Good evening, Your Honor, and members of the board. I live on Prospect Street in Manchester. I think I'm ringing the same bell, but I'll ring it for a less amount of time tonight. I don't envy you as you go through the process you're about to go through. Again, on our budget I know there are significant constraints on our resources. I'm here to talk about schools, of course. Two budgets were offered or brought forward by Dr. Brennan to the School Board. One of those is the tax cap budget and the other is a school qualification budget. I think what I want you to note is that neither one of those two budgets is a budget that is offered to say this is what the Manchester School District actually needs to operate. If you get either one of the two budgets offered to the School Board, you won't get a budget that says this is what we need to offer the School District. The two budgets that the School Board is looking at before saving you one, is a tax cap budget, which is clearly not going to be adequate because it doesn't meet the larger of the two, which is the qualification budget. The qualification budget is the minimum amount of money this School District needs in order that it would meet minimum state qualifications and that our high schools remain accredited and that we would get somewhere close to meeting state minimums. That is an important realization I think for all of you think about as you're going forward because there is nothing like a budget that would say let's bring back and let's teach foreign languages in our schools like you find in every other district across southern New Hampshire,

outside of our high schools, and there are many other examples. That is the one key note that I wanted to put before you tonight. It is of concern to me that nobody in the city, it appears to me right now, either on the School Board or here with this Board of Mayor and Aldermen, has an opportunity to address a budget that this is actually needed to fund our schools. We at Citizens for Manchester Schools will continue to work on this and be before you as we go through process, but I urge you to look at the numbers very carefully and to find whatever money we can find to finance our School District. The last thing I will say is, there are those who would have us believe that we had an anomaly on our hands this current year, that there was a moment of madness or something that happened on the first weeks of school and that that was an anomaly and it was all fixed. And of course, you all know or should know that that is not the case and it was not all fixed. As of first week of January this year, we had 39 people in one classroom in a grade school, we have a class at McLaughlin Middle School today with 39 people in it. This is not a problem that has gone away. We have pretty much stayed away from the 40 number, but we've bumped right off it all the way through the year and that's just one of many metric we might look at. Again, thank you for your time. I don't envy you in your deliberations, but I think our schools and its funding have got to be foremost in your thinking. Thank you for your time and attention.

Ms. Lisa Johnston, Miami Court, stated:

I just wanted to say briefly to please support our schools. I volunteer in the schools a lot and I know what they are going through. We really need to make sure that we get them the funds they need to maintain their teachers, to hopefully add some again, to continue to grow our city. Again, I don't have a big speech, but I really would urge you to properly fund our schools, and I would hope you look for excellence. I know our teachers out there are dedicated, they are working hard, they are giving up their time as well as the rest of us trying to make it all work. But really just please look at the budget and properly fund our schools. I'm

a taxpayer and I've been a taxpayer for a long time in the city and I'm willing to pay more if that's what it takes to fund education but it needs it to go to education. My child's future is at stake and I would hope you could support that. Thank you.

Mr. Nick Want, 623 Belmont Street, stated:

Again, we're in a very difficult time obviously with the proposed budgets going forward. But now you are in the position that we have been talking about or discussing for the past year or so, which is the responsibility as elected officials of this City to make some very, very difficult decisions, hard decisions. It is not a matter of being that we have lots of money; we appreciate that there is no endless amounts of money, we have to be extremely frugal. Other comments were made earlier about waste that may be occurring in the city, but your job now is going to be very difficult. But that is why you were elected; you weren't elected necessarily to have an easy ride, you weren't elected to make easy decisions, you were elected to make tough decisions and some of those decisions are going to favor some people, some people are going to be happy with them and some people will not. But your responsibility is to the City of Manchester, and I think you have been paying attention to the information in the press, information about the Charter Commission, there is a lot of support for the emphasis investing in the education in this City as one of the cornerstones for the foundation of this City. So, again, we're here to observe; the mayor is proposing his budget tonight, we're very anxious to see what that is, but I will say I am very happy to see, as a personal comment, that we are beginning this process significantly earlier than we have in the past, which will help. It gives more time for discussion, more time for agreement, more time for compromise for us to all move forward. Again, I wish you all the best. We're waiting and listening anxiously for the results. Thank you.

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

Mayor Gatsas stated a couple of things if we could get the indulgence of the board. Chief Mara is here. The policemen's ball is Saturday, March 9th at the Radisson, and tickets are \$35. He wanted me to announce that this evening because he hopes that he can get rid of the balance of the tickets that he has.

*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 written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

City Clerk