

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

February 6, 2001

7:00 PM

Mayor Baines called the meeting to order.

Mayor Baines called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman Hirschmann.

Mayor Baines stated before we pause for a moment of silence, I would like everyone to keep in your thoughts and prayers this evening former Alderman John Battalis who passed away. Many will remember that John was a very colorful figure in Manchester politics and certainly was someone who really committed his all to service to our community so it is in his honor that I ask all of you to observe a moment of silence in his memory this evening.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Wihby, Gatsas, Levasseur, Sysyn, Clancy, Pinard, O'Neil, Lopez, Shea, Vaillancourt, Cashin, Thibault and Hirschmann

Absent: Alderman Pariseau

Mayor Baines 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 two minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak and any comments must be directed to the Chair.

Mayor Baines 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.

Fred O'Connor, 23 Country Club Drive, Manchester stated:

I am here today to say that there is no question where the senior center is going to be and that is Singer Park, which makes me as well as everyone that I am familiar with very happy. We do not like the idea of the consolidation and I think all of the members of Manchester should be very happy that the Sears building is not going to be purchased and we are not going to spend \$4 million to buy it, \$4 million to renovate it and all that

money is coming out of the taxpayers pocket. The schools need to be serviced far more than consolidation of City departments in the Sears building. I think all that money that was proposed for the Sears building should be transferred to the School District. They need it more than anybody else does. I thank every one of the Aldermen, as well as you, Mayor, for giving us an individual spot down at Singer Park. Thank you very much.

Russell Spaulding, 321 Gold Street, Manchester stated:

We are here this evening as we were two weeks ago. We read in the paper that there is a proposal to change the zoning of the Volkswagen Dealership from industrial to commercial on Gold Street. We were here a month ago, I believe, for the Public Service land changing from industrial to commercial. The same argument here. We don't want any changing of any zoning down in that area until the traffic problem on Gold Street has been taken care of. We had a jersey barrier up there for a month and it seemed to work out fine for us, not for the rest of the City but for us it was pretty decent. If you would please consider...I don't know if this is in the Bills on Second Reading Committee or a broad paintbrush swipe of changing the zoning but I wish you would amend that to take this Volkswagen property off of the changing of the zoning. Thank you.

Jan Spaulding, 321 Gold Street, Manchester stated:

Even if all of this land is not rezoned, it still is an issue with the traffic on Gold Street that we really hope you are going to keep in mind. That should be done even if it is not rezoned. We don't want any rezoning and I am sure we would have had another petition going for this Volkswagen property if we had read it in the paper. I am sure that everyone who signed the petition for the Public Service land would also be against rezoning the Volkswagen property. Thank you.

Clem Lemire, 71 Hume Street, Manchester stated:

I am here to speak on the senior center. I think I am qualified. Our department used to run both centers years ago and I have a few comments. I never thought I would have to sit here before you tonight to fight for a central senior citizen center in Manchester. I thought you had already appropriated the money and it was a go. What went wrong? We have an excellent City owned site in Singer Park, which is the best central location in the City. There are bad rumors going around that some of the Aldermen have personal interests in the Sears building site in order to bail out a real estate broker for some of the offices that have not been rented. I say that is hogwash. I have worked for nearly 30 years for the Aldermen and the Mayor and Aldermen and I found them honest, upright and hardworking. Those rumors should be squashed right away. The seniors don't deserve to be in the middle of a civil war. They have worked hard to make our City a nice place to live and work. They don't deserve having their money taken from them and put in a pot for other interests. I can't understand why the Aldermen on the West Side,

the inner City, the East Side and also the south side could oppose the Singer site. It has close access to the West Side and is within walking distance of the downtown area, which has two large senior high-rise units and is close to the bus service. Moreover, it is a nice open space where seniors have been hoisted over the years in rooms that have very little outside visual quality. At the Singer site, a creative artist could build a simple, no frill structure with a lot of windows overlooking our famous Merrimack River to the west, to the north and south. The main room of the structure should be large enough to hold dances and the seniors could relive their old days at the Carousel Ballroom. A negator could say a lot of seniors don't dance but that is because the seniors don't have a ballroom to go to. You should follow my wife and I and other couples to dances when we have to go out of town to places like the senior center in Nashua. I say just imagine yourselves one nice evening dancing at Singer Park with windows overlooking the river and the lights from cars on the highway and lights on the west side and on the Millyard buildings. I spent my youth going to dance halls that were situated on the edges of lakes. I would like the seniors to enjoy those feelings again. What makes the site so appealing is that it can be used for dual purposes. The majority of sports activities at Singer field are in late afternoon and early evening in the spring and fall. Parking lots could be shared and it is possible that arrangements could be made so that the teams could be using the center also. I attended a couple of championship games at Singer field this fall and the visiting teams didn't seem to have a place to meet while waiting for previous teams to be terminating their contest. Other dual uses could be developed. I could go on and on, however, with just these few suggestions I know you will give serious thought to the great advantages of Singer Park. You don't have to buy land. You don't have to buy another building with the high cost of renovations. In honor of our former President, Ronald Reagan, who is 90 years old today and whose famous statement went, "Tear down this wall, Mr. Gorbachev" I say break up this log jam ladies and gentlemen and let's start building at Singer Park right away. Thank you.

Charles Hauser, 304 Westwood Drive, Manchester stated:

In my current position, I am Chairman of the Board of the Granite State Senior Games and what are we, we are the state's premiere senior sports organization. Our mission is to promote healthy lifestyles for seniors through education and athletic competition. I think we do a pretty good job of that. This will be our fourteenth year of competition. We are moving to Manchester in August of this year where we will conduct our games and we are very much interested in athletic competition. I am also one of the "old guys" who plays shuffleboard at Kolivas Park in the summer time. I am the baby of the group, but what happened there is that the Parks & Recreation has decided that they are going to completely reconstruct that park and they are not going to put the shuffleboard courts back. They are in terrible shape and they need some rework and the answer to that is that the senior center will cover that, but in the meantime it is going to be awhile before that

happens. The construction of a senior center should include some recreational facilities. One of them that I would suggest is two or three shuffleboard courts both indoor and outdoor. Outdoor for the good weather and indoor for the bad weather like we have right now. A couple of horseshoe pits outside. A couple of table tennis tables inside. This would keep those people active, the ones who look for more than bingo or canasta or whist or bridge. It is very important to the health of seniors. In our organization, you have to be 50 years old. We treat seniors just right. We bring them in at 50 and we nurture them through up to their 80's or 90's. I would really advocate the inclusion of some sports facilities in the building wherever it is going to go.

Joseph Dutile, 156 Huse Road, Manchester stated:

I want to reiterate my position in hoping that we receive Singer Park for the senior center site. I know we have in reserve \$1.3 or \$1.4 million. Wouldn't it be nice if you could give the seniors something they could be proud of? Give us a nice place at Singer Park so that we can go down there and enjoy ourselves as Clem and Mr. Hauser said. Please vote tonight. Vote in our favor and please, Mr. Mayor, do not accept a recess motion from these people because last month we had an 8-6 vote, we had a recess and I did try to keep Mr. Gatsas out here talking but he insisted going in the back room because he needed a snack. Now, Mr. Gatsas, you don't need a snack anymore than I do. After he came back we lost our position at Singer Park so no recess tonight. Vote Singer Park. Thank you.

Rita O'Connor, 23 Country Club Drive, Manchester stated:

I am here to ask like everyone else before me to go to Singer Park. There has been much said about a new senior center over the past two years and the process I think everyone has forgotten the true purpose for a new senior center. That is the growth that is occurring at the centers. I go to the West Side center on a weekly basis and I see new and younger seniors coming in weekly. They we welcome with open arms by our director, Claire. Many of you think that the centers serve as a social outlet for us with bingo, cards and trips and that is part of it but there is much more that you do not know about. The dedication of the Elderly Services Department employees is never ending and they have years combined experience and expertise in this field. They have our best interests at heart and help us in so many ways. They help with our checkbooks and give advice in different areas. They point us in the right direction when one of our spouses needs special services. This is just a small portion of what they do for us, the seniors. We need a senior center that will facilitate the availability of these and other services. I feel the only way to do this is to build one freestanding center at Singer Park. Parking, parking, parking and more parking. We have been here so many times asking for a new center. The taxes we have paid over the years have supported schools, athletic fields, and paved our roads. Now I think it is time for some of that tax money to build a first class senior

center and not five or ten years from now. The Sears site, consolidation of departments, is not the answer for the seniors of Manchester. We have many needs that will never be met by this consolidation. Please, the center now before it is too late for us to enjoy it. We don't need an \$18 burden on the taxpayers. Keep the seniors independent and well for as long as possible. The Elderly Services Department is one unit that we can go to when we need it. The money the City saves in the long run will be well worth the effort and the cost. Thank you.

Mayor Baines stated the Clerk has asked me to inform the public that the Senior Center site is not on tonight's agenda. The information is anticipated to be presented at the second meeting in March.

Hubie McDonough, 65 Holmes Street, Manchester stated:

If I look worse than usual, I have an excuse. I just came back from overseas. Last night I tried to land, well the plane tried to land at Logan in the middle of a storm. We were circling and we couldn't see anything and after many circles the pilot said don't worry ladies and gentlemen, we have enough fuel for at least one more go round. So anyway thank God we got down, but all transportation up this way was gone so I spent last night sitting in a chair at Logan International Airport. I finally got a bus and came up this morning, my wife and I and I said I better get a newspaper. I take the *Union Leader* out and holy mackerel. I said look at this; Bob Shaw is building a supermarket on South Willow Street. She said no, no. I know you are sleeping but it is a different Shaw. I said fine. I looked to the left and there is Irene Robie. I say oh that is right there is a meeting. Holy mackerel the senior center I have to get down there and talk about. Well everyone has spoken about it telling you why it should be in Singer Park better than I can I suppose but I will just add my two cents worth and hope that you will put it there. The different features that are wanted there have been mentioned. I have heard in the past, well they won't go down there. I will tell you what, when it is built...of course build it big enough so we don't need portable classrooms in the second week it is open but anyway once it is built open it with a flair, a celebration and all kinds of things to get people to come to the center and see it. Once they see it, you know the old saying, build it and they will come. They will come once they see it. So going on with that and looking around the paper I said to my wife have I got this straight on the back of the senior center the Mayor is going to add a little room there for an office for Susan Lafond? She said no you have that wrong too. I mean that headline has nothing to do with this headline over here. So, I don't want to confuse anywhere. Shaw, Lafond, Robie, McDonough...we all agree on one thing Singer Park for the senior center. Then someone else said what about the hobo jungle. I said hobo jungle, we are going to take the hobos out of the jungle. They are going to play shuffleboard and they are not going to be hobos anymore. They are going to love it. Thank you.

Lou Bayko, 625 Chestnut Street, Manchester stated:

Last week a group of us volunteers worked at the local Girl Scout office helping them with a bulk mailing. The volunteers ranged in age from 35 to 83. The subject of the senior center came up and triggered a volley of questions, particularly with reference to the baby boomers. One woman baby boomer was fascinated with the plans we have in mind. She asked many interesting questions and was completely unaware that she and her constituents could join in with our team. She definitely specified to make it large enough to accommodate the influx of their age group. Many projects and subjects were discussed. She further promised, as soon as the ball was rolling, that we would be hearing from them. She specified they were adamant with regard to having a state-of-the-art building in a country setting in order to accommodate outside activities. Thank you.

Irene Robie, 1046 Hayward Street, Manchester stated:

Have you noticed, Mr. Mayor, all of the men I have talking tonight? Do you remember the day that I told you I was getting a lot of calls from the male seniors and you asked if I was delighted? You don't know how delighted I was. It is a great thing to have men since it has always been women who came and did the talking but they came with a plan because they had been searching for something like that. There is nothing that we can think of that would take the place of Singer Park unless it is another piece of land in a country-type setting where they can have outside and inside activities. The Riverwalk would perhaps become famous if we were there because every day we could get a group of them to walk down there and get their daily exercise. The men could fish or even launch a boat, but anything like a structured, existing building would be completely out of the question so please think of the seniors. Don't think about them as oh they will help us buy a building. Think of the seniors for once that they can have a center that will make them very happy. Thank you very much.

Bruce Connell, 358 Mitchell Street, Manchester stated:

I would like to take this opportunity first to thank the members of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen who voted in favor of allowing us to speak before your general meeting although some may be regretting that it is a good idea and I hope it continues on. My concern tonight is the issue concerning the abandoned rail bed that extends from Nutts Pond through the center of the City, I believe, to Singer Park. I would like to voice our concern on that. I am representing a group of people from the south end of Manchester that would like to see that abandoned railbed used for recreational purposes rather than a roadway. It is our understanding that there is a proposal before the Board to make this into a roadway to extend from Gold Street to Spring Gardens to relieve some traffic that is anticipated because of zoning that is coming up. I am here to voice my opposition to

that. We are opposed to the further development of the south end of Manchester, which we feel is already over commercialized. There is not a day that goes by that you don't hear complaints about traffic in that general area. Adding more buildings is not the answer. The new zoning that is now proposed for Donovan Springs and the Public Service land from industrial to commercial will add more traffic to the already overburdened area. Building a roadway from Nutts Pond to Spring Gardens is not the answer. Impact to the community will be significant and should not be taken lightly. We are simply asking that you do not vote to accept the zoning at this time. Please give us the time to bring forth our own proposals. There are many citizens in Manchester who would like to see the abandoned railbed turned in for recreational purposes rather than another roadway. We believe the community would be better served with a bicycle path that could be used for jogging, walking and rollerblading. Manchester is to be commended for the efforts of Clem Lemire in setting much land aside for organized sports such as baseball, football, track and soccer. Little has been done for recreational use to be used by all citizens any time. Manchester has a great opportunity to use the abandoned railbed to provide a safe place for families to jog, walk and bike. We know that there are real dollars that are being promised by commercial interests for the roadway in the form of impact fees totaling some \$1.4 million. All we are asking is that you give us time to come up with an alternate proposal. We will be able to locate funding that will provide a much better alternative to the City of Manchester, to the environment and to all the people.

Mayor Baines stated just for your information, the zoning issue that is coming before the Board this evening does not include the issues that you have addressed this evening. If they were to be under consideration, there would be a full public hearing in regards to those matters.

Charleen Parsons, 510 Chestnut Street, Manchester stated:

I am coming before you again to address the current situation in the Welfare Department. It is truly regrettable that this situation has not yet been resolved. After the unfavorable findings of the police investigation, Commissioner Lafond should have seen two choices before her. Address the issues head on and be willing to make changes where necessary or resign if she was not willing to change. It is regrettable that she has not done either. It is unfortunate that this situation has unfolded in the way it has. It is unfortunate that Susan's reputation has been damaged, however, ultimately Commissioner Lafond can only blame herself and her choices for this. Not the Mayor and not the employees of this department. It is regrettable that such a dedicated group of hard working City employees have been put through nine months of health. It is unconscionable that we now go to work every day in fear of Susan's return. I commend the Mayor for the actions he has taken. He has clearly demonstrated to me that he is a man of his word. He has put the

people of this department before politics and I hope you all have the courage and integrity to do the same. Thank you.

John St. Hilaire, 99 Murphy Street, Manchester stated:

I delivered to City Hall yesterday morning a stack of letters that should have been sent to you with the beginnings of petitions attached to them. That is not the end, that is just the start. The reason we are here tonight is fear. We know that you are going to or it is on the agenda to come up – the Donovan Spring property to zone it to commercial. That is not the main fear. The main fear is allowing access to that property from South Beech Street. It has been said and it has been rumored to have been said that if Shaws were to build and plans are under work for them to put a building on the Donovan property that an access would be allowed to the back side of that property from the South Beech area. Take Presidential Road, take Sewall, take Gold Street, take Sherwood Drive, take Westwood Drive, take any of these streets and triple it. Those are the problems you are going to run into on Dewey Street, Flint Street, Mitchell Street and every other street that connects Calef Road to South Beech Street. Everybody who lives on the West Side of South Willow Street who is going to go to Shaws will avoid South Willow Street at all costs and will approach that property from that area. None of those roads were built for that kind of traffic. They will not handle it. They are not wide enough. They are all residential with a lot of children playing. There are not a lot of sidewalks. It is just not a smart safety move. If you want to zone Donovan properties commercial, zone it commercial. It is in keeping with the rest of what is around it on South Willow Street, but the access should be from South Willow Street only. There should be no access from any point behind. Thank you very much.

Michael Porter, 142 Golfview Drive, Manchester stated:

There comes a time when the Aldermen must put people before politics and address the critical issues at the Welfare Department. First of all, I commend Mayor Baines for taking the action he did. As an employee and as a lifelong resident of this City, I support Mayor Baines 100%. Everybody seems to be focused now on Mayor Baines and what actions he took. Why aren't the Aldermen outraged at the actions of Mrs. Lafond? Where is the outrage that Mrs. Lafond took off for 30 days without any notification? Where is the outrage that Mrs. Lafond shows up for work on average of 3-5 days per month? Where is the outrage at how Mrs. Lafond has treated her past and present employees? Where is the outrage at Mrs. Lafond for not following through on a housing initiative that she brought to the *Union Leader* in May of 2000 and never followed through on ultimately costing the taxpayers thousands of dollars because of Mrs. Lafond not showing up for work to get the deal done? The problems in the Welfare Department have been going on for quite some time. You have all heard various speakers. You have all read many different reports. Many people for years have been fearful to step forward.

I did step forward. Some Aldermen on this Board have made this a me issue and that is regretful. This is an office issue. This is a department issue. We work for the City of Manchester. Mayor Baines has worked in a very diligent manner in this situation. He, along with his staff, Mark Hobson and all of Human Resources have made every attempt to resolve the issues with dignity and respect to all parties. However, Mrs. Lafond chose to defy the Mayor at every point. We attempted to resolve the issues with a facilitator in September. Mrs. Lafond rejected this and became very demeaning and acted in a very hostile manner during that meeting. Mayor Baines was faced recently with security issues which we, as employees, brought to him and were verified by Ronald Robidas and Tom Jordan. Business cannot go on as usual. We cannot show up for work any longer in fear of our safety and in fear of retaliation, retribution or intimidation. Mrs. Lafond needs to agree to work and transition through the issues with a facilitator and she needs to agree to stop the intimidation, the bullying and demeaning posture she has taken for many years before she should be allowed back into that office location. We need to feel that we have a safe work environment free from the above mentioned. I am almost done and I apologize for running over. I was somewhat dismayed, however, in reading the *Union Leader* articles with some of the comments coming from the Aldermen on this Board. We, as an office, made every effort to meet with you to discuss the issues. Many of you refused. Several of us have spoken during public comment sessions here at the Aldermanic meetings. Some of us have actually spoken with a few Aldermen. I have spoken with Aldermen Hirschmann, Levasseur, Lopez and Pinard and they all listened very intently and I thank you for that. I want to publicly thank you. When I hear an Alderman state that Mayor Baines has abused his office, I am somewhat confused. Mrs. Lafond appears to work an average, again of 3-5 days per month and this has been continuing for years but nobody seems to be outraged by that conduct. Mrs. Lafond allows fraud on the taxpayers yet nobody, nobody on this Board is outraged at that. Mrs. Lafond is able to retaliate against employees who do step forward with legitimate complaints, yet no outrage. The Mayor does his job to protect the employees and suddenly the Aldermen speak out against the Mayor. I will wrap it up by saying that I appeal to the Board to please take a look at this issue and please support the employees and the Mayor.

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

Mayor Baines called the meeting back to order.

Denise Syrek, 510 Chestnut Street, Manchester stated:

I have been employed with the Welfare Department for 11 years and I am here to speak to you again. I wish to address all of you regarding the Mayor's decision to provide a

temporary office in City Hall for Susan Lafond. Mayor Baines has exhausted all other steps to bring intervention and resolution to the long-term crisis that exists within the Welfare Department. In July, he directed the Human Resource Department to immediately begin working with the Welfare Department to address the numerous management issues brought forth in the Police Department's executive summary. Many of which have overwhelmed this office for years. Susan's unwillingness to work with her staff, Human Resources, outside facilitators and even the Mayor's Office has now escalated this situation to one that is potentially volatile unless a transition plan of this magnitude is implemented. The City of Manchester holds tremendous financial liability if City Welfare employees are not protected from physical and psychological harm or work-related retaliation. Employees will no longer be managed by fear and intimidating management practices and Mayor Baines has now taken the necessary steps to prevent that. Many Aldermen have publicly reprimanded Mayor Baines for the way he has handled this issue, but let me remind you since April of 2000, Mayor Baines has made every attempt to resolve this situation with the least embarrassment or media attention possible while preserving the dignity of all people. It is beyond belief that Aldermen and citizens of Manchester are outraged by the Mayor's decision and yet unmoved by the events which caused such a decision to be made. Proverb states if you faint in the day of adversity your strength is small. Mayor Baines is to be commended and supported for displaying great strength in the midst of incredible opposition and adversity and I support him 100% and ask that you do the same. Thank you.

Diane Guimond, 510 Chestnut Street, Manchester stated:

I am an employee of the City of Manchester Welfare Department. I have been very reluctant to speak out regarding the concerns of the employees of the Welfare Department because I personally feel that number one the Mayor and his staff have worked hard to find an amicable solution to this most difficult situation. Number two, I personally do not feel that the office's dirty laundry should be aired in the public. Thirdly, all people involved, including Susan, should and must be treated with respect and dignity. I have worked nine plus years for the City of Manchester as a case worker in the Welfare Department and hope to continue to serve the residents of the City for many more years. I also work as a facilitator in the TQM process and was recently elected Chairwoman of that group. My co-workers have also asked that I represent them at non-affiliate meetings. I take great pride in these added responsibilities as I try to effect change for all employees so that we may better serve the residents of the City. Mayor Baines has taken an active role in attempting to gracefully effect change in our department. He has been made fully aware of the many, many concerns of each employee of this department through extensive communication with Wayne Robinson, Mark Hobson, Christine Martinsen, Ron Robidas, Tom Jordan, Lt. Mark Lussier and others who have spent a great deal of time interviewing us to determine the issues that

have plagued our office for many years. I believe many of us here today are comfortable in saying that Susan Lafond has done an excellent job as Commissioner of Welfare for many years. She has worked tirelessly meeting the needs of the indigent residents of the City. Let us not confuse the issue before us today. The issue today is about Susan Lafond's managing style. They are two very separate and distinct issues. Susan has used bullying, intimidating tactics for many years. Several former and current employees can attest to this. Based on our last meeting on September 27 I heard Susan say three times it is my way or no way. Based on this, I must believe that her bullying tactics and intimidating styles will only continue. Personally, I have worked under this management style and know firsthand how it feels. It has taken a considerable amount of time, but Susan and I were able to resolve some issues and did work amicably for a period of time. However, I do not believe that under the present situation I would be able to work with Susan without intervention. I am entitled to a safe working environment in which there is no room for fear of retaliation. I ask the Board of Aldermen to support Mayor Baines in his courageous decision to keep Susan out of our office until she is willing to work on a transition plan. I continue to applaud the Mayor and his outstanding staff for the support to the employees of our department. Thank you.

Nancy Foster, Hillsborough, NH stated:

Ladies and gentlemen and people of the City of Manchester, I stand before you tonight a former employee and a victim of Susan Lafond's abuse of power. Almost four years ago, Mrs. Lafond hired me as Director of Manchester Emergency Housing. City Welfare controls this family shelter. I had several interviews with Mrs. Lafond and her assistant before I was offered and accepted the position. There is no way I am going to get through this whole long story in three minutes so I am just going to take this paper that I spent all day writing and I am going to turn to the last page and what I am going to say is I commend the Mayor of Manchester for standing up for what is right. I understand that Susan is well established in the City of Manchester. She made comments to me and I can prove every allegation I make. I have a briefcase. I photocopied and kept a log and journal of every day on my job. Some of the very people that I felt were against me and saw what happened to me happen are sitting in this room behind me tonight. Susan Lafond is a terrible person. She not only is ripping off the taxpayers but out of all this stuff I hear the liability of the Aldermen and the liability of the City...nobody here has even said how many lives that woman has messed up. I can tell you. If you have longer than three minutes and somebody really wants to talk to me and really wants to find out what Susan Lafond is about. I do not want her job. I have nothing to gain. I have been on disability since I was fired from my job. I have doctor's records. I have all the proof you people need. This is humiliating for me. I have to take medicine just to be here. Do something while you have the chance and I am glad you guys finally got the guts to stand up to her. Thank you.

Alderman Hirschmann stated can I just make a point of order. In every meeting in the past you never allowed anybody to speak to someone's personality and now you are letting this go very far in the public's eye. What is happening here? You used to tell people that it couldn't be a personal thing and you would make comments frequently but you are letting it go now. Is there a difference with this issue? Could you tighten that up, your Honor?

Mayor Baines replied I will and I appreciate that. I would make a statement that I appreciate Alderman Hirschmann's comment. I do take...this is a very complex and difficult issue for us but no one has made personal comments about Susan being a terrible person or anything of that nature so I think that is regrettable and I apologize for not stepping in and stopping that.

Alderman Shea stated one gentleman made comments about her having committed fraud. That is a very terrible statement and if it can't be proven in a court of law that is really a libelous statement. If that can't be proven, she has grounds for suit.

Robert Powers, 510 Chestnut Street, Manchester stated:

I have worked at the City Welfare Office for 23 years. I have great admiration and respect for Susan Lafond. I feel that her philosophy on Welfare and the treatment of clients is basically what mine is and that is one of the main reasons why I remained there for all of those years. City Welfare is a high burnout job. We have stresses from our clients. We have stresses from the Aldermen. We have stresses from the management above us. This is hard enough without having to face everything else that is going on. Her management style is the concern of myself and my fellow workers, not Susan Lafond or her philosophy. As far as her philosophy goes for Welfare, I think it is good. Management style is the problem. Now this has already been addressed by several of my co-workers. It is very hard for me to come here tonight. I love my job. I have done it for as I said 23 years. I feel like I am putting my job on the line right now by speaking out, but somebody has to. I have to look at my fellow workers. Susan Lafond and I have had a good relationship, but if I see something going on with my fellow workers, I feel that I have to speak out on that. There is fear among them. We don't know what is going to happen. The Mayor has put a transition plan in place for her to come back. I agree with that. This transition is not just for us, it is for her too. We are there and he is there to protect her rights as much as our rights but something needs to be done. When she left, she left the office in fear. We have no idea what has happened to her during this whole time period. Nobody has told us why she was out. I would just like to wrap this up by saying that one of my fellow workers came up with this pin, which you can probably see. It says people before politics. I consider myself a people person. My fellow workers are

people persons also. Listen to their concerns and take it under consideration I beg of you.
Thank you.

Jackie Whatmough, 510 Chestnut Street, Manchester stated:

I am currently the Deputy Welfare Commissioner. This is most difficult for me. I have had a long term working relationship and friendship with Commissioner Lafond. There is no one better at local Welfare issues and advocacy for the poor. She has taught me everything I know about local Welfare. I would never wish the series of events that have led up to tonight on anyone including Susan or our staff. I have tried to focus on the day-to-day operations in the department and out of loyalty to Susan I have not participated in any of the letters or press releases or public speeches, however, I have to speak tonight to support totally the Mayor's plan to have Susan return to her position but at another location until a transition plan is in place. In anticipation of Susan's return, the anxiety and fear of the employees rose to a level that was determined to be a major concern by Mayor Baines, Human Resources Director Mark Hobson, City Solicitor Tom Clark, Security Manager Red Robidas, Employee Assistance Director Tom Jordan and Chief Driscoll. A meeting was held with Susan and her attorney and it was clear that Susan planned to return to the office, but did not agree to any facilitation or mediation with the staff. Emotions are running high. The Mayor has taken these steps to protect both the employees and Susan. He is also concerned about the liability to the City should anything happen in this tense environment. Susan has been out on medical leave for four months and the staff members are exhibiting stress related physical symptoms. This decision was a difficult one for everyone involved. I understand there are complex legal issues here, however, there are serious employee issues at stake as well. Our office provides important services to members of our community who are the most vulnerable. It is a stressful, demanding profession. We have been dealing with internal stress for the past 10 months. It is extremely difficult to continue to provide the level of service that our job demands when we have this never ending stress over these unresolved internal issues. We only ask that we have some intervention services in place in our department when Susan returns. Mayor Baines has tried to get this done for months. Both the employees' issues, as well as Susan's issues can be put on the table and hopefully some resolution to these issues will occur. It will only be then that we can function as an effective City department. I ask you tonight to support the Mayor's actions. Thank you.

Gene Mackie, 15 Keene Street, Bedford stated:

For the last 15 months I have held the position of Administrative Services Manager in the Welfare Department. I want to thank you for the opportunity to be able to speak out on behalf of Mayor Baines's effort to provide all of the members of the Welfare staff and I emphasize that, all of the members of the Welfare staff with a safe and secure place to work. I am very fortunate and proud to have the opportunity to work with a group of

dedicated professionals who give their all to help the less fortunate of our community. Under the best of conditions their jobs are not easy. To work in a situation where you fear for your physical and mental well being only makes matters worse. It seems like every day you read an article in the newspaper or see a report on television involving violence in the workplace. One day it is Wakefield, MA and then it is Melrose Park, IL. I don't want the next headline to read Manchester, NH. I have taken what I can best describe and my co-workers would probably agree as a passive role in the situation involving the Welfare Commissioner and the caseworkers. For the most part, I was not involved in the incidents that have been described by the caseworkers. While I have not always agreed with Susan's management style, she is the head of the department and I was hired to do the work she assigned to me whether or not I agreed with her approach. I felt then and continue to feel that any differences that I may have with Susan can be worked out between the two of us. I care about our staff and I care about Susan. I am especially concerned about the confrontations that might take place when Susan returns to our office. Emotions are running extremely high and emotional people do strange things. I am not a clairvoyant and I don't pretend to know what is going to happen. The optimist in me hopes that there will be no incidents and the department can go on with its work of helping the City's less fortunate. I truly don't want to see anyone hurt beyond what has already occurred. There are a lot of wounds on both sides that are going to take a long time to heal. I agree with Mayor Baines that a plan must be put into effect to provide each and every, and I stress each and every Welfare Department employee a safe and secure place to work. A place where he or she can work with dignity and respect. I applaud the Mayor for his concern for our welfare and I thank all of you for listening.

Jeff Kassel, 22 Appleton Street, Manchester stated:

I, too, read the articles in the *Union Leader* and listened to all of the people in the Welfare Department and some of the rhetoric is pretty shrill. This problem, it seems to me, is directly related to the fact that the Welfare Commissioner is an elected position and the person that occupies that position cannot be disciplined and really has no supervisors. Mr. Baines's suggestion not too long ago that this should be an appointed position or a position within the bureaucracy of the City government, I thought, made sense. I guess a lot of the Aldermen didn't agree with it. I noticed the Aldermen feel very free to speak out in the press and I don't think some of these remarks have been all that helpful. Suddenly, everybody is a lawyer on the Aldermanic Board and I think if anybody looks closely at what has happened, there is no legal cause of action here. Not yet anyway in the sense that somebody can get sued or the City can be sued for something that has happened because really very little has happened. There has been a lot of acrimony and a lot of people have vented here at the Aldermanic meeting and in various newspaper articles. To me, this is really a sideshow because this Board should be concerned with the real issues of the City. From time to time, departments in any

organization suffer from this kind of trouble and that trouble is usually resolved internally. We have other issues in this City involving tens of millions of dollars – the School Board, people have been promoting the senior center here tonight, Riverwalk...these are serious issues and the taxpayers of this City must also be respected. I would urge the Board to concern itself more with the issues involving \$20 and \$30 million or \$150 million rather than what is going on in a small department in Manchester. Thank you.

Walter Stiles, 226 Sagamore Street, Manchester stated:

I am a lifelong resident of the City of Manchester. I would like to talk about the senior center. I have had a lot of talks with Irene Robie and she is quite a woman. She really is. She has more pep, vim and vigor than most people half her age. I told Irene, I said I don't really need a senior center but I know that we do need one. A lot of people need a senior center and I think we ought to get off the issue and get on to building the senior center. Now, Alderman Gatsas in Ward 2 took a survey of the people and frankly I told Irene that I voted for the Chestnut Street location but that doesn't mean it should go on Chestnut Street. Anyway, I don't think we can fool around any longer. We have to get going on this senior center and Irene says that she probably won't be around. Well, I will tell you that Irene will be around for a long time more than you think. A lot of people have spoken about it. Hubie McDonough now for example, Hubie used to help me deliver my papers on Route 47 on Pinecrest up at the corner of...we have a lot of volunteers down at City Hall who are 80, 85 and 87 years old. A lot of these...old age isn't old age any more. Anyway, Marge Sandman who writes for the *Union Leader*, she is older than the Palace Theatre and that was built in 1915. In fact, she performed in the Palace Theatre here in the Silver Stars awhile ago. Anyway, I am all for the senior center. Another thing, I said etc. on the sign-up sheet. Sliding on Sagamore Street. Ted Gatsas, remember the last time I was here and Alderman Shea said that Alderman Gatsas should take the first slide down Sagamore Street, well a lot of people have slid on Sagamore Street. In fact, Lenny Gagnon, if you have read Flag of our Fathers, Lenny Gagnon used to slide on Sagamore Street and one of our dear friends who meets at the Back Room used to slide on Sagamore Street. His name was Ronald Stillman and he died last Wednesday. He lived at 188 Sagamore Street. He was in the first wave of landing on Iowjima and also on Guam. Ron was a great guy. A lot of people have slid on Sagamore Street. In fact, last night would have been a great night to slide on Sagamore Street. Well, one more thing regarding Ronald Reagan's birthday. There are two sections of the Union Leader today, one showing Irene Robie and one showing Ronald Reagan. I think that in closing I would like to have the Board of Mayor and Aldermen here in the City of Manchester write a belated letter to Mrs. Reagan and wish Ronald Reagan a happy birthday and have the Mayor and the Board sign the letter. Let's have one for Irene and one for the Gipper! Thanks a lot.

Artemis Paras, 1275 Hanover Street, Manchester stated:

I am here this evening to emphasize the importance of reconsidering two uses in the proposed zoning ordinance that you will be acting upon this evening. I am not here to oppose this action, I only want to emphasize the importance of the Board and the Mayor understanding that there have been two deletions, which I consider major. I refer to the first one as a sensible use in the existing ordinance. Those of you who served in the past know of my involvement with the transfer station that wanted to be placed in back of the *Union Leader*. At that time, a transfer station was allowed in any industrial zone subject and provided that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen approved it. This was the condition. I think all of you remember who served at that time. Now the industrial zones have been consolidated and in the general industrial zone and the redevelopment zone, the transfer station will be under conditional use permit. I would like the Board to consider if you feel it is important to have the added final approval by the BMA. That is currently under use 52A in the Table of Use regulations and it would have to be addressed under Article 5, Section 510, E10 of the proposed ordinance. The other use is an accessory use. In our current ordinance under accessory uses for parking, there is an X meaning permitted in every district. Some of your Aldermen know that there was a court case. It had to do with an interpretation and the court ruled yes that is correct, you have an X in every use and you can do any kind of parking in any district. What I fear is that we may have the same situation because we have deleted a condition that was placed on that accessory use because of the problem...if you have a business use and you want to go into a residential zone then you want to do commercial parking in the residential zone. I look upon this as an encroachment. Back in 1997, with the assistance of the Planning Department staff, there as an amendment to that accessory parking and the whole purpose was, as the court said at that time, to expressly provide that accessory uses to commercial uses could not be placed in residential zones. I ask the Board of Mayor and Alderman to consider...if it is reasonable to ask why that amendment in 1997 was deleted and we are back again now with accessory parking for any principle use and we could end up with a similar situation of problems of encroachment of commercial parking. I know that there would be input from Planning staff and Director MacKenzie. He is aware of these concerns. I raised them in my oral testimony at the public hearing on the zoning ordinance and I hope that some of you would ask questions and perhaps seek amendments to these two sections because I have been told that you, the Aldermen, the legislative body, still have an opportunity to make amendments at this time when it is appropriate to take action. I thank you for giving me consideration of this information. I was involved with both of these issues and I bring my experience to the Board. Thank you.

Billy Dodd, 181 Mammoth Road, Manchester stated:

I have to agree with Alderman Hirschmann that the character assassination that went on here tonight was totally uncalled for, but I think you have to look at the thing in the middle ground. People are praising the Mayor and people are condoning him, but you lack an EEO complaint and you lack a criminal complaint. I do not understand how the City Solicitor could tell you that you could bar an elected official from her office. The City Solicitor issues opinions. On any given day, he can walk into court and have a 50/50 chance of being right or wrong. I have to agree with Alderman Vaillancourt that if Susan Lafond chose to, and the medical evidence is there, she could have a work related injury of stress for the way this matter has been handled. These people in the Welfare Office do have a valid issue and they have brought the complaints to you people, but I think the way that it was handled at the very last minute the way it was was totally inappropriate and there should have been some middle ground somewhere long before we got to February 2. Alderman Levasseur, I have to champion his cause again with the Hackett Hill property of UNH. Do not let that become a school administration building. Add on to it and make it a school. The seniors have their opinions. They want to put the senior center down at Singer Park. I think all you have to do is go down to the auto registration area of City Hall here and look at some of the drawings of what they proposed down there. You have your cement plant going in. You have a park and ride garage going in and a conceptual ballpark going in down there. It is also the last industrial rail spot that you have in the City. Don't give it up. Try a novel approach. You have the Public Service land that they are going to be vacating. Twenty-six acres I believe it said in the paper. Purchase that. Put an elementary school on it. You have Federal money that is going to be coming in to clean up the pond. You have Nutts Pond right there. Put your senior center adjacent to Nutts Pond. You could put some walking trails around it. You could have your outdoor and indoor shuffleboard. The grandparents could take their grandchildren down there and do a little fishing or whatever. You could buy that property and put a school on it and you could alleviate some of the pressure off of Highland Goffs Falls, Bakersville and Jewett Street. Then, you wouldn't have to add on to those and maybe you could get rid of some portables. If you look at spending your money wisely and trying to do the most you can with it instead of a lot here, a lot here and a lot there, pool your resources. Maybe some of the elderly people would like to go over and volunteer their time at a new elementary school that would be on the site where the Public Service land is now. Do some creative thinking. Thank you.

Janet Stiles, 226 Sagamore Street, Manchester stated:

I am on the Regional Area Committee for Older Adults. I also am on the NH Advisory Committee for Older Adults with Mental Illness. Also, I am on the Gala Committee for Meals on Wheels. These committees are all concerned with the challenges that all older

adults face, namely loss of easy mobility, eyesight, hearing, taste and family and friends, resulting for many in isolation. These challenges add up to a need for a strong support system. A senior center will help many to overcome these daunting circumstances by having a gathering place where supporting, caring friends can be found and enjoyable activities can be engaged in at their level. These certain committees that I am on are extremely concerned about the boomer generation that is quickly approaching their elder years. We need to look to the future that is galloping towards us. What are we doing about them? One question. Why was the brouhaha over the Welfare Department allowed to brew beginning way back in May of 2000 and why is it broken out here now without the Aldermen knowing anything about it? I just wonder who is handling it right. Thank you.

Mayor Baines advised that there being no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman Thibault, it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.

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

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk