

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

**May 7, 2002**

**7:00 PM**

Mayor Baines called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll. There were fourteen Aldermen present.

Present: Aldermen Wihby, Gatsas, Guinta, Sysyn, Osborne, Pinard, O'Neil, Lopez, Shea, DeVries, Garrity, Smith, Forest, Thibault (late)

Mayor Baines advised that the purpose of the special meeting was 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.

Robin Comstock, President and Chief Executive Officer of Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, 889 Elm Street, Manchester, NH, (Visitor Center) stated:

I am here tonight to give you a progress report of the Visitor's center so you know where we are on it. We have had some great success. Barry Bresinger has agreed to design the facility for us. The drawings that have been handed out to you are from Barry's staff and this is a color rendering which may be easier for you to see. ProCon has agreed to do the construction for us. Everyone is giving us charitable rates or even doing pro bono work. There is a high level of community support. We are just in the process of putting bids out to the sign maker. This drawing is a little richer than the one on your desk, again from Barry's staff. I do not know if you can see the detail. We are trying to bring in the imagery of the Verizon Wireless Arena and replicate some of the images around the river and the Mills. Just wanted to let you know that things are moving along and we hope to be open by early summer. I want to offer and extend a special thanks to Mike Lopez for his terrific leadership and guidance throughout this process and early on. Thank you very much to Dan O'Neil who has been a great visionary and tremendous supporter and to the CIP Committee who also I would have to say...this would not have been possible. We are very appreciative and think we are doing an important project for Manchester. I will keep you abreast of the progress as we make strides. Thank you.

Helen Closson and Tom Sommers, 300 North River Road, Manchester, NH (Hands Across the Merrimack) stated:

Thank you Mr. Mayor and members of the Board of Aldermen. We are delighted to give you a brief update on our Hands Across the Merrimack project. Since we last spoke to you we have become a corporation we have a 501C-3 designation. We have a wonderful Board of Directors. As we indicated in the first instance we wanted to do a feasibility study to kind of ascertain that this was a good project and to let people in the community know what it was all about. We were lucky enough to get a wonderful grant and we are in the process of finalizing that study. It should be done by the end of the month. In addition we also received a grant to build a beautiful model which we brought with us and hope you will look at a little later. We are most grateful to everyone and everywhere I go people talk about my bridge. I am very passionate about it and I hope you will share our enthusiasm. I would like to ask Tom to make a few comments.

Tom Sommers (for Hands Across the Merrimack) stated:

I am acting in an advisory role to the Hands Across the Merrimack Board. This is the official unveiling of the model, although we have shown it with the Mayor on Channel 16. We are going to leave this here because I cannot carry it out till tomorrow. We have tried to orientate it to the way it really is in terms of the Merrimack River, the West side, the East side, the existing river walk which goes underneath it on the East side. The idea of the Notre Dame bridge recreating it on the West side and to some extent the East side the connection on the West side going to Goffstown which is already in progress through the Parks and Recreation program. Singer Park just North of there and another section South of there going down to Sundial Avenue so it is starting to happen. This is going to be one of the main pieces of it .....picture this when you come up here at night and this is lit up in a very appropriate way. It kind of becomes the entrance as you come in from Granite Street coming into the City. We are in the process of doing private fund raising we are looking for \$1 million to \$1.5 million dollars privately. We already have \$600,000 through the Mayor's effort and other people's effort here in the City through the state T 21 program. We won't be coming back in terms of asking for any money until we have done what we said we would do and that is to raise those other funds. The project is moving and we are getting a lot of enthusiasm and want to thank you for the support you all have given. Thank you.

Mayor Baines stated the correct channel is 22, and Helen if people would like to make contributions because this is a major fundraiser activity of the non profit Hands Across the Merrimack, how would they make a contribution to this project.

Helen Closson replied you can send contributions to Hands Across the Merrimack Inc., 300 River Road, Suite #2, Manchester NH 03104. Thank you very much for allowing us to be here.

Harold Levine, 49 Hillcraft Road, Ward 2 Manchester, NH, stated:

I will continue. I think I ended with bag and tag the way it was presented. Myself I am against it because we have been subsidizing the taxpayers of Manchester that is for commercial interest who with all these tremendous different apartment complex that the City picks-up there rubbish, and recyclables from. Most of them should have their own dumpsters and this is a private business that they are running and I do not think...it's about time the taxpayers of Manchester should stop subsidizing this type of pick up and we could save quite a bit of money. Another thing, over the weekend and last week I tried to reach various Members of the School Board. I read where they don't have enough money to supply paper to the children, but yet we are going to put in their hands \$50 to \$75 million to upgrade our Schools etc. in the near future. I think we have a little bit too much upper echelon in the School Department. I think the funds are going there rather than to the children who deserve it. There should be classrooms rather than living in the portable trailers and trying to be educated. Another thing that I have noticed and I have tried to get information on is the School Board budget. It seems there is some kind of a situation going on with SCS possibly earning more money than the Manchester Transit Authority. Some thing is funny there.....they are like ants, their vehicles all over the City. Before I close, Mr. Mayor you made a statement of a very lean budget. I would like to know how many Aldermen, Commissioners, and School Board Members are being covered by the medical plan of the City of Manchester. I think that should be public knowledge for all.

Eileen Byrne, 21 Riddle Street, Manchester, NH, stated:

I am here because of the senior citizens of Manchester. This is a crock. I am sorry to say we just got re-evaluated now you are going to hit us with another 12% tax? What do you want us to all do go to the senior citizen centers and apartments and stay there? You are taxing me out of my house. I really do not know...first of all the taxes...what are we getting for our taxes? We are going to have to pay for the pick-up of the garbage? Another thing, the condos over by South Willow Street by the Dunkin Donuts, they do not recycle those condos. I know someone who lives there and they do not.....they throw everything in it. Nobody recycles, why can't there be a ruling that everybody recycles not just the private owners? That is all I want to say.

DJ Murphy, PO Box 10143, Bedford, NH, stated:

I came to talk about the monument location in respect to the legislative request designated as 1471 that was in the State House. It was the State's intention to establish a committee to collect funds and donations for erecting a memorial in regards to the buildings and events of September 11, 2001. Naturally in a case of a committee that is collecting donations, or private citizens funds you are not capable of controlling what it to be done with the monies itself. What I would like to point out is that this may not be the last event of a huge catastrophic and monumental episode in this war maybe continuing assaults of even larger scale and dynamism. So even though everybody seems to jump on this bandwagon and fervor, I would like everybody to keep that in mind in this City of Manchester, NH. New York City is a tourist destination if you have ever been there. It has a lot of touristy things to

do. There is an arrival time and nightlife; you can stay up first and second shift. If you are smart you don't get to the good dance clubs until one in the morning so you can sleep until 11pm. So I would like to say that New York City is a large-scale city and the buildings that were there were taken down on a large scale. Rather than have some cheap camp vaudevillian type monument in Hinsdale, NH or the bridge between Dover and Kittery, I would like to see to it that maybe the money could be designated for a memorial or monument erected at the sight in New York City itself.

Rona Zlokower, 161 North Adams Street, Manchester, NH, stated:

I am a member of the Central High School PTSO, Manchester citizen for quality education. I am a parent of a freshman at Central High School. I couldn't testify last evening and wish to address your consideration of the Mayor's proposed budget for School District. First Alderman Wihby please do not believe that apathy or lack of concern for the tax rate is the reason why more citizen's did not testify last night. Parents of students in Manchester Schools are frustrated and very upset about the conditions of our schools and the lack of resources. They are heartened by the new building program. Most do not understand the complex budget process, the formula for state reimbursements, the Claremont decision and its impact, the negotiations for teachers salaries and benefits, the charges for city services, the formula for tuition students and how the tax rate is set or what it means for the schools. It is a jungle, if people are not hear, or were not here last night it may be because you do not make it understandable. The process for testifying where a citizen speaks and no one answers is somewhat disconcerting and not too gratifying. Finally most people struggle to work, get their kids to and from daycare, pick them up from sports, music and other activities, get dinner, spend a few minutes with their kids helping with homework and begin the next day, that is not apathy. Regarding the budget I understand from School Board members that if the Mayor's budget is passed at \$121 million cutting \$16.9 million that the ....once again for the seventh year in a row middle school Spanish will be cut. (She then started speaking in Spanish). I have more of a French accent than a Spanish accent. That means it is very important that our students study Spanish in a bilingual and diverse world. Other cuts will mean that there will be no curriculum coordinator, Nashua has four. That alternatervative school for at risk kids will be modified, we have a lot of at risk kids. The text book budget will be cut to \$90,000, there will be no library expenditures, that supplies will be cut back. A first grade teacher told her last week that there will be no more supplies for the year. That seven reading teachers, one in each school will not be placed in the schools. I also understand from a number of people in education that Manchester continues to score poorly on reading. As pupil costs go down so do tuition payments from the towns. Manchester is not meeting state standards in several of our schools. Accreditation at Central is in process and in subsequent years will be in process in the other schools. A severe cut in the budget and not funding these programs could really effect accreditation. We really need to support our schools. Thank you.

Sherry Chakrin, 15 Camelot Drive, Bedford, NH, stated:

I am here as the advisor for Destination Imagination at Manchester High School West, and also on behalf of the students that could not be here this evening themselves because they are in the throws of another fundraiser. The reason that these folks are raising funds is that they have gone through a competition process with Destination Imagination which many of you might know as Odyssey of the Mind. They have come out on top both at the State and Regional levels, and have earned the spot to go to global finals, which is an International competition in Knoxville Tennessee this month. This requires them to raise 6,000 in order to get the team there within the span of about five weeks. They have been working very hard in the last two days since they decided that indeed they would take this additional challenge on and they have raised three quarters of the funding themselves within 22 days, which is pretty remarkable. This group of young people and the organization that they work with is Destination Imagination is a creative problem solving organization that relies on teamwork to solve challenges, both long-term challenges and short term instant challenges, which are truly life skills that these children have been developing. This group of seven members has over 41 years of combined experience in this organization and they are absolutely thrilled to be going to this international competition. They were hoping to have some time to be able to practice their challenge and refine their solution before making it to global finals, and are requesting funds from whomever might be willing to help them out along their way. If anyone would be likely to help donate or has any ideas as to where they might be able to get additional funding to get over that one last hurdle in order to make it to global finals. They could contact me, my name is Sherry Chakrin and my number is 472-5171. I can also be reached through West as the advisor of this group. They could send funds, if you are going to write a check it should be made out to Manchester High School West with NH-DI in the memo line and mailed to Sherry Chakrin, 15 Camelot Drive, Bedford, NH. Thank you.

Lucille Stevens 100 Woodcrest Court, Manchester, NH, Ward 6 stated:

Since we are still in the discussion mode of the city budget, I would like to pick on the Manchester School District because it takes the largest chunk of our tax money. Everyone wants larger expenditures each year because it is for the children, has any of the School Board members or Administration ever sat down to figure out where they can save money except when they are forced to cut to comply with the City budget figures. I will give you a few obvious ideas, all high schools should use identical textbooks. In the last three years, 3,387,379 dollars has been appropriated for textbooks, but since these funds are not dedicated the money is used for any thing but textbooks then they cry for more money because the children don't have textbooks. Use the same curriculum for the three high schools, cut down the huge number of electives offered at each school, get back to the basics. Have a centralized purchasing plan and save money by buying bulk purchases. I counted 26 athletic programs in high schools. If they absolutely must have them let the parents pay a fee to offset the cost. When the current school contract expires and negotiations begin, those taking part in the health plan should have to pay at least 25% of the cost. Many home

owners who have paid real estate taxes in this City for years who have no children and will never have any children ask me why they have to pay the school taxes. That is taxation without representation. I seem to recall a Boston Tea Party that took care of that situation, and I wasn't there. Thank you.

Rea Valkanus, 905 Hall Street, Manchester, NH, stated:

I am fourteen and live in ward two. I came here tonight to speak out on an issue that is important to my peers and me. This issue talks about the reconstruction and maintenance of the Derry Field Park tennis courts. I think it is imperative for kids my age to have somewhere to go that isn't home or school that provides athletic and social activities that are safe, free of charge and are accessible for the non drivers out there. The tennis courts serve that purpose very well. Also on a wider scale I think that everyone would benefit from having reconstructed and well-maintained tennis courts throughout the City. That is about it and thank you for your time and I am glad to be part of my community and coming here and representing my peers and me.

Alderman Gatsas stated that I would like to thank the young lady for coming because I am sure that will instill in this board that Derry Field Park needs additional funds for those improvements.

Mayor Baines replied we appreciate you sharing that thought with us Alderman.

Billy Dodd, 181 Mammoth Road, Manchester, NH, stated:

I apologize for my appearance for I just got finished doing some yard work. I want to give everybody two thumbs up tonight, from sitting in the back evidently somebody talked to everybody and they are paying attention when people come up to speak. The budget, I couldn't make it down here last night cause I was at a board meeting for another organization and you can't be in two places at one time. Were the City has a budget of over 100 million dollars and the School Department the same thing. There was one article in the paper today from an individual that was here last night and her quote was "If you have to blame someone, blame the insurance companies, everybody hates them". I don't like that statement and would like to use the word responsibility. The responsibility for the budget rest with this board and the School Board. This board in past years and past administrations has dropped the ball. There was an interesting article that I saved from May of last year in the Union Leader. It is called a Tale of Two Cities, comparing Manchester and Nashua. I went to a budget hearing about four years ago when the City was going to get their first installment of the free Claremont money. I made a suggestion that the City take something like 10 million dollars of that and stick it in the bank, next year do the same thing. That was just an idea and the Board could have run with it anyway they wanted to, instead they choose to use every nickel of that free money in the budget. Nashua put a lot of their money into a savings account and now they are paying for their school renovations with interest money, and have cut the bond rates in half. I do not know how you are going to solve that one now when you

have put all your nickels out already. One thing you did about four years ago when you spent all that money, you got out of a game plan of instituting your middle school program. I don't think there is anything wrong with the junior high program. With the middle school concept of teaching you had to hire something like 78 new teachers. Now this year I believe in the contract talks with the teachers the School Board had to add something like another 18 teachers for the grade schools. You guys have no control over the contracts that the School Board negotiates, and that is driving the cost up. The gentlemen sitting back here with the uniforms on. It is kind of sickening that they have to run multiple pieces of equipment to a scene to get enough manpower. I do not think there should be any budget cuts for those guys. You need to staff them so they can run the adequate equipment to do the job properly with out putting a lot of people in harms way, mainly themselves. So put your thinking caps on and try to spend a little less money. Thank you.

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

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

A True Record Attest

City Clerk