

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

July 8, 2008

**7:00 PM
Aldermanic Chambers
City Hall (3rd Floor)**

Chairman Lopez called the meeting to order.

Chairman Lopez called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman J. Roy.

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

The Clerk called the roll. Fourteen Aldermen were present.

Present: Aldermen M. Roy, Gatsas, Sullivan, J. Roy, Osborne, Pinard, O'Neil, Lopez, Shea, DeVries, Garrity, Smith, Ouellette, Domaingue

Chairman Lopez 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.

Chairman Lopez 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.

William Infantine, 89 Winward Lane, stated:

I'd like to speak about the proposed parking fees. It is my opinion that the primary reason for parking fees is commerce, to get people to come in and move in and about, to have people come to work in the offices and the businesses downtown so those businesses and those buildings can be occupied to generate tax revenue. Secondly is to generate revenue. Conversely, the same reason we have parking fees, fines, and meters, is primarily as a deterrent for people either to stay too long at meters and secondarily it's a revenue generator. Now, increasing the fees on Elm Street may well be the deterrent we're looking for to continue to generate that commerce. I'm not sure that is a big enough deterrent, but the proposal for some sort of a parking district around the arena district I think slaps in the face of what I believe the reason for fees and fines are. I believe that's purely a mechanism to increase revenue. I think we have a very good opinion of ourselves, or people do in the state when they come to the Verizon Center. I'm concerned that when you create this district, first of all you have to have signs. So there will be an inordinate amount of unsightly signage. You'll also have some inconsistencies and confusions, where you have to pay certain days of the week in the City and where you don't. And I'm concerned that that will create a lack of goodwill that we have created here in the City with the Verizon Center. That perception we all know is worse than the reality. So please consider my comments when you make a decision on these issues coming before you. The primary reason for fees and fines and meters is to generate commerce, not to generate revenue. That's secondary. Thank you very much.

Eric Sawyer, 40 Wilmot Street, stated:

I appear before you tonight as chairman of Access Manchester. For those of you who aren't familiar, Access Manchester is one of the official provisions of city government, section 3.13. The previous person that had this post took it with

considerable salary and benefits. I serve for no fee. I want to talk about taxi fares increases. I can understand that you want to raise the fares to accommodate some increase in fuel cost, but in the news, first the fare was going to be raised fifty cents. Then it was raised ninety cents. Then it was done without a public hearing or public comment. And third it was done at a non-regular meeting. It was done at a special meeting of the Board. And fourth, you applied the percentage increase to the whole fare. The whole fare wasn't gas prices. So, to give you an idea, a typical trip to the hospital and back for an ordinary medical appointment would have been \$30. It's now \$50. I've been working with Tim Soucy at the Health Department to establish some alternatives. Both of the hospitals have shuttle services, and then there is Caregivers. But we haven't really gotten very far along because we thought that action was going to be taken at the next regular meeting, which would have been this meeting, but instead you did it at a special meeting. In short, as chairman of Access Manchester, I'm supposed to serve as the ombudsman between the disabled community and the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. I'm supposed to advise the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on issues that affect the disabled. Time and time again there are issues that come up, and that opportunity never presents itself until after the fact, so I hope that you, at an appropriate time, and soon, reconsider this taxi fare increase because the percentage increase applied to the whole fare just wasn't right, and the way you did it without public comment. Thank you.

Tom Puskarich, 365 Bridge Street, stated:

I'm the proprietor of Z Food and Drink right here on Elm Street. My concerns are with parking today and the parking plan as proposed. It has been my understanding that parking has been an issue. The whole issue with parking is we need to create the turnover in downtown to keep the commerce coming, as Mr. Infantine said earlier. We also need you to create a safe situation for the people who work down here to be able to park that is within relatively close distance of

these employment areas. When I first heard of a premium parking rate on Elm Street, I was floored because it's supposed to be coupled with some shorter enforcement periods on some side streets. The current ordinance, as I read it, there are only several small side streets that are attached to parking, that have a parking garage attached to it already that this actually affects. The actual net effect of the side street parking shorter enforcement period really is unfair. It does smack of a little bit of a revenue stream as opposed to an element of using parking as a device to promote growth in downtown. I'd ask the Board of Aldermen here to consider this, revamping this one issue here when we consider the overall parking plan. On another note, I would like to ask Brandy and the Office of Economic Development to explain how this is not just about revenue, how this is actually here to promote downtown, not only to me but to get this into the various needs outlets. Whenever we talk about parking here in Manchester, the local news and particularly the Union Leader seems to promote, seems to pick up on a headliner here and basically says, City hikes parking; don't come downtown. Downtown Manchester needs to be a vibrant part of the City. The City has come a long way, ascending to a world-class city here, much in the lights of Portsmouth and Providence. Without a sustainable, vibrant downtown, I think we look more like Lawrence and Lowell, something that is more of a suburb of Boston. We need to be very careful as we consider how this parking plan is going to impact downtown businesses and what makes the downtown a vibrant business community. Thank you for your time.

Howard McCarthy, 105 Randall Street, stated:

Maybe some of you know who I am and some of you don't. I remember you. The last time I appeared in front of you people I got denied on this ice cream thing, but a few weeks from now I'm going to prove to you how inconsistent some of you people are that have voted against me. That will come in a couple of weeks. Hopefully I will see if I can put a little common sense into some of you. But

tonight I'm not going to dwell on that. I'm here about this parking thing. I'd like to say I'm against the increase in parking meters and also doing away with free parking on Saturday. Do you have something against the restaurant dining business and other businesses? You've already closed the Merrimack Restaurant. I was talking to those people two or three months ago and they said the parking was just too much. They just can't put up with it any longer. So now they're closing. I just walked by there tonight. It's sad. I'm against all this...if you really want to get some more revenue, why don't you stop wasting your time and look at some waste that goes on here. What I'm getting at...I said this...I have a TV show at 6:30 on Friday nights on Channel 23. You may look sometime, though I don't say anything too profound, and I'll warn you ahead of time that I like to sing, so I'll warn you ahead of time in case you want to take a break. What I'm getting at is I see something here on this flagging thing. I think it's featherbedding at its worst. In other words, I've gone around and looked at other towns, like up in Concord and Bedford and other surrounding towns. They don't go to the police to do the flagging. Now I don't have all the facts and figures, and I know it can get complicated, but overall you're paying the police about \$40 an hour to do the job that a responsible person can do for about \$10 an hour. Most of these people...there are companies that have flaggers and that's in the ballpark of \$10 or \$12 an hour, but not \$40. You know, a policeman is a man that we admire and they do a great job and we have to have them. But a policeman's job is to do police work and to protect us from crime, and that's their job. But to have policemen flagging, paying them \$40 an hour, you know that it runs into hundreds of thousands of dollars. An ordinary policeman can make as much as \$80,000, \$90,000 or \$100,000 a year. It's all in overtime jobs. Why don't we cut that out? Maybe that could help out the budget. Now the last thing I want to talk about is a few words in support of Carol Johnson, Manchester's City Clerk. This woman did nothing wrong. She tried to resolve an internal problem like any one of us would do, especially with a blood relation involved. I don't think you or the people

watching me speak would do different. Being hypocritical is not the way to go. He who is without sin, let him cast the first stone. This woman is courageous and she has heart. She corrected a problem. There is no loss to the City. Like any one of us who sees a situation that requires stern measures without destroying a person, she needs to be commended. This woman is putting the heart back into the City. If this is the Queen City, then she is the queen. Thank you.

Marcel Lacasse, 229 Young Street, spoke about the a proposed No Parking zone on Young Street starting May 1st to November 1st because of baseball. He said that he is for it. However, he is concerned that it will cause people to park in front of his house and he sometimes has a hard time to get out in his yard. He mentioned that there are elderly people like himself on the street as well. He said that he has nothing against baseball. *(The speaker's exact words could not be captured, so this is a paraphrase of what he said.)*

Kathy Hamel, 823 Elm Street, stated:

First of all I'd like to thank you all. I've been downtown here 12 years. Of course parking has always been a fairly serious issue. I'd like to thank you for trying to create a more vibrant, growing downtown by trying to create turnover on Elm Street. I think that's critical to the growth. I look outside and see the restaurants or the little eating places and I know for a fact that customers have said many times they would like to try those places and can't find a parking space, so I think that's a step in the right direction. However, raising the fees in the parking garage seems such a contradiction because a lot of the people who work downtown in the offices and we who own businesses have to park in the garages. If you're raising the rates on Elm Street and at the same time raising the rates in the garages, it just seems like a contradiction because we're trying to move people into a place that helps everybody, and their wages aren't growing. I have a lot of women that I know that work downtown, and it's a real concern for them to have to pay more

for parking than their wages are increasing. Also, for the Saturday parking, I would like to give an affirmative. I'm grateful for that. I often have kids park out front that live in apartments...really nice kids, by the way, but they'll go off for the weekend, not thinking, as kids do, leave their cars on Elm Street for the entire weekend. They go with someone else. So I think that's a very positive step. And the other thing is doing any of the things you're planning on doing, however which way you go, if it's enforced it works; if it's not it's useless. But thank you so much for trying to help downtown. We appreciate it.

Keith Murphy, 2 Blackberry Way #202, stated:

I am here as a downtown business owner to register my opposition to the proposed increases in the parking fees. I took a petition, and I have a summary here if you'd like to see it. I went to every single open store on Elm Street between Auburn and Bridge; 25 business owners signed a petition opposing the proposals. In another 18 stores, the owners were not in, but their managers signed instead, for a total of 43 businesses in opposition. Only four people told me they would not sign. You've met two of those four tonight. Two of the four told me that their support depended upon changes in the ordinance copy that I gave to them. That's 43 to four; I can't say that another 20 people sitting behind me will testify to this...but the opposition to this proposal as it currently stands is overwhelming. Here's where we're coming from on this. Raising your parking fees across the board and charging our customers to park on Saturday will certainly drive customers to competitors. That's a simple economic basic fact. Let's remember downtown store fronts were empty after the mall opened and South Willow Street was developed. I've seen the photographs; I wasn't here myself. And a big reason why was the free parking, the acres of free parking that those places offered. Now parking charges put us at a disadvantage, and the higher the cost and the longer the enforcement, the higher the disadvantage that we face. You can ask Miss Chen over at the Peking Garden. What she said to me was, how can I convince my

customers to pay a meter at 7:45 on a Saturday when all they want to do is pick up their to-go food? Our businesses and our customers are especially sensitive to the increases in the current economy. Elm Street has 19 empty storefronts currently between Auburn and Bridge. I count 83 total storefronts. That's a 23% vacancy rate. Now is exactly the wrong time to push our customers toward our competitors. The Arena district as proposed will lead to extremely angry customers. As currently written that district requires that anyone parking near the arena pay a dollar from two hours before the event to an hour after it starts. It's seven days a week. Does anyone really believe that my regular customers will pay an event parking fee when they're not going to an event? Let's say there is a Tuesday night concert from 8:00 till 11:00. A customer parking in front of my business at 6:00 PM, coming in just for dinner, is he going to willingly pay a dollar for that event when he's not going? How about a Sunday high school graduation in June? If somebody is parking in front of my building at 1:30 on a Sunday, why would he pay a dollar when the graduation started at 1:00? He's not going to the graduation. How about when the circus runs on Saturday afternoons? Under this ordinance, anybody that goes downtown into that arena district and parks their car before or during an event has to pay the fee, and that assumption is very flawed and very unfair. My last point is that the plan is simply too complex. It's something that even Jay Minkarah acknowledged in today's newspaper. It's a maze of regulations. Now Ms. Stanley, I talked with her today. She was quoted as saying it will take drivers two years to get used to the new ordinance. Are we really prepared for two years of people trying to negotiate a maze of parking regulations? I'm not saying the current system is perfect. I'm not saying it doesn't need to be tweaked, and perhaps the business owners can work together with Ms. Stanley to make that happen. But the current plan is deeply flawed and needs to go back to the drawing board. This plan will have unintended consequences. Thanks for your time.

Mike Farrington, 1962 Elm Street, stated:

I'm owner of a small gift shop on the corner of Elm and Stark. I just want to say this simply will hurt my business. It's not about growth or generating commerce downtown. This is strictly revenue-driven, and it's wrong. Keith just pointed out the number of empty shops there now; that will increase if this goes through as is. It's too complicated. There's no creativity for commerce in it. It's just a flat-out revenue generator, and it will hurt business downtown. Thank you.

Tammy Simmons, 142 Parker Street, stated: I'm here tonight to speak against increasing parking or limiting parking or adding Saturday parking fees. There are all sorts of things to be against tonight. I come here from a different perspective. I come here first as somebody who works for one of the businesses in the district that will be affected. I work part-time at Murphy's Tap Room and I can tell you I have had numerous people tell me they have tried to come there before and didn't because our parking lot happened to be full, and they did not want to have to pay to park. And if there is a Verizon event, they could be parking blocks and blocks away. It's not like these people can walk one block off of Elm Street and get free parking. They have to walk many blocks off of Elm Street to get to free parking, and to be honest, I wouldn't walk through most of those neighborhoods by myself - for sure, at night, definitely. So I don't know how we're going to expect people to frequent businesses so that we can generate more revenue with the rooms and meals tax if we're deterring them from coming in the first place. If somebody wants to go out and get a burger, are they going to fight for parking and then pay for parking to go to Murphy's or are they just going to go to the Mall to TGI Friday's? It's easier there. So working for somebody, that's one perspective. Another perspective I have is often I have business to do in downtown Manchester, and I dread it. If I have to go to a meeting in somebody's office, or if I have to have a business lunch in downtown Manchester, I can almost bet you I'm going to get a parking ticket, because if that meeting goes long, the last thing on

my mind is whether or not I've got quarters in that meter. I'm focusing on my business and on my clients. I end up walking out with a \$10 ticket just so that I can conduct business in the downtown area. The two hour limit sounds like plenty if you're running in to do a little shopping, but if you're having a luncheon meeting or you have a meeting in somebody's office or if you're going out to dinner or you're meeting friends, two hours goes very quickly, and \$10 tickets add up really, really quickly. I'm all for helping the City budget with my parking tickets and all, but I know it's a deterrent. Lastly I come as a consumer. I don't shop downtown. It's too difficult. There's no parking. It costs money to park. If I need to go to the UPS store, I can go to numerous locations other than the one on Elm Street. If I want to try a new sandwich shop, I'm not going to go downtown because I have to either walk blocks and blocks or I have to pay to park. If you're looking at picking up a sandwich and looking at a price that you know...whether you're going to go someplace that's charging \$6.99 or \$8.99, well, add on the parking and it's even more. It's a deterrent. Parking is a problem. It always has been. It always will be. I'd like to see us maybe put a little effort into looking at creative ways to find more parking. You can't tell me there aren't enough smart people in this room who can't figure out a way to get some parking closer to the downtown district that can alleviate some of the problems that these business owners have. Thank you.

Billy Dodd, Ward 7, stated:

There was an article in the paper about our new School Superintendent. When I read it as a taxpayer and saw that in a three year period he got school teachers a 22% pay raise where he came from, the teachers probably were glad, but as a taxpayer, I'm scared. I hope you guys can do something with that. Noise in the City from motorcycles, loud cars, loud music. I was speaking with the Police Chief out front earlier, and I brought up a couple of items to him that might be difficult in enforcing the decibel limit, and he was ahead of the curve on me. The

two things that I brought up, he's already researched them and has come up with a solution. I think you guys made a good choice when you picked him for a new chief. He's off and running. I just want to see him aggressively address the noise issue. He was ahead of the curve for the two things I had thought of, so he's working on his feet. You made a good choice. The other thing is parking downtown. You guys know that if you want to drive the people away, raise the fees. The Union Leader has termed your head of your parking department a czar. That's not a good name to have. The answer is right here on the parking ticket. You guys are supposed to be voting on the issue tonight, according to the paper. Whatever you need to do to table that, hold off for a little more discussion, I think maybe you might want to do it, because your answer is right here in the receipt. Let the merchants come up with some way that they can honor this receipt. It tells you everything about the person that parked - what time, what date, when it expires and how much they paid. Let the merchants decide to honor these things. You come into a store and the merchant has a limit of \$25 and you spent a dollar or two dollars to park, they'll take that off your purchase. They keep this slip and that's how they balance their drawer. But use this as a means to get people to come downtown. If they can park and get their parking fee back, that's fine.

Parking for employees: If you work at the mall, you don't park at the front door next to the sidewalk. You park 1,000 feet away or something. Let the owners do the same thing. When the people park in the garage, let them bring a receipt, let them park somewhere else where they don't have to pay. Let them walk 500, 600 or 1,000 feet to get work, but let the merchants go back and figure out a way that they can get people downtown with this. I've said it before. Until you create something downtown like Church Street in Burlington, Vermont, you guys are just spinning wheels. As of today, you still haven't solved the high school parking problem. But yet, all of a sudden you're going to come up with a magic solution for the merchants downtown. Table it and let the merchants decide how they want

to handle this receipt, but I think that is one way that you might be able to get people downtown, get a little money back on their parking.

Calum McNeil, Ward 7, stated:

I just want to thank everybody for allowing me to come out and speak to my government, the only forum I have tonight. So, I'm wearing my hat. I forgot to comb my hair. I just want to remind everybody it's July 4th and I have two friends who died in Iraq, so I'd just like to propose a couple seconds of silence. In school I belonged to Amnesty International. I used to write all these great letters to foreign countries all the time. My favorite line would be to ask the dictator how he was able to go to sleep at night. How did he enter that other realm with everything he's done in this life? I confer with the Mayor about everything I know about *Now I Want Truth* and all that crazy stuff and calling for a re-opening of that investigation. It's a very commonly told thing and I'm sure you've all known about it forever. I do want to bring it up again tonight. It's something we need to talk about, something that's real, it's happening. Dennis Kucinich has 35 articles of impeachment against the President. Oklahoma's house of representatives has voted to secede from the union. These are real things that are happening in our nation now. I want the Magna Carta to mean something; I want the Bill of Rights to mean something. It's really, really, really important. We all know that Newton's law of gravity says that the 911 report is a total lie. I can go over it for 30 seconds now or you can just go on line and check out *911truth.com* or wherever else you want to look it up. It's pretty much everywhere. This parking thing is another false flag thing that's going on, something pretty simple called problem, reaction, solution. The Mayor and some interests want some parking garages in the Millyard. The best way to create this is to create a major, major demand for parking. We can see that all we've done is we've taken the downtown parking and pushed it to the Millyard area. We're trying to create a demand down there. I don't understand how that can be so transparent and

nobody calling this out. This is obviously a revenue generator, now that they've figured out some demand is happening, so the czar has decided to make some more money and pay some more employees, which is great. I mean, we have a department that in two and a half fiscal years went from four employees to 23 employees. I may be off by one employee, but I believe that one of them actually parks cars for Fratello's and Cotton. Here we have my direct competitor. I work in the downtown area and you're actually going to charge my customers more, direct them downtown into the Millyard area, park downtown where you want that new parking garage to happen. I just don't understand how I can...you know...Frank Guinta's line with *Now I Want Truth* is "There's nothing I can do. I'm sorry Calum, there's nothing I can do." That's his quote. Garrity was there with me. There is something he could do. He could take Grace Sullivan out of here. He could take government-paid-for mass propaganda out of New Hampshire, out of Manchester. Let's make some real changes, things happen. Let's make a real Live Free or Die state. I don't even know how I can come up here every time and say the same thing forever, but I want to thank everybody for showing up and being what they are. Thanks.

Glenn Ouellette, 112 Auburn Street, stated:

Ladies and gentlemen of the Board of Aldermen and temporary Mayor, welcome. You know, let's be sensible here. We've created some of these problems. Go back two, three, four years. We had a building department that inspects buildings. If my building does not pass code, I'm in trouble. Why is it we have City buildings that don't pass codes? What, did they get a waiver? Have you been to the transportation center bathroom lately? It is deplorable. I think you should send the Health Department there and possibly the Building Department. No wonder Concord Coach wants to move out. Well, let me tell you this. Bangor, Maine, has a much smaller community than we do and they have two bus stations. Lewiston, Maine, has a smaller community and they have two bus stations.

Portland, Maine, is smaller than we are and they have two bus stations. What is wrong with this city? You have spent eight years to make the downtown a destination place. In the next two years it's going to be a destination place out of town. You are overtaxing these businesses. You tried parking on Saturdays before. Where has it gotten you? You've had to revert back. Forty-three businesses say no and four say yes. Did you ever even ask the businesses? I heard it right here. You never had a public meeting when it came to the taxi. They're asking for a fifty cent increase. It's not your money so you gave them ninety cents. But who uses the taxi? The old people who can't afford it. You raise the bus MTA fares, which is reasonable, but down the road you're planning on cutting services. That's not reasonable. Someone's asleep at the watch here. We pay some of our department heads \$80,000 to \$90,000 to over \$100,000. How can the City of Manchester say, we didn't know anything about it except for three weeks before that the state is going to see to it that we close our transportation department and move it to Londonderry? We created that problem two or three years ago when we told the state of New Hampshire we did not want them to build a Park & Ride free, at their cost, for 650 cars. We need a ten year plan. It's almost there. Pass it. The last thing I want to say is don't close that station. In the last three days I have found four privately-owned respectable bus companies, one of them a national firm that is interested in taking over that station on conditions. You have to make it according to code and you have to plan in the next few years to build a new one. Let's be sensible. I went to my mother in Maine this week, and if I had taken a bus to go there, I would have had to have gone south to Boston. That's \$40 added to my ticket. Who uses those buses? The very poor. I took a train from Amtrak. I paid someone to drive me to Exeter. I've said it before. Our transportation problem in this city is backwards. We don't go south to go north. You are the Aldermen in this city. You have the power to make policy. Please correct these infractions. Thank you.

*There being no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of **Alderman Pinard**, duly seconded by **Alderman J. Roy**, 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 was presented and on motion of **Alderman Domaingue**, duly seconded by **Alderman J. Roy**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk.