

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

April 21, 2009

7:00 PM

Mayor Guinta called the meeting to order.

Mayor Guinta called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman Garrity.

A moment of silence was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

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

Absent: Alderman Domaingue

Mayor Guinta 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. Mayor Guinta 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.

Glenn Ouellette, 112 Auburn Street, stated:

Good evening. Since the year 2000, we have definitely spent \$16 million that we didn't need. I can easily count \$16 million in projects that was expended and completed and within ten years time. Those projects were destroyed and replaced for other reasons. That's what happens when we don't have a ten year plan in operation. The skating rink: a quarter of a million dollars and it was used for two years and then warehoused until last year when the City had to recycle it because it had rotted. A brand new concert stage at Singer Park wasn't even completed when it was torn down and recycled; brand new, never to be used, \$200,000. We just forgave \$19.8 million to a private investor. That \$19.8 million could have built our Highway Department. We still owed \$1.9 million in bonding at the Singer Park when we destroyed it. It wasn't even ten years old. And I can go on. We need to be careful how we spend the people's money. That's why in the last two years I've insisted that you people sit down and come up with a ten year plan. It should have been voted on last April, a year ago, and now we are re-tweaking it. Well, every time you postpone a vote on that plan, it gives you an excuse to spend money and then destroy it by saying, we didn't have a plan. Well that's no longer a poor excuse. It is now time, time for you to reckon with a ten year plan in this City. You just spent a lot of money on Green Street and tonight the drains are again starting to overflow. Someone is not being careful how you spend our money. I think our schools can survive with one to two million. But remember, Your Honor and the Board, you made a statement, Your Honor, last month when you gave your budget that MCTV and MCAM were not necessary departments or something that was really necessary for this City. Let me remind you that democracy is the law and that every single month everyone who receives Comcast pays a 5% franchise fee. You already take 20% of that money to put in the general fund. I strongly believe that that is misuse of funding because it wasn't meant for that. The last thing I want to say is the School Board or the School District is

going to be receiving \$7.4 million roughly, but every single year you take that money and it doesn't go to the schools. So the \$146 million proposal, Your Honor, to the school is not \$146 million; it is minus \$7.4 million. If we're going to talk about truth, that's the truth. Thank you.

Nicholas Ambrosi, 544 N. Adams Street, stated:

Your Honor, I'm a student at Central High School in the Manchester School District. I'd just like to say that for the past 11 years now, I've benefited immensely from the services of the School District, not just in the classroom but in the extracurricular activities offered by the School District. I'm a member of the National Honors Society, World Language Honors Society, Band, Jazz Band, Math Team, Alpine Ski Team and First Robotics Team. Not just my experience in the classroom, but outside the classroom, has prepared me for when I graduate next year to be an effective citizen in the City of Manchester. And I think that while it's important that we don't cut teachers or increase class sizes, the last couple million dollars in the budget that are spent on sports and extracurricular activities have a huge benefit as well because they...students in the classroom don't necessarily learn the leadership, teamwork and work ethic skills that they learn on sports teams and in extracurricular activities that they need to succeed in higher education and in the work place. I believe that in allowing the precedent to be put in place, where those activities are no longer necessary, will have serious long term economic impact in the City of Manchester where the School District does not put out graduates who are prepared to be effective leaders in our community. So I would just like to leave you with a message that I think it's not just what we learn in the classroom, it's what we learn outside the classroom, funded by the City, that is just as important. If the extracurricular activities are cut it will have just as serious an economic impact as cutting funding in the classroom. Thank you.

Olivia Papp, 38 Castle Drive, Hooksett, stated:

Hello, I'm a resident of Hooksett and also a sophomore at Manchester Central High School. I understand that it's not exactly customary for students that are not of voting age to speak at these meetings. However, I'm here today because I feel that we are at a time, even though not financially lucrative, when we can institute great change in our City. I hope that it is the right kind of change that we choose to institute. I currently, two periods a day, sit in a classroom of more than 30 students. The current budget allows for the amount of teachers that we currently have, which is already a large class size, a very large class size. At the beginning of the year this year, I had a class of more than 35 students in which we traded desks sitting in the back of the room on the floor because there were not enough desks for us. And I understand that not all classrooms are like this, and there are classrooms of smaller size, but with the diminishing number of teachers that a smaller budget would allow for, I don't believe we would be providing the same quality of education for our students. And every day we turn on the TV and we turn on the radio and we hear about costs in terms of dollars and cents. But my hope is that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen will consider costs in terms of a child's education, a cost that transcends the measure of dollar and cents. Thank you.

Howard McCarthy, 105 Randall Street, stated:

I'm getting of tired coming here, and I'm sure you're getting tired of looking at me. Has anybody taken me seriously? Does anybody here know or lived through a depression? Well I have. My father couldn't get a job; we were poor. It's tough. Now I want to tell you something. When I was about three or four years old, I couldn't get my breath and my mother grabbed me and she held me and my father said, "I think he's going to die," and when I heard that I said, "I don't want to die." I was about three or four. And my mother said, "You are not going to die because

I won't let you," and I started to breathe. What I'm saying to you is that I've been through a depression. In these times with the way the economy is, to lose a job is devastating. What is wrong with the department head asking for what I requested? Simply keep everybody working. Is it a crime to ask to give back a week's pay? Is that so going to alter these peoples' lives that are possibly ready to lose a job? How about you people? If you gave a week's pay back, would that alter your life and devastate your life at the present? I don't think so. Seek and ye shall find, ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find and open up any door. I want every department head to put that on the agenda. On a volunteer basis to keep working...this furlough business, what good is it? Why not keep them working and give back a week's pay? Money bags Howard McCarthy will give \$500 if this program gets working. At least try. Try. One other thing, do you people ever get tired of the same old heads? I know tonight is going to be a special meeting, there's going to be extra names there, but I'm beginning to think that there's so much apathy out there of the voters and the citizens of this City. I'm not just addressing you people; I address everybody in the back of me too. Apathetic people that won't take this politic thing sincerely and get up here and speak their peace. And for all the nay-sayers...and a woman said to me at the flee market, "Howard, I saw your show on television and you can't sing" and I said, "I know I can't sing, but I like to sing and I'm going to sing." Take a look at me—Friday night, 6:30 and I'll be singing my heart out whether you like it or not. Thank you.

Marie Papp, 38 Castle Drive, Hooksett, NH stated:

Good evening, I was born and raised here in Manchester and have a daughter at Central and a son that will be attending Central High School in just a couple years. I sympathize with the seat that you are all in this evening and I understand that it is your duty to put forth a fiscally responsible budget. That task is clearly made more difficult by these economic times. Families have been affected by lay-offs; my family is no exception. My husband was laid-off just last week, so now we're both

out looking for work. So you would think, based on my current economic situation, that I would be in favor of the Mayor's proposed budget. Make no mistake, I am not. I do not, after attending various School Board meetings, and listening to the cuts that are being made, based on the \$152 million figure and not having a fully funded budget of \$156 million...I could stand here and go on and on about my concerns about cuts for the music department and cuts to staffing, but I have three minutes. In preparing for tonight's meeting, I did some research and I discovered through the State Department of Education's website that the Manchester School District is the eighth lowest in terms of cost per student out of 73 school districts in the state that offer K-12 education. Our high schools are the lowest out of 73 school districts in the state, far below the state average. In addition, the State Department of Education came out with its most recent report on April 10th for school districts that are in need of improvement. From what I could tell, I would love to be proven wrong, but the Manchester School District was the only district that was classified as a District in Need of Improvement in both the areas of math and reading for going on five years. Again, I understand the need to put forth a fair and responsible budget, but with all due respect, there is nothing fair or responsible about crippling our School District which is already among the lowest in terms of cost per student in the state and in need of improvement. Do not allow short term savings to turn into long term costs to our students and the community as a whole. I urge you, Board of Aldermen, to reject the Mayor's proposed budget and give the School Board the money that they need to provide a quality education to our students, ideally, closer to the \$156 million that is needed to fully fund these programs. Do not make our children's education yet another casualty in these economic times. Thank you.

David Bigelow, 335 Laurel St. stated:

My topic is, as it's been every time I've been here so far, a dog park. Basically, the reason I'm here is because it's spring; the ground is sod so we could potentially be building a dog park assuming you guys approve it. In Manchester 38% of households own a dog and I know there are 109,000 plus residents in Manchester, which means about 38,000 people that live in Manchester, have a dog in their house. And if you go by population studies, for each household that has a dog, on average, it's 1.6 dogs, although I've never seen six tenths of a dog running around. But in any case, that means that there's 23,700 plus dogs in Manchester of which only 10,000 are licensed. So you have more dogs that are unlicensed than licensed. A dog park might help change that because one of the rules for a dog park is the dog has to be licensed and vaccinated to be allowed in the park. There are over 122,428 acres of park land already owed by the Parks Department, so it probably wouldn't be too hard to find a couple of acres that dog owners could use. I know in the past one of the concerns has been liability for insurance because we're self insured, which one state rep said meant Manchester doesn't have any insurance. As a group, we're willing to get insurance if that's what you want. Another possibility is, before people can use the park they have to sign liability waivers. There are a lot of communities that go that route. Basically, we'd just like to have our chance to try and come up with the plans. I'm sure that you would still want Chuck DePrima to approve them, but we're willing to do whatever you need to get it done. In this bad economy we're basically saying: Let us build you a free dog park; let us maintain it free of charge as opposed to asking you guys to pay for it. To me that's a win-win. Thank you.

On motion of Alderman Smith, duly seconded by Alderman Pinard, it was voted to adjourn the Special Meeting to allow the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to meet.

Mayor Quinta called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to order. He then called the Special Meeting back to order.

Gail Dubois, 20 Exchange Street, stated:

I'm a life-long resident of Manchester and I've been a tax-paying citizen for the past 25 years. My children were educated in the Manchester school system and I have had one child who required the services of special education. More relevant to this evening's meeting, I have been a paraprofessional at the Wilson School for the past 11 years in the special education department. Through this history, I have had the opportunity to experience our educational system from many points of perspective: As a taxpayer and as an educator, and yes, paraprofessionals are educators, I am concerned for the future of my living community. If we fund our schools at a minimal rate, our city will be driven by second-rate skills. As you seek to hold students and teachers accountable for results, you ladies and gentlemen are shareholders in the burden. Money on its own is not sufficient. It is necessary for us to continue on our path to meet the standards of No Child Left Behind. As paraprofessionals, we have all been required to meet the highly qualified standards, yet in meeting those standards, there has been no compensation for our efforts. Across the board, paraprofessionals in the Manchester school system are a great resource for the minimal salaries that they receive. If you are looking to make a significant dent in your budget, bear in mind, we are the least paid for the qualifications that you require. What is most important this evening is that you consider the children of Manchester in their right to an education. Not every child finds success as a member of a classroom. There is no one best way to teach, no one best way to learn. Paraprofessionals ensure on a daily basis that every child in the City of Manchester has the opportunity to achieve success in a setting that is conducive to their learning ability. Academic gains are made when children receive what they need. With the proposed cut of paraprofessionals the educational needs of many children will be

compromised. I ask you to consider that underfunding our schools does not promote our city as a whole. It does not encourage new business opportunities, nor will it entice families to invest in our community. Without this appeal, our local businesses suffer and our community fails. A strong school system is a strong draw for economic well-being throughout our City. I ask that before you make a decision that will forever affect the future of Manchester's children that you consider the children whose needs are the greatest, whose successes are celebrated and whose educational futures are at risk without the funding necessary to provide for a positive learning environment.

Chris Herbert, 85 Watts Street, stated:

Mayor and Board of Aldermen, as a School Board member, obviously I'm familiar with all the budgeting we've had to do and work for and I appreciate the issues you have to deal with on the City side and the drop in the revenue. But I'd just like to point out a couple things. Number one is I think you have the calculation wrong in terms of politics. It's my impression that if you all voted for \$157 million or \$153 million or \$154 million, not one of you would lose your position in the next election because of that vote. In my opinion, even though times are tough, I think the Manchester taxpayers, the majority of them, still have a sense of community and still have a great understanding of the importance of education. They value it very highly and they are more than willing to pay the bill. I don't know who you are listening to, but when I go to Hannaford's or I'm out and about doing something, I have never had anybody come up to me and say, "You know, Chris, you're spending that money too much. It's too much for education." Quite the opposite. I have had many, many people approach me, who I do not know, and shake my hand and say, you're doing a good job on the School Board; I appreciate you sticking up for the kids; and keep up the good work type of thing, so I think you have the calculation wrong. I think you think that the majority of voters, the majority of taxpayers, in the City of Manchester are not willing to pay the bill for

education or city services, for that matter, and I think you're wrong. I think the people who are most afraid are the people in this room. If you go out on the street, I know there are people that are going to dominate the conversation; the Union Leader is going to be mad at you; people will be writing letters and that kind of thing, but I don't think they represent the majority at all. The other thing I want to mention is that the best way to hammer down values of homes is to have a public school system that's perceived to be weak or poor. \$200 a year or \$250 a year more on property tax bill doesn't compare to losing \$10,000 on the value of your home and this doesn't matter if you have kids in the home or not. If you're ready to retire and go to Florida and you have to sell your home in the next 24 months or 16 months, it's going to sell for less because of what this group could do to damage the perception of how good the educational system is in Manchester, so I don't even think it's a good management decision. So on those two points, number one I think the politics is in favor of funding education to a level that's higher than you're considering, and number two, from a leadership position, I think you're damaging everybody's home values across the City and I think that's a very bad decision. Thank you.

Chrissy Simonds, 394 Second Street, stated:

I'm here tonight to publicly say thank you. Thank you to all the School Board members for all their hard work and dedication. Thank you Dr. Brennan for advocating for my son and all the other children in our district. Also to the administration, especially to our teachers. Even though they don't know if they are going to have a job in September, they go to school with a smile on their face and educate our children during these difficult times. We owe these talented individuals our support. They go into their classrooms every day trying so hard to get these kids to enjoy learning, to want to come to school. They try to work with parents that aren't willing to be a part of their child's education. I feel the only way our children are going to get the best education is if we come together as a

team. It is all of our responsibility to teach our children, to encourage our children to do well in school, to stay in school, to make sure they are our first priority, to make sure they are the Mayor and Board of Aldermen's first priority. We have to have open communication. We're after one goal: for our children to have the best education. We are all on one team, the winning team. We need to come together and help one another; we need to respect each other's views. Let's get things done and not just talk about them. Help me, help you, help us. Thank you.

Marilyn McDonald, 23 Roysan Street, stated:

Good evening. I have lived in Ward 8 for the past 45 years. I was a substitute teacher for seven years in Manchester and accepted my position as library assistant in 1976. The library is, and should be, the core of every school. It is not a job from 8:00 AM to 2:30 PM, but a commitment to instill the love of reading, accomplishment and success with every child we come in contact with. When Manchester adopted a fixed library schedule for the elementary schools, the district sought to put a certified library media specialist in each library to promote and enhance literacy education for all of its students. The media specialist is responsible for conducting five- 45 minute library lessons on a daily basis. Because of the busy schedule of the media specialist—teaching classes, correlating the teachers, the lessons plans relating to subjects taught in the classroom to improve NECAP test scores, updating book orders, writing reports and attending staff meetings when necessary on children with IEPs—it is the assistant that handles all the other needs throughout the day. Filing well over 1,000 books with multimedia material weekly, sending out overdue notices daily, processing and cataloging books and material, updating inventory, handling the needs of the staff when trouble strikes, a jam in the copy machine, bulbs blown in an overhead in the middle of a lesson, laminating jobs needed to be done, a computer glitch needed to be handled immediately, assisting and preparing instructional material for classroom...these are only a few of the needs a library

assistant handles. I know the budget is tight. One way to ensure our libraries will continue to inspire children to go above and beyond would be to drop the library assistant to grade-level-nine at \$15.85 which is what the classroom paraprofessionals' top-step is now. This would be a saving for the City of approximately \$65,000 a year. The position could be a dual position, having the library assistant working in the library during the morning hours and working with children in the classroom during the afternoon hours. I think of education as a link in a chain of success. Each step a child takes in his or her education along the way is connected with opportunities from each person that child has come in contact with. I ask that you not break one important link in the chain—the library assistant who contributes above and beyond, to help every child succeed. I have valued my time working for the City of Manchester all these years. I would like to continue to make a difference in a child's life to reach above and beyond to become the upcoming citizens of our community. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you tonight and to express my concerns about eliminating this position, library assistant. Thank you.

Maxine Mosley, 76 Sherborne Street, stated:

Good evening, Mr. Mayor, members of the Board. I reside in Ward 6 and I'm a 28 year employee of the Manchester School District. I'm not here to tell you what to do, but I am here to share two pieces of information. One thing that I do as a homeowner is that if my energy costs are going up, I do an energy audit of my home and that's where I save my first savings. I happen to work at McLaughlin Middle School, which is supposed to be one of the gemstones of this district. It was built 11 years ago. The windows were never sealed properly. During the winter, the air conditioner would not shut off in the main office. The front office staff was working with gloves, hats, mittens, and scarves and their coats on. We duct-taped the window to try to minimize the draft. We have rooms upstairs that were in the 90s, while the air conditioning was blaring on the first floor. We have

exterior doors that were not weather stripped properly and there are gaps at the bottom. Now I don't know about you, but this is part of your home as well as mine and it's one of many public buildings and I think they need an energy audit. I think if you listen to the presentations that Mr. McGillivray gave last night on behalf of the educators and children of the district, he came forward with some interesting reform ideas. Instead of discounting any reform, I think we need to adhere to it. As the purveyors of this City, there are a lot of city buildings...I'm sitting in this room freezing. I don't know if the air conditioning is on, but it's really cold in here tonight and I don't understand why the air is blasting and I don't understand why we don't have lower tiles in this room, but an energy audit would certainly give us some more information. Secondly, I had the chance to speak with Alderman Mark Roy earlier and shared an article with him that he graciously photocopied and was going to give to members of the Board, but for the sake of the audience and the public, I'd like to read a couple things from this article. It's an editorial by the editors of "Rethinking Schools," which is an independent magazine produced four times a year. It really looks at reform of education primarily for urban schools and I think one of the things we forget in Manchester is that we are truly an urban setting: 41% of our students are at free and reduced lunch. We are an urban setting. That means their families are at or below the poverty line. We are an urban setting. So I'm going to read a few things from this article and hope you have the time to read them. "Since the early 20th century, prominent business leaders have acted on the belief that since they were good at making money, they were obviously the most qualified people to decide how to best educate the country's youth." Further in the article it states, "They tried to govern school systems as if they were corporations, organizing schools as if they were something akin to factories and orient education towards testing and tracking students towards presumed real world destinations. There are many flaws inherent in imagining that schools will work well once they adopt factory or free market models. Perhaps most fundamental is a presumption that schools work best when they emulate

business. Schools are not businesses. Students are not things that can be produced; they are human beings who are learning and growing in ways that are too complex, erratic or nuanced for any standardized scores to truly measure. We have to remember, education is education—a humane and human process. It is not competition, or production. It is not a business.” And I think its time to respect the educational leaders that have been hired in this district and to put forth a budget that these people know what they are doing. Thank you very much.

Mayor Guinta stated there being no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of Alderman J. Roy, duly seconded by Alderman Pinard, it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.

There being no further business, on motion of Alderman Shea, duly seconded by Alderman Ouellette, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk