

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

September 1, 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 Lopez.

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

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.

Barbara Miles, 127 Cypress Street, stated:

I'm the co-captain of the Somerville Crime Watch Group. I've come to inform you that Police Chief Mara has invited you to walk with him through the most dangerous and deteriorated places of our neighborhoods. On September 11th at 4:00 PM we will meet at Engine House 7. Walking the alley between Hall and Wilson Streets, police and citizen presence will declare this alley off limits to drugged and drunk youth and adults who harass law abiding, taxpaying residents. Loitering on Wilson Street, police and citizen presence will confront business owners who have defiled our streets, allowed violence to become a way of life and refused to advance to the quality of life law abiding, taxpaying citizens deserve. Proceeding to Prescott Street, police and citizen presence will demand property owners to clean up burned out and torrent trucks, remove waste and restore operating businesses to the standards expected of reputable enterprises. We invite you to join us in this march. Is not our City all one City? Does not the beauty or deterioration of one neighborhood affect the beauty and deterioration of all neighborhoods? We invite you to walk with us and we will walk with you.

Dave Bigelow, 335 Laurel Street, stated:

I'm talking about dog parks. I would like to thank the Lands and Building Committee very much for having it on the agenda today and discussing it. Regardless of what I thought of the meeting and the back and forth, it doesn't matter because of something that happened after the Committee meeting that might solve the whole problem to begin with. Thanks to a bright idea by Phil Greazzo, Dick Agangost was asked if he had any land he would be willing to let us use. His reaction to that was that he very graciously offered about five acres of the park land that will be replacing the Jac Pac Building down near the River. The neat thing about that is that it will take the City or the Dog Park Association the least amount of work and effort because he is already going to be landscaping the park and developing it so no additional work would be needed. Also to comment on the four sites, whether it was the Weston Observatory, the land near Brown Avenue and Crescent Road, the landfill or the Westside Ice Arena for one reason or another some

people had problems with the site. I guess most people were leaning towards the landfill, but for me, that would have been the worst on the list. Rating them in terms of shade, parking, and the most available area for the least amount of effort, the site down by the river blows them all away. It has parking, esthetically it is pleasing and it is near a hiking trail. One thing you do if you're a smart dog owner and used to going to dog parks is take your dog for a walk before you go into the park so some of the excess energy is burned off and he is not going to cause problems. It is away from houses and surrounded by an industrial zone. The closest houses are by the river, but there is enough room so I don't think they would be complaining about noise from a dog park because they have trains going by all the time, which make more noise.

Tracy Bachert, 718 Bryant Road, stated:

I'm here to talk about our schools. I am not a teacher. I'm a parent and the president of the PTO at McLaughlin Middle School. Today was the first day of school and my youngest went into first grade with 26 kids in her class. She was lucky because she has a small class. Her kindergarten class from last year that had 14 in it had 20 this year. If that was a daycare, that would be illegal and daycares aren't required to teach them anything. We have a great City with great teachers and great schools. We need to put everything we can into these schools and into our kids. We need to give the teachers a decent contract. We need to put every penny that we can find into the schools. I'm lucky that my child only has 26 kids in her class. There are other kids her age that have 28 and 30. It is unacceptable and again, if it were a daycare, it would be illegal. Like Joe Briggs said at the last meeting, you need to do the magic that you do and you need to fix it because these are our kids. They are our future and they are the ones who will keep crime down by keeping them in school, getting them good jobs, getting them into good colleges so they can come back and work here to benefit the City. If they drop out of high school they are a benefit to no one. They are going to drop out of high school when it starts in first grade and they can't learn and start falling behind.

Christine Kelly, 55 Riverfront Drive, stated:

I'm here to talk about the dog park. As a homeowner and a dog owner I love the idea of a dog park. When I lived in Hudson I had two dogs and I could bring them out by the airport where there was a dog place where they could run around. That doesn't exist any more. Since I have lived here for the past year, there was a park in Bedford, Benedict Park, where you could take them off the leash. They aren't going to allow that any more. There is a place in Candia, but it is a long walk through the woods, which I don't enjoy. I think it would be fabulous to have a place that would be safe for people and for dogs where they could burn off excess energy. I know from my own experiences that my dogs tend to get along with other animals and people if they are exposed to a dog park. Also, if they do get off the leash, they are less likely to run away due to the excitement of it all. It sounds like there are a couple of places that seem like viable options. From what I have heard, the landfill is less desirable if only for the lack of shade. I'm hoping that we could find a spot that would work for everyone. Maybe by the industrial area? I think the hours of operation make it more amenable, even with houses around, than others because you aren't going to be out there at midnight with your dog. Thank you all for considering the dog park and I hope this goes through.

Phil Greazzo, 139 Parker Street, stated:

I echo the sentiments of the people before me. The dog park issue is something that I have been working on for quite a while and while the Lands and Building Committee was debating sites, I got frustrated and turned to Dick Anagnost and asked if he had some land I could fence so I didn't have to deal with it anymore. He said that he did. He said he had five acres that he was going to be donating to the City. I asked if he would be willing to donate it to us and he said he would be, in order to alleviate all the issues of not here, not there or costs the City is going to have to pay to improve those sites for parking or lot leveling. That's something that Manchester Dog Park Association simply cannot afford. We can afford the fencing and we can afford the maintenance. If Mr. Anagnost is going

to improve the site off of the river trail and landscape it, level it, and include parking, all we have to do it put up a fence. That eliminates the City's obligation for anything except to say yes or no. I support that site and I hope Mr. DePrima can do the investigating that he needs to do to make this a reality so the Board can look into it further. I also have an issue with the spending cap. Someone mentioned something that stuck a few moments before the meeting. There are to be neighborhood meetings on whether the dog park should be in the area, but no meetings on where the spending cap is. Nobody wants to allow a vote to go to the ballot for some reason. Whether you do it as a Board or as a non-profit organization going to court on your behalf, you're trying to deny the will of the people to vote. Whether they vote for it or against it is irrelevant at this point. They should have the right to vote. Not holding any of the informational hearings that you swore to have, but trying to have hearings on whether or not someone should be having a dog park in their neighborhood seems ludicrous to me. I request that you let the people vote on the spending cap.

Howard McCarthy, 105 Randall Street, stated:

I really don't have any thing profound to say tonight. You could have been mayor for the rest of your life. You do a good job. You're a good man. I like you. I see a couple of Aldermen that are willing to take your place. Ted Gatsas and Mark Roy are buddy-buddy. How can that be? If I were there, I would want to sit on the other side of the room. I think that's wonderful that you can sit there and love each other. I want to let you know that I haven't changed my attitude in my endeavors. I have been on the street very few times to sell ice cream. It has been the coldest and wettest summer that I have ever experienced. My intention is to continue to stay on the street. I'm going to do something after the ice cream season is over. I'm willing to give anybody a free scoop of ice cream. Is there an Ordinance against that? I will be on the street until New Year's Eve, no matter how cold it is, giving out coffee. I want to congratulate you, Your Honor, for seeking higher office.

Calum McNeil, 471 Silver Street, stated:

This is the only chance that I have to talk to my government on a personal level. It is such a great thing. Wouldn't it be great if we had more people down here caring about the tax cap? We have more people caring about a dog park, which I think is a great thing, but we don't have anyone who really cares about what's going on. There is no one running against Mr. Ouellette in his ward. There is no grassroots leadership in the ward. I want to call that to heart. We need to stand up for what's going on. 5,000 people put this on a ballot and wanted this voted on, but the Board wouldn't let it happen. They didn't hold one meeting like they said they were going to. I'm not saying that the dog park is a horrible thing, but where is the leadership? I want Manchester to be a better place. I'm running for School Board. Obviously there is a real problem there. Nineteen out of how many schools are failing? It's horrible. Of course the bureaucracy of one person stepping in and doing something good is there, but no one wants to knock down the old network. When something is happening that is wrong and the old network is holding it in place we have to get some independent leadership that is going to be able to do that. That's the real thing that has to happen. I really want to run for School Board. I would like to incentivize the tests for kids so they have a reason to do well on a federal test. I would like to incentivize the teachers so they have a reason to teach the kids better. Why don't we give 50% of the teachers a paid vacation for four to Bermuda and make the businesses in the community sponsor this trip and do it off the federal test? Why don't we look at the New Orleans model of giving the principals control of their schools? I don't know why we're not having an informational meeting about the tax cap. I'm a citizen here to address my government. I wish someone else cared. Dan O'Neil, you did a great job bringing a lot of Fire and Highway support. Real Pinard, you're Highway and Real's Trail program I love. Osborne, you walk the neighborhoods and have a lot of support in the area. Jim Roy, Planning Board like no one else. Peter Sullivan, what you have done to downtown is amazing. Gatsas, everyone likes the truth. Frank, I think you do a lot of great things in a lot of places. Ouellette, you bring a lot of support to the west side. George Smith, you are

a good man and you do a lot of good things. Mike, Fire and Police. Same thing for Ms. DeVries. Mr. Shea, what you have done for the school system is unbelievable and a lifelong service.

Ryan Tower, 55 Head Street, stated:

Tonight I was going to talk about the spending cap and show my support for the dog park because this is something that could get done very easily. Let's stop leading the public along and making them think that they need to fight for something. The dog park can happen. It is a realistic situation. In regards to the spending cap, I have been watching this battle through the Union Leader. I'm afraid that the debate is being framed incorrectly in the sense that the opposition has said that if they sign the petition it will lower their taxes. Everyone will sign a petition like that. My problem is that the idea and the nature of a petition is not to get the people to sign the petition because they support that's on the petition, but they want to sign because they support the democratic process of allowing the people to vote on the subject matter that is in the petition. I wanted to clear that up for everyone because it seems to be getting confusing. The second oppositional stance that I have been hearing is we don't know if the language is constitutional. Unfortunately for that argument, in order for a petition to become a petition that is approved by the City, the language has to be approved by the City's lawyer. If we're saying we don't think the language is constitutional it would have never become a petition originally and the 5,000 people who signed it wouldn't have been able to see it. I wanted to clear up that debate.

Kathy Staub, 274 Laurel Street, stated:

I'm here this evening to talk about the school budget. In my life, I have found that I get into the most trouble when I make assumptions. This year's school budget was based on a number of erroneous assumptions. First, the building aid from the state of \$1.9 million would not materialize. That money was given to the City for the schools, but was not allocated and still has not been allocated. The second assumption was that the stimulus money could be used for general operating support for the schools. That was also not

true. Dr. Brennan has employed as much slight of hand as the State Board of Education and the New Hampshire Department of Education would give him and he has been able to reinstate things like full day kindergarten by using stimulus money. In two years that money will be gone and we will be without full day kindergarten again. The third erroneous assumption was that not replacing our retiring teachers would have no significant impact on educational quality. As you heard earlier there are some very large classes in our elementary schools. My neighbor teaches kindergarten at Northwest and yesterday she said she had 31 children enrolled in her class and they were hoping not all of those children would show up. The biggest erroneous assumption that was made when this budget was put forward was that the School District didn't need that money. Somehow there was waste and the money could be found somewhere, but after three years of level funding there was no place left to look. It was the straw that broke the camel's back and now we're looking at significant financial impacts on our school system. The only thing we can do now is thank the teachers for agreeing to reopen their bargaining agreement and make some concessions so we don't have class sizes in the upper 20s and low 30s in elementary school. There is some concern that there is going to be a cost to this going forward. Currently, our beginning salary for teachers is below the state average by \$1,000. Of 160 school districts in the state, we are 92nd on the list. If in the future we are going to attract good teachers, we are going to have to have a competitive beginning salary. Otherwise, we are looking at worse conditions down the road where we are not going to be able to attract qualified teachers. I would ask you to consider all of these things. Hindsight is 20-20. There were mistakes that were made and I hope that you will try to rectify some of them tonight.

Tammy Simmons, 142 Parker Street, stated:

It is September. Summer is just about gone. Kids are back at school and I'm reminded that it was a year ago that we sat here until midnight arguing about whether we should put the spending cap on the ballot. Unfortunately, it didn't get on the ballot last year and it seems to me the biggest reason was that we needed to educate the voters. I'm

wondering if this September or October is somehow longer than last year because as of yet, nothing has been done to give any information to any voters. I'm wondering if the focus has changed from educating the voters to keeping it off the ballot. That's what it seems like. The only bit of community information or education or feedback beyond the collection of those signatures last summer was a community meeting that Phil Greazzo organized for tomorrow night. I wonder if the focus has shifted because those opposed to the spending cap are starting to wonder if it won't pass in November. It might affect some aldermanic seats because everyone knows who is for it and who is against it. I'm always reminded of Franklin who has thrived for 20 years under a spending cap. Every time it comes before their voters, a larger percentage votes for it. If it is not doing good things in their community, more and more people wouldn't be voting for it. Their skies have not fallen, their schools have not failed, their police and fire have not ceased to exist, their street lights are still on, they still plow, they paid off their bonds, and they are thriving. I think those voters have gotten to vote on it either three or four times now. I'd like to vote on it once. I'd like to see this City and this Board stop trying to keep the people of Manchester from voting on something that they have a right to voice their opinion on. Some will vote for it and some will vote against it, but they should have the opportunity to vote.

Wendy Thibeault, 8 Mountain Road, stated:

I'm here tonight to support the dog park. Dave Bigelow was very thorough in appraising the sites and I support his last idea of the place by the river to be donated.

Maureen Molly Lee Sherman stated:

I've been talking with Congresswoman Carol-Shea Porter's office. I don't want legal action done against the City Police. They are hurting me. I reported them. I told her they were hurting me. I went to your office to get an appointment with you and your staff was hurting me right away. They were threatening me. I talked to Carol Shea-Porter's office and they partially told me what to do. I tried to make an emergency appointment with

you, but they gave me an appointment three weeks later. I reported them to the county attorney. I stood there for 30 minutes writing down all the information proving they were killing me. I came back to your office and they told me to call Senator Jeanne Shaheen's office. I told them the situation and they told me to get a hold of the Sherriff's Office and he is working on the situation. I want to know why you gave me an appointment three weeks later for an emergency situation. I need the Sherriff's office right away.

*On motion of **Alderman Pinard**, duly seconded by **Alderman Shea**, it was voted to receive and file all comments and written documentation.*

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Pinard**, duly seconded by **Alderman J. Roy**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk