

**SPECIAL MEETING  
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN  
IN JOINT SESSION WITH THE  
BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
(PUBLIC HEARING – MAYOR’S BUDGET)**

**April 6, 2011**

**6:00 PM**

**Mayor Gatsas** called the meeting to order.

**Mayor Gatsas** called for the Pledge of Allegiance, to be led by Alderman Greazzo.

A moment of silence was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Craig, Ludwig, Long, Roy, Osborne, Corriveau, O’Neil,  
Lopez, Shea, DeVries, Shaw, Greazzo, Ouellette, Arnold

School Committee Members Ambrogi, Vaughn, Soucy, Kelley,  
Gelinias, Katsiantonis

Absent: School Committee Members Briggs, DeBlasi, Herbert,  
Gagnon-Langton, Beaudry, Avar, Dolman, Beauchamp

**Mayor Gatsas** advised that the purpose of this special meeting is a public hearing to receive comments on the proposed Fiscal Year 2012 municipal budget, the proposed Community Improvement Program for the Fiscal Year 2012 to 2017 period in accordance with the procedures established in RSA 44:10 and in satisfaction of any other local, state or federal law that may apply. The Clerk shall

present the resolutions, the subject of which contain all of the appropriations as proposed, following which a brief presentation may be made and public comments will be heard.

**City Clerk Matthew Normand** presented the proposed Resolutions:

“Appropriating to the Parking Fund the sum of \$4,929,771 from parking revenues for the Fiscal Year 2012.”

“Appropriating the sum of \$13,779,048 from Sewer User Rental Charges to the Environmental Protection Division for the Fiscal Year 2012.”

“Appropriating the sum of \$2,257,354 from Recreation User Charges to the Recreation Division for the Fiscal Year 2012.”

“Appropriating to the Manchester Transit Authority the sum of \$982,825 for the Fiscal Year 2012.”

“Appropriating to the Manchester School District the sum of \$150,200,000 for the Fiscal Year 2012.”

“Appropriating all Incremental Meals and Rooms Tax Revenue Received by the City in the Fiscal Year 2012 and held in the Civic Center Fund, for the payment of the City’s Obligations in Said Fiscal Year under the Financing Agreement.”

“Appropriating to the Manchester Airport Authority the sum of \$46,309,448 from Special Airport Revenue Funds for the Fiscal Year 2012.”

“Appropriating to the Manchester School Food and Nutrition Services Program the sum of \$5,796,000 from School Food and Nutrition Services Revenues for the Fiscal Year 2012.”

“Raising Monies and Making Appropriations of \$133,615,233 for the Fiscal Year 2012.”

“Appropriating to the Central Business Service District the sum of \$258,000 from Central Business Service District Funds for the Fiscal Year 2012.”

“Continuation of the Central Business Service District.”

“Authorizing the Finance Officer to apply a credit of \$208,899 from the City’s Fiscal Year 2011 City Retirement System contribution against the City’s Fiscal Year 2012 City pension costs.”

“Authorizing the Finance Officer to transfer \$130,877 from the Special Revenue Reserve Account to the Parking Division in Fiscal Year 2012 to reimburse the Parking Division for Fiscal Year 2012 debt service associated with the Hampshire Plaza parking garage.”

**Mayor Gatsas** advised that the meeting shall be open to public comments; that each person when recognized shall come to the nearest microphone and state their name and address in a clear, loud voice for the record; that each person shall be given one opportunity to speak and comments shall be limited to three minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak; residents and taxpayers shall be called upon first, followed by all others; once all present have been allowed to speak, should there be a topic not discussed, those wishing to speak a second time shall be provided the opportunity to do so.

**City Clerk Normand** stated I would just note for the audience the yellow light will show at 30 seconds, and at three minutes and ten seconds, the microphones will automatically shut off.

**Win Hutchinson**, 386 Orange Street, stated:

It’s not often that I get up to speak on a budget that needs a tax increase, and to speak favorably of that budget. Times are tough in Washington, in Concord, and here in Manchester. We’ve just had a very tumultuous week in Concord, as probably some of you know. It wasn’t easy and I know that the people up there on the stage haven’t had it easy either. It has been a very, very difficult task. Given the circumstances, contractual obligations with employees and what have you, I

would say that the Mayor's budget that has been presented does the job. I hate to say that it is a 3% or 4% tax increase but that's the way it is. We are all feeling the pain. We are going to feel it some more until we are out of this mess. But I hope everybody understands that it is not because we want to do it; it is because we have to. I congratulate the Mayor and Dr. Brennan and the people who have worked with them to create a budget that at least minimizes impact and tries to do the job necessary and keep Manchester moving forward without having to mortgage our future. Thank you Mr. Mayor, Dr. Brennan, Aldermen and School Committee members. I think you've done an outstanding job. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

**Maxine Mosley**, 76 Sherburne Street, stated:

Good evening Mr. Mayor and members of both Boards. To be honest with you, three minutes isn't enough time for all the things I'd like to say to the persons sitting in front of me. I am going to try to make this very short and very much to the point. I am a taxpayer; I have been a taxpayer for 31 years in the City of Manchester. I work for the public school system; I work two other jobs. I do not think that the budget that is on the table for the schools is adequate. I believe that the School Board's budget is much more appropriate to keep us moving forward. I, for one, am more than willing to pick up another job and pay more taxes to make sure that the School District gets what it needs and these kids are and ready to move into productive adulthood. Thank you.

**Clare Callaghan**, 505 River Road, stated:

Good evening. I thank you all. I understand that this is a tough time for everyone, and I appreciate the work that has gone into the proposed budget. I'm also not averse to paying higher taxes to make this a better city. I'm here tonight to specifically ask that the public transit system be looked at long and hard as something more than a necessary social service, but as a potential engine to drive

our city forward. What we have in place now, as inadequate as it might seem to some people, should not be cut any further, and building on what we have now, I think there is an opportunity for creating a whole new sense of how a public transit system should operate within a city. I believe there are new constituencies out there to ride the bus. I am looking at a city that has everything in place already in terms of colleges, defined business districts and new development. I believe that working with those groups, there doesn't need to be a lot of money put into this, but awareness of the ecological benefits. Our green campuses should take this on. I would encourage every single one of the agencies whose clients depend on public transportation to take the bus once a week. I think all of you should be taking the bus once a week. Get out there and get to know your city in a way that I do. I love this city because of the buses and because I have had the opportunity in the 30 years I have been here to ride the bus, to get to know all of the neighborhoods, not just my own. Teach your kids to ride the bus. We can start a whole new generation that sees public transport as a future investment and part of our infrastructure, not just a marginal social service. Please, the social service aspect is prime. There are individuals out there who need the bus. They need it today and they need it tomorrow. Let's look at how it could possibly be used for the rest of us. It can be done and I don't think it's going to take a lot, just a different way of looking at the bus system. Thank you very much and best of luck with your hard work.

**Karen Hansberry**, 242 Medford Street, stated:

I am here to represent the paraprofessionals that work in our schools in the City. I just wanted to go on record that many times during the last few meetings that I have attended for the Board of School Committee that none of the unions are willing to open their contracts. All of you know that is not true. The paraprofessionals have indeed met with Dr. Brennan and others to discuss that we would be very happy to open our contract, to make concessions, to pay 20%

towards our medical benefits, have five furlough days, and other options that were presented to you. Also, just two short years ago we were asked to become highly qualified. Many of the districts around Manchester, their paraprofessionals were never asked to do that. All of us spent months upon months becoming highly qualified and highly certified with the State of New Hampshire Department of Education. None of us were paid for that. It took hours upon hours to accomplish that. If the proposed 200 jobs are lost, it's going to be a big loss to the education system in Manchester. Manchester is getting the biggest bargain ever with the paraprofessionals in Manchester. None of us took the jobs because of the money. I started less than six dollars an hour 17 years ago. All of us took the job because we love children, we want to help children, and it fit in with our schedules. And yes, it was because of insurance. Do you know how sad it was to meet at Beech Street School in the library and see all of the faces of the paraprofessionals who have served long and hard? They are veterans. Some of them have children that are disabled; single parents that will no longer have insurance; they are heads of households. The 200 proposed jobs is going to be a big sacrifice for these families. It was very sad to look into these crying faces. It's not just people in positions. It's human beings that are going to lose their insurance coverage. And they have children to support. It's not just, you know, cut the paraprofessionals. We are kind of at the lower end of the ladder. Like I said, you guys have no idea, unless you follow us around. Who is going to feed the kids that rely on feeding tubes? Who is going to toilet the kids? Who is going to help the kids with issues, like the kids in the PASS program – drugs and alcohol, teenage pregnancy, homelessness? This is a real serious thing, so I really hope you will take another look at this and think long and hard before you sign that paper that says, let the 200 paraprofessionals go. Thank you for your time.

**Joe Briggs**, 105 Bunsen Avenue, stated:

I apologize for not being there tonight, but tonight is enrichment night at Weston. It's baseball practice; it's lacrosse practice. Very many of my constituents were not able to come here tonight, people that had a lot to say, because the timing of this just did not allow them. They had to make a choice between their child's project they are working on and this. It's a hard decision. I want to represent them tonight by simply reminding all of you that the math behind the Superintendent's original budget was very simple. The average cost of educating a child in New Hampshire is substantially more than \$10,000 a year. We have 16,000 students. That is \$160 million. That happens to be exactly what his original number was. Now, the Board made a recommendation of \$152 million on the assumption that we could never get...it was aggressive to attempt to get that full amount. But I want to ask all of you to consider these people back here, and your own rationale and your own logic for the budget that you are looking at tonight. A lot of that rationale is the fact that we have a unique city, a unique and vibrant demographic that requires a fire department and a police department second to none, and we can take only minimum staffing adjustments from that. Our school system is exactly the same way. For those very reasons that we need a first class fire department and a first class police department, we have an expensive school system. It's not expensive in the sense of where we are relative to other cities and towns because we are very efficient. But, \$10,000 per child is the target, and if we take even our own recommended budget of \$152 million, that's an \$8 million gap. That's going to be substantially more than 200 jobs. This can be higher classroom count. This can be substantial impact to our school system. Do we really need that? We have a very high percentage of our overall housing, about 45,000 homes, which are low income apartments. We don't have a tax problem in Manchester; we have an evaluation problem. We can't pay the bills off of that. You guys are very aware of that. Many of you sitting up there passed the ten year plan understanding that. That was using 2006 data. I believe

the numbers have increased 6% since then. We are now 54%. That's what we have got to start looking at. But tonight we're talking about substantial cuts in the school system, and yet we are proceeding with building a municipal center and a new fire department. I don't doubt that we need those, but I can't touch the municipal center. My kids can't play there. No one can use its facilities. It's not going to result in another sidewalk. So I just ask you, reconsider this: Let's pay more in taxes if we have to. Thank you.

**Mary Jane Lyons**, 169 Wayne Street #2, stated:

Hello, I've never spoken at a meeting before so I'm a little bit nervous, if everyone can bear with me. I'm here tonight because of the possibility of the West Side Library closing. I'm a lifelong resident of Manchester. I've lived here for my whole 48 years. My father was the superintendent of the highway department for 30-something years. I may not be really good with the financial aspect of everything that's going on, but I really feel like I want to speak for the people at the West Side Library. The number one issue for me when I'm going to the other library is a safety issue. I was over at the other library one day because I am out of work right now, so I use the library for computers, as many, many people do. The Main Library, to say it nicely...I understand people who are homeless and don't have money, but it's not safe there. I've been there before where I've had, you know, someone who is schizophrenic just go crazy on me. I feel that it's just like...it's like a homeless shelter there. The West Side is just so different there. The librarians are spectacular. I can't say enough about them over there. The other side, to say that a bridge is not going to close, is not going to divide us, it is. Because, guess what? Not everyone has a car. There are a lot of people out of work right now and everyone is feeling it. I know there are a lot of disability groups that go to the Library on the West Side - Easter Seals people, elderly people, a lot of the immigrants. I don't know. I guess that's it. I'm not very good

at public speaking, so I apologize. I'm really nervous. I just wanted to say that, and thank you for your time.

**Charles Peaslee**, 485 Dubuque Street #2, stated:

I'm here tonight because the budget that you guys posed, it just doesn't cut it. One, you're going to close the Library down, which a lot of people use, like the elderly and the immigrants. Even my day program, Easter Seals, the Moore Center, whatever other area agencies are around, they come and use that for reading, for searching for jobs, because it is hard to get around to go to jobs, to look for them in the mall and stuff. That's why they go and use the computers for job searching and other things, to check their email for important messages from family and friends and stuff. If you shut the Library down, then we are going to have to track all the way over to the Main Library, pay for parking, and it's just not going to be fun. We go to the library because they know us there, and it is a lot safer. It's safety; it's safer to be there than trying to cross Pine Street to get to the library. If you shut that down, where are the people on the West Side going to go? We are going to have to travel all the way to the Main Library or to Bedford, and nobody has a car, like the elderly. They don't have a car. The buses only run for a certain period of time. You have to catch the bus or wait an hour for the next one to come through. That's why a lot of people like the West Side Library, and if you guys close it, you're taking away...and a lot of the schools, the West Side students use the Library too. They go there to do their book reports; if they have research, they go there to do their papers. They go to the Library to do their research. If you close that, what are they going to do? The library in the school is not going to be big enough for all of their research and stuff. So, if you shut that down, the people on the West Side are not going to have a place to go, the people who don't have a car, the elderly. We have to walk and that's the closest one to get to. And if you shut that down, we've got nowhere to go. Nobody is going to want to walk all the way across the bridge to go to the Main Library. If you shut it

down that's one thing that we are not going to have, just because you want to build a Wal-mart, just because you want to build a civic center, and then you want to build a Market Basket. We don't need those right now. You need to worry about the schools that need the money, the sports, the people that are doing things. If you close down to save your money... Why don't you guys take pay cuts too, to help the budget? That's the one thing is you guys make more money than we do, so why don't you take a pay cut to help the City? Thank you very much.

**Tracy Bachert**, 718 Bryant Road, stated:

I just want to talk about the paraprofessionals a little bit. I don't think people understand that they are not just there to help the children that they might be assigned to or children that they specialize with. Every child in every class, whether it is gym or lunch or an actual class, benefits from those paraprofessionals. Every child who is, quote/unquote, normal benefits from those paraprofessionals. No matter what the class size is, whether it's an ideal class size or if it's stuffed like it is now, if the teachers had to stop to take over the work that the paraprofessionals are doing, all of the other children suffer too. Take the paraprofessionals away, the special needs children suffer, the regular needs children suffer, and the teachers suffer. The teachers are stressed enough as it is. They cannot do this on their own. There is a reason the paraprofessionals are put into place to begin with, and it's so every child gets the same education. I'm sorry, could you maybe listen to me? Thank you. I pay a lot of money in taxes. I am not opposed to paying a little bit more to get what my children deserve. There are two things that you look for when you buy a house and when you sell a house: safety and education. I am not opposed to paying more to get that, because I'm going to need that when I try to sell my house when my children are gone. So if that's what you need to do, raise taxes, to get what this city needs, we're silly to think we're not going to have to pay more eventually. We might as well do it now and do it right. Thank you.

**Peter Sorrentino**, 285 Milford Street, stated:

I want to start by thanking everybody in the room, everybody in front of me, as well as everybody behind me. It's the time we spend here that helps drive the City and the decisions to help make the City a better place. Everybody here has other things they could be doing, but they didn't. They came here instead, all in order to try to make Manchester a better place. I stand in front of you tonight to present no opinion, no passion, no half-truths, but facts about Manchester property taxes. I know you doubt that right now, but I challenge you to think of past comments I've made and listen carefully to tonight's. Although you may interpret them as you choose, I present data. I do this with the confidence and belief that people making decisions will back better decisions when they understand the facts. Additionally, the public's greater understanding will make it easier for decision makers to make the best decisions for Manchester as a whole. Citizens are concerned about increases in taxes, which is why I chose the data I have. The data directly addresses tax increases. On March 15<sup>th</sup> I spoke before this Board at a public hearing. I said that in the past four years the City tax rate was up 18% and the local education rate was up 2%. During the BMA meeting immediately following, several people mentioned these figures. After the second or third mention, the Mayor interjected that I was not telling the whole truth because I had not included the state education tax. The reason I had not included that tax is because this Board has no control over it. Nonetheless, when I got home I looked up the state education tax from the City's website and factored it into the calculations. As it turns out, the state education tax fell over the four years. This reduction factored into the local education tax results in a 2% reduction in what Manchester property owners pay for education, compared to four years ago. You heard correctly. Manchester real estate property owners pay 2% less for education now than they did four years ago, and they are paying 18% more for City services than they were four years ago. In spite of these changes in the past four years to Manchester

property owners' taxes, I see the Mayor's proposed budget cuts 40 or so City jobs, but it nets about 160 cuts in School District jobs. To recap, the data and the facts are that in four years we've had an 18% increase in my taxes, in our taxes, for City services, a 2% reduction in my taxes for School services. My belief is we are cutting approximately 40 people from City services and 160 people from the School District. I do not tell half truths. I know the best decisions for the City as a whole will be made when everyone knows the whole truth.

**Julie Allen**, 14 Monroe Street, stated:

I am a paraprofessional in the Manchester School District. I'm here tonight because I'm concerned about the future of our city. The budget proposed by the Mayor reduces the School District budget to a level that will negatively impact our schools. The Mayor's proposal of reducing the School District support staff, the paraprofessionals, by 200 is irresponsible. This cut would reduce the paraprofessional support staff from 325 to 125, cutting the support staff by nearly two-thirds. The paraprofessionals support the most academically challenged, as well as the most emotionally and physically challenged children in our community. Losing 200 paraprofessionals will put a strain on our classrooms and on our teachers, and it will ultimately have a negative impact on all of the public school children in our city. Teachers will now also have to do many of the jobs that the paraprofessionals have always done. As a longtime Manchester resident and property owner, I also have personal concerns. My husband and I have lived and paid taxes in the City of Manchester for nearly 40 years. Our children attended the Manchester public schools for 12 years and went on to public universities. Yes, we believe in and support the public school system and always have. Over the years we've played what we consider to be a very active part in our community. We believe we've given much of our time and support to the City of Manchester. We've always felt that is what a good citizen does. I believe that your actions and decisions during this budget process will directly affect our

schools, as well as our property values. As a woman said earlier, young families scrutinize the school system when choosing to invest and live in a community. By accepting the Mayor's budget, we will not only be negatively impacting the students, we will be sending a message to those young families looking to purchase homes in our city. That message is, 'Don't look in Manchester.' Look elsewhere. We do not adequately fund our schools. Is it in your plan to discourage families from settling in Manchester? Is it in your plan to reduce the value of our properties? Is it ultimately your plan to make the Queen City an undesirable place to live? In my mind that is the message we are sending when we do not properly fund our schools. Please give my comments consideration in any decisions you make regarding the school budget.

**Kathy Staub**, 374 Laurel Street, stated:

This is my 13<sup>th</sup> budget hearing. I've been speaking at these public hearings since my daughter was in third grade. She will be graduating from college this spring, and although the people on the stage have changed over the years, one thing has stayed the same. The City continues to underfund our school system. We spend less than just about anyone, and we have the results to prove it. Every year I follow the budget process, and every year we focus on how we can survive one more year without laying anyone off. We never get to the kids or improving practices, at least not in the public arena. When the school budget was presented a couple of weeks ago, Alderman Ouellette asked how this budget would move our School District forward. That was a really good question. A better question might be about where we are going, what our vision is, or what the plan is. After nearly 16 years of observation, I've recognized that money is not the only thing we are missing. We are missing a vision for our future and a strategic plan to get there. A medium-sized city like Manchester is the perfect place to live. We have all the amenities of a larger city, and yet in a lot of ways we are still a small town. People who look at trends say that young professionals, the Millennials, if you

will, are turning their backs on the suburbs and moving back into urban areas. We are in a great position to attract these people. However, as soon as they start having families, they are going to head for the hills in search of a good school system for their kids. You may say that they don't really matter because they don't vote. Well, they do matter, because when they leave they will take with them their intellect, their energy and their expendable income. The loss of middle income families from our city has already begun, and every year of uncertainty about how committed the City of Manchester is to public education only accelerates it. We spend less than anyone already. Cost containment is not our biggest issue. In 2008, the City education tax was \$5.98 per thousand. Last year it was \$5.41 per thousand. The state rate has also declined by twelve cents. As Mr. Sorrentino pointed out, we are paying less for education now than we were four years ago. Reductions in staff, loss of programs and dwindling resources give the public the impression that we are not simply neglecting our school system, but that we are actively dismantling it. I urge you to consider the future of our city and the long term health of our city and stabilize our school system. I would also like to suggest that this body use its influence and recommend that the School District undertake a professionally conducted strategic planning process so that we can all understand what a modern 21<sup>st</sup> century school system looks like and work together to make it a reality. Thank you very much.

**John Angelo**, 174 Cedar Street, stated:

Thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Mayor, Aldermen, fellow educators, members of the School Committee and residents. While I am proficient in a number of subjects, I have always maintained to my fellow educators that they day I had to take over a math lesson, we would be in serious trouble. Today that day has come. Looking through statistics, the average income for a high school dropout, on the national level, was \$17,300 in the year 2005. Thanks to the scare tactics of our local newspaper, my salary was published, being a paraprofessional right here at

Memorial High School for 13 years. My income for 2010 as a paraprofessional was \$17,775, which is slightly above, if we do the math, what a high school drop out would be expected to earn on a national level in the year 2005. I also look at my fellow educators and I see years and years of experience here. There are two reasons for that. One is that these people have heart, because that's what brings us to education. The second is that no college graduate could afford to get a job as a paraprofessional today, which we are expected to have here in Manchester, to be a college graduate or prior to three years ago, we had to be highly qualified. People did spend hours and hours. Now I understand that all new hires would have to have a college diploma. I can't see anyone graduating college today who would want a job like this unless they had heart. That's what we really have to offer. I will refer to *The Courage to Teach*. This is a book. Bedford, our neighbor, does not seem to like books. Here in Manchester, this is a book and it's one I am happy to quote from. "Good teaching comes in myriad forms, but good teachers share one trait. They are truly present in the classroom, deeply engaged with their students and their subject. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students, so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves. The connections made by good teachers are held not in their message but in their hearts, the place where intellect, emotion and spirit will converge in the human self." I want to thank my fellow educators. These have been some of the happiest 13 years of my life, working here at Memorial High School. I'd like to think that each day that I go into the classroom, whatever it is that I have to do, I'm very cognizant of that number, that one out of 30 Americans is now incarcerated, and if I have helped even two students over the years to avoid that, I have more than earned my salary. Thank you.

**Lisa Gravel**, 30 Belmont Street, stated:

I must be in the minority because I don't want my taxes to increase. Between gas prices, food prices, my increased health care, I've got no more. I really, really

don't. The way that I am understanding, the way things went down, the unions asked their body to contribute a little bit more to their health care, and that was a flat out 'No'. To me it appears they are cutting off their nose to spite their face. If they really want to keep all of those 200 people...and I respect teaching. It's a wonderful profession. I admire you, but I also think...I work 12 months a year at my job and when I saw some of the salaries that were printed in the newspaper, they make more money than I do. I think I was respectful and didn't say anything while you were speaking, so I appreciate it if you give me the same respect. I just think that they are talking about...you know, they look at schools when people are looking to buy homes. I think they look at taxes too. You know what? If I knew that the taxes were out of control in a certain city, I don't think I would look to move into that city either. I look at a lot of the people up on this Board, and I think that you've kicked the can down the road for a long, long time. A lot of promises have been made with tax dollars that are just not sustainable, and now maybe it's time to make some hard decisions and be accountable. The fact that many of you are taking health care is obscene to me. At least these people are working. You are public servants and you have no right to be getting health care or dental care on my back. That's all I have to say.

**Steve Stefanik**, 161 South Hall Street, stated:

I wasn't sure how the format would go this evening, so I wasn't prepared with my thoughts, but I've been sitting here patiently listening. I'm with Lisa. I'm a taxpayer and I'm here concerned about my taxes. Every year the taxes go up, and I haven't heard too many people here this evening address the issue that public employees, city workers' health care benefits and pensions are breaking the back of the City and breaking my back as a taxpayer. You've got to curb spending. Nationally and statewide, we are all aware of this, but this is like an unspoken white elephant in the room. We've got to do something and address pensions and healthcare. I don't have any health insurance. I've been a teacher for 30 years.

So, I support education, but not on the back of the taxpayers. Why are we building, Mayor, a \$42 million complex in these economic times? That's my question to you.

**Mayor Gatsas** responded we don't have a back and forth here tonight. It's just for you to talk.

**Mr. Stefanik** stated then you contemplate it when you sleep tonight. Thank you for your time.

**Arlene Letourneau**, 193 Comeau Street, stated:

In January I retired from the Manchester City Library after ten years as a reference librarian. As a former librarian and as a private citizen, I hope you will reconsider your decision to close the West Manchester Library because the value of the library to the neighborhood far outweighs the cost of keeping it open. In the 30-plus years that the branch has been at its present location, it has become an important part of the West Side community. During the time that I was a librarian, and now, I have seen the branch's influence first hand. Of particular importance is the children's programming. The library also offers a safe welcoming atmosphere for the students who attend West High School across the street from the library. The branch serves patrons of all ages, including me, who enjoy having the library in our neighborhood for all that it offers. In addition, the branch has a dedicated staff that is in tune with the patrons. That only comes from knowing and understanding the neighborhood that they serve. Again, I'm asking you to reconsider the decision to close the West Side Library because it is just too valuable and too important for it to close.

**Robert Benge Ambrogio**, 544 North Adams Street, stated:

Thank you for your service to our city. I want to put this in business terms. Mr. Mayor, you are a business person, as are many of you on the School Board and the Board of Aldermen. My hope is this argument will resonate with you. We have a business that puts out an inferior product. You may question that fact. And don't get me wrong. Many have gotten a solid education in the Manchester School District, including my children. But they are the exception, not the rule, the result of very dedicated professionals who perform despite the system. How does a business know that its product is inferior? They look at their sales and they talk to their customers. So let's look at Manchester's sales and customer base. Bedford decided that they could do better by bringing their business in house and supporting their high school students themselves. Auburn decided after many years of buying high school from the City of Manchester that they would be taking their business elsewhere, ironically getting a better product at Pinkerton at a better price. Hooksett has certainly made it known that if the quality of education doesn't improve, they too may take their business elsewhere. Unfortunately, that leaves the only customers who have no choice, your captive customers, the children of Manchester. What do we do with a business that has a problem with its product? Well, we can't afford in this case to go out of business. The only option is to invest. We need to understand that it's not a cost; it's an investment. Good schools strongly influence property values, which you have the privilege of taxing. We need to invest in our schools, and then like any investor, we demand better performance, demand it from the administration, from the unions, from the teachers, from all of those that contribute. Without that investment we have leverage to demand nothing but the lowest common denominator. Listen to your customers. They, not the government, are telling you that you have a district in need of improvement. The only way to get that improvement is to invest in our

schools. I would be more than happy to pay more taxes to allow you to make that investment. Thank you for your time and your service.

**Patricia Cornell**, 787 Montgomery Street, stated:

I am a member of the Board of Trustees of the Library. The West Side Library delivers library services directly to the community which surrounds it. The branch serves not only as a library but also as a homework center, a place to access the internet for job searches, as well as a meeting place for community activities and organizations. The proposed \$250,000 reduction in our allocation represents the highest percentage cut of all but one City department. In attempting to address this reduction, the library trustees and staff have made every effort to find a way to maintain acceptable levels of services at both the branch and the main library. But despite these efforts, the trustees have regretfully determined that it's necessary to close the branch in order to maintain acceptable levels of library service to our residents. The library trustees and staff have worked diligently to keep acceptable services at both of our buildings, but have determined that this budget reduction will require the closure of the branch. The cost to the average residential taxpayer to run both libraries from City taxes is \$4.25 per month, of which thirty-five cents per month goes to operate the branch. The cost to support the branch is less than it costs to mail one letter. Given that such a large benefit to the community comes at such a small cost, the library trustees and staff respectfully ask the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to restore \$250,000 to the library. As Henry Ward Beecher stated, "A library is not a luxury but one of the necessities of life." Thank you.

**Kynnette Emile**, 30 Gaita Drive, Derry, stated:

I am a paraprofessional at Southside Middle School. In listening to everything that has been going on tonight, I want to put it into a little bit of perspective. The paraprofessionals in the schools are a little bit like the nurses in the hospitals and the doctors' offices. Without the nurses in the hospitals and the doctors' offices,

the patients would not get the care that they would normally get. Yes, the doctors are important for helping them to get better and stuff, but it's actually the nurses that spend the most time with the patients. Likewise in the school system, the teachers are busy. They have class work. They have grades to do. Our case workers have to do all of the IEP's and that kind of stuff. They do not have time to specifically work with all of the children every day, all day. That's why we as paraprofessionals are very important in the school systems, because we are the nurses. We are the ones who take care of those children. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

**Josiette White**, 508 South Main Street, stated:

Thank you, Mayor, and members of both Boards. I appreciate your time and I know that everyone has worked very hard on this budget. I'm here tonight because I am concerned about a number of the cuts, especially those to education and public safety. Before I came tonight I was thinking about...I live very close to the fire station in my neighborhood. Every night after I'm home, and after I've eaten dinner and I'm settled in for the evening, I hear a fire truck pull out and rush off to help somebody who needs it. I can't imagine what impact it would have to cut the positions you are proposing cutting from the Fire Department. Not only do I see this happening regularly, but I took a quick look at the newspaper, just sort of skimmed through to see what is really going on in the City. Nearly every day there is a story about some sort of public safety situation where a police officer or a firefighter is there. They are responding; they are helping; they are making our city great. I sat here tonight and heard many of my neighbors mention that these are difficult times, and that's very true, but I think it is in these difficult times that we most need our strong public services. I've also heard my neighbors say that in these difficult times we need to pull together and invest in our city. I think that's what we are all here asking for you to do tonight. I've closely watched the work of these two Boards, and I know that you've made a strong and repeated

commitment to education and to public safety. I just feel that this budget doesn't reflect that sentiment, and we need to do better, and we can do better. I very much appreciate the Mayor's former comments about respecting the people who do the work that make our city great. I know that most of the people up here feel the same way. I think we can get to a budget that reflects that and protects our public safety and keeps those pieces intact that will position us to move forward for a stronger and better Manchester. Thank you so much for your time.

**Nicholas McGinty**, 508 South Main Street, stated:

Thank you, Mayor, Aldermen, and School Board Members. I'm here today to say it is clear that everyone has worked hard to craft this budget, and I don't want you to think we don't appreciate the work you have done. But, I think we can do better. I think we need to do better. I'm here to ask you to reject the budget as proposed. While a number of crucial programs and projects have been supported in this budget, and I'm grateful for that, I still think we are making cuts that are too deep in education and in safety. I moved to Manchester in 2007 and I'm proud to live here. I love living here. I feel lucky to live in my neighborhood next to the fire station and in walking distance to the West Side Library. I also feel very lucky to know that my roads will be plowed, my garbage will be picked up, and our city's infrastructure is appropriately monitored and attended. When it comes to public safety, we have to invest in it, invest in it like a good insurance policy. It's the fiscally responsible thing to do. You hope you never need it, but you're glad to know it's there. If there is an emergency, I want to know the fire station in my neighborhood is open and ready to respond, if I ever need it. Hopefully I won't. Like the thriving youth programs in our community, our schools and our infrastructure, our safety is worth the investment. I respect and appreciate the work everyone has done, including Mayor Gatsas, in trying to put people before politics and keep Manchester above the fray. We've seen how the budget stuff can get nasty. Respecting City workers that support our community is something I

think we need to keep in mind as we do the budget process. I hope we can take this one step further, improve the budget that has been proposed and protect the things that matter to our community by restoring the positions in the Fire Department and in the school. If this unfortunately means higher paying higher taxes, then we need to look at that. I thank you for your time and consideration.

**Rick Neveu**, 158 Maurice Street, stated:

You guys have a hard job, and there is a reason why you are sitting here and the Superintendent of Schools is sitting down there. It's because you have the last call. You need to look at that last call real close. There are some things that are wrong here. A lot of people are good. Some people need some help. Some people maybe should not be here, but you need to make that decision. That package that you've got has some good things and it has some bad things, but it's not a done deal. You have to look at it very, very close. A lot of people out here hope they are not wasting their time, standing here next to you guys saying that this isn't right. But you guys get to make the decision. Again, there is a problem with the School District, especially when you think 200 people are going down the road and 40 people are going to replace them. Common sense, guys. 200 people, even if only half of them worked, you don't have enough people to do it. You have to look at what they are. You hear a lot of talk about paraprofessionals here. That's not the whole story. There are people on the opposite side, the Aldermen side. These people are talking about looking for front people at the Fire Department, the people that are going to the Fire Department first, young and new, and losing a line, what you could call a secondary line, of a captain or whichever one they were talking about losing. You need the front line people. You've got to go in there and make a difference. The only thing that I would like to say today so that you will remember this is simply this: We are wasting our time. I really feel like I am wasting my time, standing here, telling you people what we want, when I really feel like this deal is done. I don't believe politics should work that way. I

do go and watch what you people do. I have stood in the Mayor's office and said, 'This isn't right.' We don't need politicians. We need people who actually understand what is going on, and look before they vote. Thanks for your time.

**Glenn Ouellette**, 112 Auburn Street, Manchester, stated:

Come August I will have been here 26 years. The library has been open since 1980 on the West Side. I may not be a native of Manchester, but we are smart enough, those of us who have moved in since 1980, to know that our city has grown in population tremendously since 1980. You are telling us that by closing the West Side Library that the West Side has not grown. Let me refresh your minds and tell you that 48,000 people live on the West Side. That's roughly 45% of the City. That's almost 50%, but every time you have cut services in the last ten years, it has pretty much been the West Side first. Those of you who know Portland, Maine also know that they now have a community called South Portland, Maine. There is a reason for that as well. The people of that part of the City of Portland did not like what the city was doing to their neighborhood. They split and they are now South Portland. And they are doing very well. If you look at the commercialization between Portland, Maine and South Portland, Maine, all of your big malls are in South Portland. I'm not suggesting that here. Your Honor, you keep saying that we live in one city. Now, I've fought for that since I moved here. But where is this one city? There are 200 paraprofessionals and you want to cut almost two thirds at one time. I have found in the last 25 or so years that I have been here that when you cut in this city you either don't cut enough or you overcut, or you cut in the wrong places. I have maintained since 2001 and I still maintain that today, that if you cut just 5% of the waste, and don't say it doesn't exist because you know it does, 5% of the waste will take care of your increase. This year, what you need to do because we are in a fiscal crisis is ask yourself why we are there. It didn't happen by itself. It didn't happen just because of the City of Manchester. You have to blame the federal government, as well as the State of

New Hampshire. But this is a local issue. I would recommend that you do not accept this budget. You have until the end of June, by law. At least wait to see what the State and the feds do. You know you are going to lose money, so you are going to have to re-open the budget one way or the other, or something is really going to get cut drastically. If you accept this budget now, and you can't re-open it, millions of dollars that you are expecting that does not come down the pike because the feds and the State decide to cut that part, you can't increase the taxes once you've made a decision. You are going to have to make some drastic cuts. It's we the people who are going to be losing. So, I know you are in a hurry, Your Honor, to make this budget go...

**Shawna Sullivan Gagnon**, 40 Leighton Street, stated:

I came here today just to listen. I didn't plan to talk, but I can't help but to. I'm here for two reasons. I'm an educator here in Manchester, and I just wanted to make sure that you are aware of the benefit of the paraprofessionals to our classrooms. I go every day to be a really great teacher, but I am a better teacher when I have somebody supporting me in my classroom. So, make sure you are aware of that. I am also here because I am a mother. I have lived here my whole life. I have been proud to be a Manchester resident. I came here; I bought a home here. I tried like crazy to be a teacher in this city because I care about this city, I invest in this city, I volunteer for the community with sports teams, and so on. What I see going on right now is concerning. I want to know when I go to bed at night that the firefighters are stocked and ready to go, to come help me if I need it. And I deserve that, as a City employee, as do my neighbors and my family. My kids deserve to go to great schools, and investing in the schools is the right thing to do. So I respectfully ask you to consider, though we don't want to do it, raising the taxes so that we can have the city that we deserve as residents, and people like me and my family will stay here. Thank you very much.

**Howard McCarthy**, 52 Valentine Drive, stated:

I just want to say, do you know we are in a recession? Do you know what a depression is? Well, I do. The only way all of these things are going to be solved is if everybody gets into the act and realizes that the days are in the past. What happened in the last number of years in the economy was a false economy. All of the contracts that were made are really not actually viable today. Two years ago the snowplow drivers gave a good example when Kevin Sheppard asked them to keep on plowing and keep the streets clean, and would they do it and not ask for overtime pay. They gave something. You have to give something and everybody here has to give something. That's the only way that things can be done. My wife was a teacher, and I understand the way the teachers feel. Two years ago it seems like there was a meeting at City Hall and one of the teachers got up there and said she didn't care what the taxes were, even if they doubled, I want to keep teaching and I want to keep my job. That's a dedicated teacher. There is a lot of waste in this city. I see it, and I hope to go before you people at City Hall. In the meantime, I believe in altruism – doing things and not expecting anything in return. Wouldn't it be nice if all of these contracts that were given out to all these heads of the departments that are making over \$100,000 if they could give back 10%? That's right, 10%. If you were making \$100,000, could you live on \$90,000? I think they could. I know I could. Anyway, giving something is what this is all about. The countries of the world are going bankrupt, and this country possibly could, which I doubt, but you never know. It has to be something given, and everybody here has to give. The teachers have to give, along with everybody else. I hope that budget that you people are trying to come to an agreement on. Thank you very much. Nice to see you.

**Will Thomas**, 27 Margate Drive, Auburn, stated:

Good evening. I was born in Manchester, although I now reside in Auburn, which is still a sending town for approximately two more years. I am a retired teacher as

well from Central High School. I am also the coordinator of New Hampshire Veterans for Peace. My teaching career began in 1969. I retired in 2002. For all of those years and beyond, it seemed that every two, three or four years we've always faced a budget crisis. One of my favorite authors is Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. who always used to say, 'The more things change, the more things stay the same.' So that's what it seems we have to confront. Now, I've always felt that Manchester and the State of New Hampshire do not have a spending problem; it is a revenue problem. And, in that situation, we have the fourth highest number of millionaires per capita in the United States. We have the lowest tax burden of any state in the Union. Yes, we do have the second highest property tax, but we don't have a progressive income tax. We have that property tax which is very regressive, and unfortunately, is painful for a lot of people. And of course the New Hampshire well-to-do don't really have to pay their fair share like most of us do. Compared to others, the Manchester School District spends the least amount of money, I learned, for our schools and for our students. To me, this is disgraceful, not just as a former educator, but as a former citizen of this city and of this state and of this country. Our tax rate for schools is one of the lowest in the State, so we basically are short-changing our children's futures, and for that matter, our own as well. Somebody said, I think it was Kathy Staub, about from the Bible, there is a quote, 'Where there is no vision, the people perish.' You look at Manchester, and unfortunately, you see this. So, I'm asking the BMA here, why not do something wonderful, even noble, soon? It might be painful for some. Increase the school budget by some \$2 million, \$3 million or even \$4 million plus for the schools in particular. The National Priorities project reports that taxpayers in this city will be sending \$162 million to the Department of Defense to continue our apparently endless wars and occupations. For that amount of money, we could take care of our paraprofessionals, which I agree are essential and crucial, our teachers, our police, our firefighters, our librarians. You could do this and you must do this. Just as Oliver Wendell Holmes said, 'Taxes are what we pay to have

a civilized society.’ I hope you agree with me and most of the people in this room.  
Thank you very much.

**Elizabeth Kulig**, 249 Aladdin Street, stated:

I am here today as a former Central High School, Hillside Middle School, and Weston Elementary student. I recently graduated and I now go to St. Anselm. I think this budget is disgraceful, especially the cut of 200 paraprofessionals. I regularly volunteer at Hillside Middle School, two times a week, and they need those paraprofessionals. A couple of years ago you were thinking...actually last year you were thinking that we had a middle school problem. Do you think it's going to get better cutting those 200 paraprofessionals? I don't think so. You need those paraprofessionals for that middle school problem to go away. It's not going away, especially when you cut those paraprofessionals. And the idea that you are trying to make the teachers and the paraprofessionals fight over stuff is disgusting, because that is what you are doing and that is what you have been doing for years. You're pitting people who should be working together against each other, and I am sick of it. Personally, I think before you make this decision, if you are skeptical of what it is like to be a teacher at one of these schools, you should maybe substitute for a day or two. See what it is like to teach 20 or 25 students, when maybe four or five of them have IEPs with ADHD, behavioral problems, anger problems. Frankly, they make it so all of the other students can't learn and you can't control your own classroom. Those are the students that the paraprofessionals help with to help control the classroom. So, the idea that you are trying to cut the paraprofessionals is going to make this middle school problem...I guess it vanished over a year. I mean, I guess it did. I mean, we are still in need of improvement, but it vanished. So, I think you should definitely consider being a substitute for a few days. I'm not joking. Please do.

**Artie Pliakos**, 560 Auburn Street, stated:

There's Ed. Hi, Ed. I'm going to throw some numbers at you guys. If you want to cut 200 paraprofessionals and replace them with 40 certified instructors, if you don't know, the math just really doesn't work out. I'm not a math guy, but you can't replace 200 people with 40 by any stretch of the imagination. You can't do that. But anyway, I just want to say one thing: everyone is all up in arms about taxes being raised, but seriously, people, it's 2011. Thanks.

**Valerie Lovell**, 545 Huse Road, stated:

I was born in Manchester. I have lived in Manchester my whole life. I graduated from this high school. I have three children that graduated from this high school, and now I have a grandson who is entering Manchester schools. It's not by my choice, I have to say. I am also employed with the Manchester School District as a paraprofessional. When I started at this job, I started at about \$7 an hour. I do have my degree in nursing. There was a time when my kids, all three of them, attended this school, and I worked 14 hour days. I would leave school and I would go and do my nursing position until 11:00 p.m. I did what I had to do to keep them in this District. I fully believe in this District. I love these schools, and I did what I had to do. Would I refer anybody to these schools now? No, I would not. Every year the budget comes up, and every year the schools are the first to get the cuts. I have been a paraprofessional at West for 13 years. Anybody who has worked with me knows that I give 150% to that job. I do everything from changing diapers to feeding tubes, to working one-on-one teaching reading to kids who come in as freshmen who cannot read. You get rid of these people behind me and I can only imagine what this city is going to turn into. There will be twice as many high school dropouts because, I'm sorry, classroom teachers don't have the time, with 25 to 30 kids in their room, to sit down and read a test to a student who can't read, to type out a report because they can't write; they can't spell. That's

not even touching on the behavior issues that we have with some of these kids. Anybody who has walked through the halls at West knows the issues with the programs we house at West High School. It's not just the typical ADHD child that we work with. We work with kids with severe behavior issues that have to be removed from a regular classroom. Granted, I was lucky enough that I only had one child that had an IEP, but I wouldn't have wanted my other two to suffer because of one, and that's what is going to happen to the regular education students at all of the schools. I hope you will reconsider.

**Tammy Simmons**, 142 Parker Street, stated:

First, I am glad to see that the School Board members are here tonight because I always think it is so important that both of our bodies hear what the public has to say. Up until now it has always just been the Aldermen, and with the School budget being such a large portion of our tax dollars, I think it's important that you are all here, so thank you. I didn't come prepared to say anything, so I might be a little erratic. The first thing I wanted to say is I actually wanted to thank Alderman Roy for thinking outside of the box a little bit, because I think that's where we really are as a community. We have to start thinking outside the box. We have start looking at things a little bit differently than we have in the past. We can no longer continue doing things the way we have always done them in the past. I don't know if his proposal for the Fire Department is the right answer or the wrong answer, but I do think it is important that we look at things, and that we look at things creatively and maybe differently, because we have serious problems that are facing us. I also want to say that I oppose closing the West Manchester Library. When we start charging people to swim in this city, then you come back here and tell me we can't afford the Library, then I might support closing the Library. But when people can swim for free, I think it's important for the kids on the West Side to go in and read for free. And now the part that all of those people behind me clapping will boo me for because they always do...I don't know if

getting rid of the paraprofessionals is the right idea or the wrong idea. I don't sit on the School Board; I don't really know enough about what they do to say that they should just lose their jobs. What I do know is I would hope that our education community works as a team and works as a whole. The reality of it is the taxpayer well has run dry. There is no more money. People are struggling to keep their houses. It's that bad. The economy sucks. The teachers in our community have a choice. They can go back and renegotiate. They can go back and pay a small increase on their health insurance benefits to keep those paraprofessionals in their jobs. That is their choice. The taxpayer doesn't get a choice as to whether their taxes go up, but the teachers do have a choice as to whether those aids in their classroom stay or go, because the well is dry. There is no more money. We dealt with it at the state level. It was painful. It's painful at the city level. People need to realize there is no more money. Thank you.

**Kim Dittbenner**, 99 Wheelock Street, stated:

Good evening. Thank you for being here. I wasn't prepared to speak tonight. I'm actually petrified, but I have a couple of things to say. I am a special educator in the City of Manchester. Without my paraprofessional, there is no way that I would be able to do the job that I do and make the parents as happy as they have been. So I just want you to know that, and I want to say thank you to the paraprofessionals. More to what I thought I should say tonight is I read in the paper with regards to the cuts in the Fire Department and the Police Department. I need to let you know that last Labor Day there was a large fire in my backyard. A huge apartment building went down completely at 11:00 p.m. If a firefighter and a police officer hadn't knocked on my door, I shudder to think about what could have happened to my family – my then 15-month old daughter, my husband and myself and my two dogs. Thank goodness there was somebody there to knock on my door. I can't even imagine. Just so you know the aftermath and how close I was, my siding had to be replaced. There was debris on my deck. That's how

close we were. So please consider, when you want to cut the Fire Department and the Police Department, we need these people. They are going to save our lives. If there are any firefighters or police officers here tonight, thank you very much.

**Martha Andreo**, N. Amherst Road, Bedford, stated:

Good evening. I am not a resident of Manchester. However, both of my children graduated from Manchester High School West. I am also a paraprofessional at Manchester High School West. I am also a certified teacher who has chosen to work as a paraprofessional. I'm here actually tonight representing my son. My son is at Southern New Hampshire University taking a class that he felt very strongly that he could not afford to miss. So, I would like to read a statement that my son wrote last night. Michael Andreo has written:

Paraprofessionals: Educational Essentials. When learning disabled students are denied their rights to paraprofessionals, they are denied their rights to an education. As a learning disabled student, I find it astonishing that anyone in the field of education would even consider removing paraprofessionals from our public schools, much less actually attempt to do so. Years before learning disabilities were properly researched and categorized, many students who suffered from them were simply deemed academic failures, simply because they have a different learning style. Fortunately, our educational system has progressed to the point where students with disabilities are not only widely accepted, but also have access to the support they need in order to reach their full academic potential. I was diagnosed early in my childhood with Attention Deficit Disorder and Dyslexia. Reading and writing were always difficult for me, as was the intent concentration required to make such efforts. Throughout my elementary, middle and high school careers, I had to struggle to develop the most basic academic skills most students take for granted. The encouragement of many excellent teachers helped me to not give up, but it was the skill and dedication of the paraprofessionals that allowed me to prevail.

**Ms. Andreo** stated I'm going to skip to the last page. He goes on to describe his other disabilities.

It is the one-on-one assistance provided by the paraprofessional that is most essential to the education of learning-disabled students, attention that the teachers simply do not have the class time required to provide. Can anyone guarantee each and every teacher's undivided attention to each and every learning disabled student throughout each and every class period? I would not believe anyone who made such a guarantee, nor would it make any difference if it were possible to carry out. I have found in my extensive experience that it takes a special kind of individual to be an effective paraprofessional, with skills not necessarily required of effective teachers. Their dedication, compassion, patience and skill make paraprofessionals absolutely indispensable.

**Lynn Reed**, 18 Embassy Avenue, Hooksett, stated:

I am currently a paraprofessional at West High School. My reason for speaking to you all tonight is to address the potential loss of 60% of the paraprofessional positions in the City of Manchester. Paraprofessionals are a valuable asset to the students, teachers, parents and the whole community. The academic needs of the student body as a whole are the primary responsibilities of the teachers. However, the paraprofessional's primary responsibility reaches far beyond purely academic achievements of individual students. The paraprofessional is more immediately responsible for the social, physical and emotional needs of the individual students. The paraprofessional is the first line these students have to resolving these social problems in the class. There is a large population of special education students with a wide range of needs in the Manchester School District. Some of the needs of these students are: needing someone to keep them focused in the classroom, mediating social situations, removing students from dangerous situations, dietary regulations, and toiletry needs. There are many students who would not be able to be included in regular education classrooms without a paraprofessional with them to mediate and advocate for them. We would be doing these students a great disservice if we were to place them in lower level classes simply because we don't have the appropriate coverage to meet their needs and educational potential. If we were to place these students in classes without the appropriate coverage the

teacher would have to take the time away from the lessons to compensate for the individual student. With the number of paraprofessionals that Manchester has right now, we are still struggling to find coverage for all the students who need us. In many cases having one paraprofessional in place where two or more are needed, the idea of cutting 200, which is 60% of these much-needed positions, is an unrealistic number. Doing this would jeopardize the education potential of far too many students. Thank you for your time.

**Keith Foster**, 89 Parker Street, stated:

I am an employee of the City but I'm not here as an employee. I am here as a parent. My daughter, who has downs syndrome, goes to Memorial High School. In the morning my wife brings her in to school. There are paraprofessionals who meet my daughter and all of the other children who come off the STS buses. I see a safety issue without those paraprofessionals there. My daughter isn't mainstreamed. She is in a secluded room, and without the paraprofessionals she wouldn't get anywhere near the education she has. When she has to go to different classes - she is mainstreamed in a couple - one in the computer room, she cannot do that by herself. The teacher can't leave the room. Sometimes my daughter has accidents at school. The teacher can't leave to help her clean up. These are issues that you people up there don't see. But the safety issue concerns us. She used to be a flight risk. She's not any more, but there are children who are flight risks. Please think about that. Thank you.

**Rita Banfield**, 210 Salmon Street, stated:

Number one, I am not in favor of an increase in the budget. I am a taxpayer. Number two, in terms of priority, I think Fire and Police, for safety, need to be the priority. School is only a start. I look at education as a lifelong process, and we cannot do everything during our school years. So I think we need to think about that. I am also concerned about what is happening at the State level. The budget

certainly is not looking good and it is going to fall back on the cities. My request is twofold: to put more money in the Welfare budget because, just using one population alone, the mentally ill, they are going to need help with rent, medication and services that they will no longer be able to get on the State level. It's going to be falling back on the City. We need to be prepared to service them. And the other part in the budget, children are young and grow, but I don't see much emphasis on the elderly. They have social security as their primary source of income. They don't get cost of living. The Medicare that they are expected to pay goes up. Medications are going up; rent is going up. They pay and are taxpayers. They don't have any more income to give. Agencies in the budget like Child & Family Services, Homemaker Services, service the elderly. These are people in need as well as the young. Also, there is the Visiting Nurse, our home services. I think we need to balance the perspective, Children and elderly, the whole life cycle. Thank you.

**Lisa Frisselle**, 322 Huse Road, stated:

My comments have to do with managing revenue, and not necessarily the budget spending cuts. When I read this article in the paper a couple of weeks ago about the Elliot River's Edge project being non-taxable, having tax exempt status, I was a little surprised because I do remember when that property became available and the City purchased it for future use. There were committees formed to decide what would happen with that property. Would it be used for a park? How would it be developed? Now we see that the Elliot Hospital, with tax exempt status, only 9% of the property is going to be taxed and that's all we are going to get for a benefit. Who was looking after the citizens of the City? There are going to be many employees working at that beautiful building. We're going to probably have to pay for all of the snow removal and all of that. I'm not sure how that is all going to work, but it's a done deal. The grand opening is next week or in a couple of weeks. How did that happen? That's my question for you. I see this in the

paper, but maybe someone can write an article and explain why this property is tax exempt. Who benefited is the developer, the construction company, you know. All of these people benefited but we are giving away a big hunk of our property, which we don't have that much left in the City. It's all developed. Then we choose to do this with the property. I just don't understand it, so if somebody could maybe write something up, because there has to have been somebody on this committee here that thought this was the best way to use this property. I work for a company in Manchester and I know our tax bill every year is about \$100,000. That's what my company pays for property taxes. I guess that's my comment. Let's manage the tax revenue and bring up the tax base in the City. I just don't understand how this was used. Or else, how about the people who have some pull in Concord could change the tax laws so they do have to pay some property tax. It seems like there is... you read the paper and every other day there is a new bill being passed to lower the drop out age or to allow people to bring guns to the State House. Well, let's change the tax status on these tax-exempt companies, like hospitals. I don't know. That's my comment.

**Dan Bergeron**, 82 Megan Drive, stated:

Good evening everybody. Your Honor Mayor, Board of Aldermen and the School Board. Thank you for your diligence to this topic. I told myself tonight if no one brought up things that might be out of the box thinking when it comes to education, like for example, I guess I have a favor to ask. I know I have mentioned this to a few people in this room already. I've worked alongside many of you; I've volunteered alongside many of you; I've voted for many of you. So, I don't mind asking this favor. I sat in a room with Dr. Brennan, in fact, watching a movie called *Waiting for Superman*. It's a movie, and whether you agree with the topics that are covered on it, it got me to think outside the box a little bit and get a little fired up about education. So I guess my favor is, before you make any big decisions, at least maybe give it a view, see it. I know the Derryfield School is

showing it at the end of May. I guess I'm just saying maybe you will have your ah-ha moment like I did, because I'd hate for you to see it after and think, 'I wish I had thought of that when making these decisions'. I guess that's just my favor. I am a member of Students First Organization now. And Donna, if you ever need my help and are thinking out of the box for education for Manchester, I'm more than happy to volunteer, just to at least maybe come up with some different ideas. I'm not sure. That's my favor for you. Just take a look at it and maybe it will just get you to think about something. Thank you.

**Mike Porter**, 390 Seames Drive, stated:

I want to start by saying thank you to each and every single one of you for having the courage to put your names on the ballot and get elected. It's a very important position and you should be thanked for your service. This weekend I had the opportunity to go to Keene State College for the academic excellence conference. Two students from this high school who are now juniors at Keene made presentations on the math department. The first one was an interesting property of regular polygons. I have no idea what that means. The second one was magic letters, a theoretical structure for comparing solutions. One of the students was my daughter who was educated right here. Education is the key to the future. Period. End of story. I don't know much about the paraprofessionals. I can't say whether you should cut or not, but they are an integral part of the system. They have been a part of the system. The system is working. Do not tinker with that which is not broken. The Police Department – 25 vacancies for a city of over 100,000. I don't work as a police officer. I'm actually on the defense side. What you see in the newspaper every day is only a scintilla of the work they do. These men and women are patrolling the streets at 2:00, 3:00, 5:00 in the morning. They are wrestling around with drunks, mentally ill, murderers. These men and women are doing a job that none of us can begin to understand. It is the same with the Fire Department; the same with the Highway Department. Before you cut one job,

work their job for two or three days. Before you lay off a paraprofessional, a teacher, a firefighter, a police officer, go out and sling that trash barrel in 30 degrees below weather. Put that gun on. Ride with a police officer; respond to a fire; teach a class. Then you will be educated. To go back to my theme, education is important. Become educated before you make your cuts.

**Mayor Gatsas** advised that all wishing to speak having been heard, the comments presented shall be taken under consideration with actions by the Board.

*On motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Committee Member Gelinas, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk