

COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS

May 18, 2010

6:00 PM

Chairman Lopez called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Lopez, Osborne, O'Neil, DeVries, Corriveau

Messrs: L. LaFreniere

Chairman Lopez addressed item 3 of the agenda:

3. Communication from Alderman Jim Roy regarding a proposed reorganization of the Economic Development Office.

On motion of Alderman Osborne, duly seconded by Alderman Corriveau, it was voted to discuss this item.

Alderman Roy stated thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, before I go into this memorandum, I would just like to make a little comment. The last few days I have felt like I was back in the budget process of the last two years because there has been a lot of misinformation that has been passed out and people have been calling and writing to me. It is almost like the days when hockey was going to disappear. People have been told that MEDO is going to disappear and that is not the case. Economic Development will still be done by the City of Manchester. The façade program will still be administered by the City of Manchester. The revolving loan fund will still be administered by the City of Manchester. It is not all going to go away. As is stated in my letter to you, for some time now, I have believed that we need to reorganize MEDO. With this proposal, it would save the taxpayers \$200,000 a year. By no means do I think that I have all the answers and I welcome input from any of you. We may come up at the end with a different plan than this. There is money to be saved. First of all, in my plan, the position of economic developer would go into the Mayor's office and that money would be put into his budget. Secondly, because essentially there wouldn't be a stand alone department anymore, the administrative assistant position would be eliminated. Those duties can be handled by the customer service representative in the Mayor's Office. That saves \$30,000 a year. This was also pointed out in the Task Force. I wanted to mention that first. The Mayor's Task Force on Efficiencies, article 1.4,

pointed out that one of their suggestions was to put the Economic Development Office into the Mayor's Office. I won't read the whole excerpt, but, "there is no greater purpose of the Mayor's office than advancing the economic future of Manchester" and I agree with that. The third bullet in my memo, the position of development coordinator, would also be eliminated and those duties would be transferred back to Planning under Mr. Maranto and his staff, which would be a savings of about \$100,000 a year. That function is one of the things that upsets me most in government and it is a redundant function by this city. We already handle the CIP funds up in Planning and there is no reason to be shipping it to another department when they actually administer those funds anyway. As a matter of fact, when the Efficiency Committee sent out questionnaires to all the department heads, interestingly enough, one of the questions was what ideas you have about efficiencies and possible consolidations in Manchester government in general that were not provided in the other answers. Mr. Minkarah wrote that the financial management aspect of CIP should be put into a single department. Currently, expenditures for projects using CIP funds have to go through two departments which is inefficient and sometimes results in confusion. Also, the reporting between the two departments is sometimes inconsistent and it can be difficult to track the use of funds over time. That is from Mr. Minkarah. It seems that he and I are on the same page about that. He is accurate because there have been some mistakes made in the administration of those funds. I don't think that those same problems would have arisen if it was up in the hands of the people who administer the CIP funds. We have a loan out there for repairs to a business that were installed in a building that the business doesn't even own. That business, at the same time, is in bankruptcy. Why we are loaning funds to that type of a business I have no idea. I don't think that would have taken place if that had been under Mr. Maranto's control. Finally, the position of marketing and retention specialist would be eliminated. I distinctly remember one of the things that I picked up in the budget process this year was that the budget for marketing at MEDO this year was \$5,800 and we are paying someone \$71,000 with wages and benefits to administer that \$5,800. That doesn't make much sense to me. I think that Mr. Minkarah could handle that himself. I know that there are some other duties inherited in that position, but I think Mr. Minkarah is quite capable of handling those. If you have any questions, I'll be glad to try to answer them for you. Thank you for your time.

Alderman DeVries stated I think before I ask, I would like the respective departments to speak or I would like to hear from the Planning and Community Development Department. Tell me if you would, Alderman, what exactly is it that you believe will be or should be accomplished by the Economic Development office or individuals? It will be one individual who will be left. I heard you mention things that you would do away with, but I didn't really hear, nor do I see in your letter, what you think will be accomplished.

Alderman Roy asked by Mr. Minkarah himself or by saving the \$200,000?

Alderman DeVries replied by the individual, Mr. Minkarah.

Alderman Roy stated he would continue to do what he does and sell Manchester.

Chairman Lopez stated I think we should leave names out of this and use their titles.

Alderman Roy stated the Economic Development Director would continue to sell Manchester as the place to bring your business.

Alderman DeVries stated I get the snapshot of that, but I don't hear what that actually means, how that will be accomplished, what you envision happening, after reorganization. Is this an individual who will spend his time on the phone? I'm not hearing...the devil is in the details of any plan.

Alderman Roy stated I think the way I presented this was that other than Mr. Minkarah's position, all of this is redundant and it is taken care of by other departments or not needed. What do I envision? I envision him going out and soliciting people to bring their businesses to Manchester and I know we haven't had a lot of success in that. This started back in the 1970s and it was called the industrial committee. I haven't seen a lot of success and I'm not blaming any one individual. I don't know that that was the best tact to take. I don't think it has worked out well for the City of Manchester. Just recently we learned that a lot of businesses have been leaving this City, moving just outside of the City and registering all of their vehicles, and it is an extensive number, not at our Tax Collector's office and it has hurt our revenues. I guess the retention wasn't happening there. I think he can continue to do what he is doing and try to get businesses to come here. I don't know that it is going to be all that successful. My hat is off to what they have done recently with the chili cook-off. I would love to see three things like that here each year and I think he could still do that.

Alderman DeVries stated and I'm sure he would because I know you are a great cook and your chili is fabulous. That being said, if you could tell me if you have seen other municipalities who have deployed a similar vision as you have with the one individual. Are you following a model from another community?

Alderman Roy replied no, I am not following a model from another community. As I pointed out, I think two of these positions aren't needed and one is a redundant function of our government. To answer your question, Nashua had an economic developer who was in the Mayor's office. They set it off to the side by itself and now it is back in the Mayor's office.

Chairman Lopez stated I would like to say a couple of things. I'll come back to you, but I have to say a couple things to set the stage. I was an Alderman who thought that MEDO could go into the Planning Department at one time. That was a proposal that I made three or four years ago. Since then I have changed my mind and I'll tell you why. I went to a conference over at the Chamber of Commerce regarding the direction that the City of Manchester should go going forward. This was a couple of years ago. There was a great presentation by an individual from Connecticut and there were about 20 or 30 business people around there, including City staff. There is documentation out there that we could get to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen I'm sure. Since that time, I have come to appreciate MEDO more. I sit on the MDC with Alderman Long and I know the work behind the scenes that goes on. This is not a division that is in the forefront because the Mayor takes the credit and the Aldermen take the credit for what moves forward. It is an instrument to bring things forward. I talked to a number of people who looked over a number of years and asked what individual really brings business to Manchester? I believe we all do. No one individual can do it; Planning can't do, MEDO can't do it; Finance can't do it; it takes a team effort. That team effort is behind the scenes working. The recent project has been worked on for almost three months for Hackett Hill. It might not be perfect, but it is a project that has been worked on for three months. Other projects that these people do...I think the problem with some of us, and I'll speak for myself, is that we don't know what these people really do. I think that is a mistake. I think that we have to know. The job description does not really fit what they really do on a day to day basis. We talked about the \$400,000 Brownfields money. That was a grant written by an employee. Who is going to write that grant? You talk about having the executive director report to the Mayor. He does now as a department head. He gets his orders from the Mayor as to the direction of the City. We had a lousy Mayor and got nothing done. What I'm saying in the end is that we need to understand that there are employees in this city who never get credit for anything. I think Alderman O'Neil will agree and the rest of you will agree because it was Information Systems that never got credit for anything. It was just a division over there of people working day in and day out until they put up the new website for the City of Manchester. What a great website. The talent that employees have...You are always going to have employees behind the scenes doing a lot of work and the department head gets credit or the Mayor gets credit or a Committee gets credit for moving things forward. As one Alderman, I am not in favor of this. This is the wrong time and the wrong date to do anything with Economic Development other than have them continue doing the work that the Aldermen want done and the direction that the Mayor wants to go. There is a process if somebody doesn't think that somebody is working properly. We have the right to ask for a desk audit and really find out what they are doing and that can be done just by the HR Committee directing the HR Director to do it. It is a process. It is not fair. We just went through a great division of Parks and Recreation. That vote

is done unless ten other Aldermen do something else. That is the process. I'm not in favor of moving anything forward with MEDO tonight. As a matter of fact, I'm willing to receive and file it and end this picking on employees. If we have something that employees are not doing, let's get to the department head, get a work study, and look at, let HR deal with it to see if we have to get rid of an employee. That's the way we do it. That is my recommendation to the Committee, to receive and file.

Alderman DeVries stated I'm glad to hear your sentiments. What immediately came to mind for me is the last time we were in the middle of recruiting we had similar discussions going on with consolidating the departments and we knew at that point in time that it really rendered that department very ineffective and probably cost us many people applying for a position. I know it did because I heard it from anybody who watched this play out in our newspapers. Our conversations do resonate. They resonate in the community and they can take what could be the beginning of a trend for Manchester to come out of our recession and stagnate. That being said though, Mr. Chairman, and knowing that we have eight items that we need to work our way through and we are already 25 minutes into our meeting on our first item, do you wish that we get a written response to some of what has been voiced? Was that a motion that you made to receive and file?

Chairman Lopez replied I will make a motion to receive and file and there are other ways to address these issues.

Alderman Roy stated I would like to respond to what your comment was. I take exception to the way you characterized it. If you think I am picking on anyone, I apologize. That certainly isn't my intent here. I never said that anyone wasn't doing their job; what I said was that I believe that those jobs aren't needed or they are redundant. I never once said that someone wasn't doing their job and if you want to have a desk audit that is fine with me.

Chairman Lopez stated that's fine and I appreciate that, Alderman, because I don't believe that there is duplication in any one of their jobs, but that is an issue for another day. If we want a desk audit, we will just ask the HR Committee to do a desk audit.

Alderman O'Neil stated I'm willing to give Alderman Roy the chance to explain in a little more detail and if you don't want to take it up tonight, that's fine. I have to be honest that I don't understand where the redundancy is and I'm trying to think where that is; also, the comment about services not needed...I'm willing to let him present a more detailed plan about where he thinks that those other things can be handled. I can't see them. I am not in favor of HR going in and doing desk

audits on employees because we are not sure that they are doing their jobs or not. There needs to be some accountability here and the accountability has to start with the department heads. If we don't think that someone is performing then they need to deal with the department head. If I'm asked to vote tonight, I'll vote to receive and file, but as a courtesy to my colleague, he obviously has some very strong thoughts, I would like to see some more details about it. I might ask those same questions about the other department you are talking about. Are they doing some things that some others are doing? I don't want to get into all that. I know we do get monthly reports. I think it is hard to figure out what is new from the previous month so maybe the department can look at updating recent action and not carrying along some of the projects. That might be helpful. We will give Alderman Roy the courtesy of presenting a more detailed plan than the one page letter?

Chairman Lopez replied I'll comment to that because I was caught about six years ago in the same thing. I think that if any Alderman is going to bring anything forward, he should coordinate it with the department head, get a written report and have all the documentation in place instead of prolonging this issue.

Alderman DeVries stated I don't think the receiving and filing of this initial letter, which was pretty brief, precludes any Alderman from going in and trying to put together something that is more in depth for us. I don't view this action tonight as a be all and end all if this is an issue that you wish to present with more detail to us. That is what I was digging for with my initial line of questioning.

Chairman Lopez stated that is exactly right. Any Alderman can bring anything forward like an organizational chart and how things should be set up, but I think that it is only fair that if an Alderman is going to do that, he should go to the department head and tell him what he is bringing forward and see if he wants to rebut it, whatever the case may be. Otherwise we are going to be here and get into other issues, whatever the case may be.

On motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman DeVries, it was voted to receive and file this item.

Chairman Lopez addressed item 4 of the agenda:

4. Communication from Mayor Gatsas requesting acceptance of the correspondence from Manchester Community Access Media (MCAM) regarding the termination of their contract. Mayor Gatsas also requests that the Committee review options for the merger of MCAM and MCTV beginning July 1, 2010.

(Note: Referred by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on 05/04/2010.)

Chairman Lopez stated items four and five I would like to table. I'm still, believe it or not, collecting information. Secondly, I want to get the minutes from the City Clerk's Office and also information from MCAM in writing as to the different types of equipment and the equipment that is coming over from the School District to the City side on MCTV. I think there will have to be a special meeting once they have all the documents.

Alderman DeVries stated I guess I am a little confused...

Chairman Lopez interjected, it was to table, so there is no discussion.

On motion of Alderman Osborne, duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil, it was voted to table this item.

Alderman DeVries asked Mr. Chairman, would you be opposed to giving us a little more detail as to how this is going to work with our limited schedule that we are heading into and the deadline for certain employees for the end of the contract year?

Chairman Lopez replied that's correct. We have to take some type of action before the end of June and I can foresee that we are going to have to have one or two special meetings, not on this subject, but on another subject. I think that as soon as I get all the information that I'm gathering for the Committee, I have to get it out so probably next week would be the first meeting to go over the details. Whether we make a decision at that point, that will be up to the Committee. I know that the City Clerk is working to try to get information from MCAM. There is a lot we haven't really accepted. We are still trying to find out the actual cost of the termination contract and the actual revenue. I understand that they have income coming down. I would say that a special meeting would be next week some time. Is Monday or Tuesday available?

City Clerk Matt Normand replied there is a brief window before the School Committee has their meeting and subcommittee meetings. I think Monday 5:00 to 6:00 PM is possible. I'm not positive; I don't have a calendar in front of me. It would be tight on Monday or Tuesday.

Chairman Lopez stated I think we are going to need more than an hour to discuss this. If you could get us Tuesday that would be good. We need some time. I don't want to rush it because there is a lot of information here and I think we have to do two things: we have to accept what we are going to do with MCTV and we have to decide if we are going to terminate MCAM or is it going to be a part of MCTV. We need to figure out what we want to do. There are all kinds of rumors out there. I have nothing other than the proposal made by Mike Roche and that is about the size of it until someone comes forward with something to discuss.

Alderman DeVries stated I thank you for the privilege of a little bit more detail. I guess my concern is that I am assuming that our only meeting in June is going to be the first Tuesday of June. Is that correct?

Chairman Lopez replied no, tonight I have been asked to have a meeting on June 22nd.

Alderman DeVries asked for the full Board?

Chairman Lopez replied for the full Board. The Committees are going to meet. There are issues in Lands and Buildings that need to be taken care of. There are issues in our Committee and depending on what the Chili-Fest people need in order to move forward...I don't see any of us not having one meeting in June. I think two or three.

Alderman DeVries stated I appreciate the privilege here, but don't we have employees that as of June 30th are out of a job? Are we planning on giving them any advance notice that there may still be a job ahead for them or are we planning to wait until that last week in June, have that Board meeting and tell them?

Chairman Lopez replied I'll try to answer your question this way. From what I understand was said by the School Department, they said they would have a job. I think all the Aldermen said they would have a job.

Alderman DeVries asked all those positions will be given, even those that aren't certified school teachers?

Chairman Lopez asked which positions?

Alderman DeVries replied everybody at MCTV. We are not excepting the termination at MCAM so I would assume that they are not as concerned with MCAM as they are with MCTV because we have terminated that contract and they are not funded as of June 30th. If they are not a certified teacher, wouldn't they be out of a job?

Chairman Lopez replied I don't know. I don't know the answer to that question. That is the School Department's authority over there, not mine. I think we have to let the process play out. I think they have been very clear that the people would have a job and I think we have to see what takes place in either the proposal that was given to us by MCTV or another proposal that is going to come forward. Alderman DeVries asked didn't we ask the School District to give up that contract? Isn't that back in the domain of this Board?

Chairman Lopez replied Alderman, I'm going to answer you one more time, but we're not going to debate it all night. We asked the School Board to terminate MCTV's contract as well as we asked MCAM to terminate their contract. The School Board had the option to come back and tell us anything that they wanted to tell us. With their authority, they did not have to terminate the contract. They could have made concessions or asked for A, B or C. They didn't desire to do that. They came back and threw it back at us and said okay, we're going to terminate the contract. That is where it stands now. I'm positive that something will be done before June 30th. I can't see the Board of Mayor and Aldermen not doing anything.

Alderman DeVries stated I appreciate those sentiments because I certainly hope that is the case.

Chairman Lopez addressed item 5 of the agenda:

5. Communication from the Manchester School District regarding termination of the Manchester Community Television Contract.
(Note: Referred by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on 04/20/2010.)

On motion of Alderman Osborne, duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil, it was voted to table this item.

Chairman Lopez addressed item 6 of the agenda:

6. Communication from Jay Minkarah, Economic Development Director, recommending that the City enter into a proposed Water Line & Sewer Line Extension Agreement with the U.S. Department of Labor related to the Job Corps Center construction off of Dunbarton Road.
(Note: Referred by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on 05/04/2010.)

Chairman Lopez stated he asked me to ask the Board to table this because they are not prepared to bring anything in from Water Works.

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Osborne, it was voted to table this item.

Chairman Lopez addressed item 7 of the agenda:

7. Communication from Easter Seals requesting reimbursement of building permit fees totaling \$1,825 for the Building of Hope project at 9 Mammoth Road.
(Note: Referred by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on 05/04/2010.)

Alderman Osborne moved to approve this item. The motion was duly seconded by Alderman DeVries.

Alderman O'Neil stated I'm going to vote against this. If we vote for this tonight, we are going to have every non-profit project expecting to have their fee waived. We have many of them pending right now with housing issues. We just had the Boys Club. I'm going to vote against this. I have to be honest that I have some concerns, as I've heard some of my colleague's say, about some of the salaries that we have see paid at Easter Seals and we are waving a fee of \$1,800. I have a problem with that as well. I'm going to vote against it.

Alderman DeVries stated I don't know a whole lot about the salaries. That is not something that I had been privileged to previously. I did hear from the Mayor who is trying to explain to us how this project is different than the other non-profits that have come forward. What he explained and what I know to be the case is that this particular project is built 100% on voluntary time. These individuals have raised 100% of their project needs and project costs. I find that to be very different than the other non-profit projects that I have been involved with or seen where they go for federal dollars or City dollars or a combination of others. These have all been donated for this project and it is a very worthy cause. I'm hoping

that the Committee can see its way to sending this positively to the full Board this evening.

Alderman Corriveau asked is there any precedent for this? Has the City waived fees for building permits for non-profits in the recent past at all?

Mr. Leon LaFreniere, Director of Planning and Community Development, replied this type of request has been made a number of times in the past few years. The only case that I am familiar with where this type of dispensation was granted was for the YMCA project about two and a half years ago.

Alderman Corriveau stated so a request like this is made frequently, but often not accepted.

Mr. LaFreniere stated I think there was concern about the precedent being set. There are circumstances obviously associated with this project that differentiates it from a lot of the other projects that have made this type of request in the past, but it has not typically been granted because of the concern about setting precedent. I'm not expressing an opinion because this is a policy decision of the Board.

Alderman O'Neil stated not only was this a worthy project, but there were many other worthy projects around the City. We shouldn't single this one out. We probably are going to have through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program three, four, five or six housing initiatives coming forward from different non-profit agencies. Some of the programs that we funded in the CIP process...I think this is a bad precedent. I don't recall the YMCA; I'll ask Mr. LaFreniere for some details on that. This is a bad precedent and once we grant this one, we are going to be granting all the requests that come in so I encourage my colleagues to vote against it.

Chairman Lopez called for a vote on the motion. The motion failed with Aldermen Corriveau, O'Neil and Lopez voting in opposition.

Chairman Lopez addressed item 8 of the agenda:

8. Communication from Barbara Vigneault, Senior Services Department Director, regarding the results of a survey distributed at the William B. Cashin Senior Center.

(Note: Referred by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on 05/04/2010.)

Chairman Lopez stated I would like to say please look at this. It tells you quite a bit about what is happening. When you look at the different Wards in the City of Manchester on this survey, 13 people from Ward 8, nine people from Ward 9 and 14 people from Ward 7 go to the Senior Center, so they do cross the river. When everybody asks you if the east side doesn't go to the west side, you can refer to these numbers. That's why I wanted it referred to this Committee and if you can get any more information out of it...I think one of the things was interesting about being satisfied with the hours of operation because there has been some conversation about longer hours, but senior citizens don't go out at night in most cases. There are 159 who are satisfied. You can read it at your leisure and get whatever you want out of it. I got a lot of information out of it that I think is very valuable to the director as they move forward. Are you satisfied with the administration? There are 151 people who said yes; zero said no. It is a pretty interesting report. Do you feel you can come to the staff for help and information? 154 replied yes. That says a lot about the Senior Center that we have for the City of Manchester. With that, a motion to receive and file would be in order.

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman DeVries, it was voted to receive and file this item.

TABLED ITEMS

9. Communication from Jack Donovan, Executive Director of Business Finance Authority, requesting that the City support the effort to maximize the use of Recovery Zone Facilities Bonds by agreeing to waive its \$8,966,000 allocation and allowing it to be added to the statewide pool.
(Note: Tabled 3/16/10 at the request of the Finance Officer.)

This item remained on the table.

10. Presentation by Robert Cote, President of Brattle Consulting Group, Inc., regarding SubItUp.com and its impact on the Manchester Police Department.
(Note: Tabled 04/20/2010; no representative present.)

This item remained on the table.

11. Communication from Connie Boyles Lane, Orr & Reno, regarding the Effluent Supply Agreement between Manchester and Granite Ridge Energy.

(Note: Table 04/20/2010, awaiting an update from the City Solicitor.)

This item remained on the table.

There being no further business, on motion of Alderman Corriveau, duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee