

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOL, OTHER DRUGS/
YOUTH SERVICES**

**December 11, 2007
Aldermen O'Neil, Duval,
Pinard, Garrity, Forest**

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

Chairman O'Neil called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen O'Neil, Pinard, Forest
Alderman Lopez

Absent: Aldermen Duval and Garrity

Messrs: M. Boldin

Chairman O'Neil advised that the purpose of the meeting shall be organizational in nature. He stated the Committee was formed in the spring, but because of the budget, summer and then elections, we never really have met. I thought it would be appropriate, although we have limited changes in the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, to at least talk about some issues and refer them to the next Board, which will take office January 1st. Some of the staff was able to get together last week. I apologize to Dr. Aliberti. We could have done a better job in reaching out to the School District. I take responsibility for that. Moving forward, without question the School District needs to be a partner in many, many of these issues. I'll just provide a brief overview of some of the successes this Committee has had in the past...and you've all played a role in it. This Committee led to the formation of our own in-house employee assistance program, which I think has proved very, very successful. Many years ago when the School District was doing a pilot program on student assistance, through the work of this Committee in conjunction with the School District, it has now led to formal student assistance programs at all three high schools and in the four middle schools. I believe that is still correct, Dr. Aliberti. I think we should be very proud and the District should be very proud of that. It also led to a newly-created staff person at the Office of Youth Services, an outreach person, which I think his position has proved very valuable to the citizens. He has gone out at many hours of the day and night, and I

think some of us...I know I've said over the years, if he saves one kid, it's worth the salary we pay him. It has also allowed us to have some discussions with the non-profits over the years and partner with them. In sitting down with some of the City staff...challenges, concerns, issues...whatever you want to call them...These were some of the things that the staff believes the Committee can work on and hope to address over the next couple of years. Youth homelessness...and I understand that there is a plan coming forward, Bob, at some point soon. It's being worked on, and just the focus of youth homelessness as part of that is going to be important. The continued use of alcohol and tobacco by young folks needs to be addressed. Although the City has done a great job in addressing the eighteen-plus clubs, we still have a couple of them operating in the City. Rocko's and the 313 Club...I believe that the Police Department would say that as of the current date, they've had limited problems. But as we know, over the years those eighteen-plus clubs have proven to be major problems in the City. Prescription drugs, oxycontin being one, has become a drug of choice by our young people. Something that was new and surprising to me was heroin use. According to the police, it's cheap; and because it's cheap, it's on the rise. An issue that we've heard come up in other discussions is the language barriers that exist in the City. And we've heard it in many, many discussions about other topics, but it continues to be a problem, specifically in trying to service the young people of this City. This next item is actually an adult issue related to alcohol and other substance abuse, but there is actually a lack in this City of emergency medical detox, which can affect young people or can affect adults. We have some great facilities at Serenity Place and the Farnum Center, but there is no emergency treatment available in the City. And finally, a challenge or concern that was brought up is with the change in the dropout age to eighteen. What challenges is truancy going to make for the School District, and how does that affect the City of Manchester as a whole? I believe the School District currently has one truant officer. How can we work together to try to help address that. Some of the things that were suggested by staff moving forward...and they were very united in these discussion...and the first two center around the middle schools, which I found very interesting. A peer pressure education program for the middle schools...not exactly set up like the GREAT program that once existed in the City, but to talk about the pressures on a sixth, seventh, or eighth grader in the City. A comprehensive health education program for the middle school students...maybe those two could be molded together. We have a lot of after school programs going on, and I am pleased to learn of a new program that the Library has up and running. Denise, is the person on board, the new team director? The Library is going to have a new team director on board, running programs at both the Main Library and at the West Side branch, I believe. And all the other great programs we have doing on...the MPAL, the Regis Lemire Center, Boys & Girls Club, the Housing Authority, Makin' it Happen, Salvation Army, YMCA, YWCA. There's really no coordinated effort with any of them. Is there duplication of services,

meaning duplication of resources? It was brought up by several that there is a great Court diversion program in Nashua that we maybe should look at. It's going to require involvement of the judges in the District Courts here. According to the police, they have been very successful, with positive results. It was brought up that we need to be on top of the Job Corp center being constructed in the City, and the fact that Manchester will have sixty slots. Once we get the City side and the School District side together and assess where we are and where we can go, then we need to include the non-profits. So with that I'll open up for any comments. Again, the intent of today's meeting is more just to order the issues and then forward to the next Board that will take office in January, and hopefully, working with City staff and School District staff, they can start to address some of these issues.

Alderman Pinard asked Marty, did you ever meet with the commissioner in Laconia about a program? I thought the two of you were going to meet?

Mr. Marty Boldin, Office of Youth Services Director, responded yes we did have a telephone meeting to discuss the juvenile delinquency diversion program that they have there, and we talked about ways that could fit here in Manchester.

Alderman Pinard asked is it something that we might be interested in doing in this area, like the Nashua one?

Mr. Boldin responded the program in Nashua, the drug court that they have in Nashua is going to be coming through family courts to Manchester in the next two to three years, and we definitely should be working closely with that program. It's a good program, good outcomes.

Alderman Pinard asked how about the one in Laconia? I had met the commissioner and it sounded very, very interesting.

Mr. Boldin responded I think that would be something for this Committee to take a look at as well. It really has to do with doing outreach to targeted youth, much like what Alderman O'Neil is talking about doing with gang activity with kids.

Chairman O'Neil stated Marty, just to follow up, because I know there was some discussion by staff on the family court, that is still a number of years down the road, correct?

Mr. Boldin responded it's two years away.

Chairman O'Neil stated so there is an opportunity maybe for us in the interim to work on a drug court program like Nashua?

Mr. Boldin responded and I think that preliminary conversations have happened with the District Court at this point, and I think they'd be very willing to take that forward, yes.

Alderman Forest stated I think item number two, the alcohol and tobacco use by teens...I was at Derryfield School this weekend for a concert. For those of you who know me, I am not a non-smoker. I go to a lot of things with friends and it's always non-smoking, and I don't object. I was at Derryfield School and the thing I liked the most was during intermission, apparently they have a policy at Derryfield School: absolutely no smoking on campus. And I like the idea. I was wondering if maybe...I know we have public schools here and everything else, so it would be a little more difficult. I think that would be a good suggestion to have, you know, for schools, when they have concerts or something like that, that there is no smoking on campus. I think that's a good idea and maybe it's something to look into. I see David Scannell is here, and Dr. Aliberti is also here, and I'm sorry about mispronouncing your name because you're a nice guy. I never call you for complaints. I never get practice on your name, so...And the other comment I make, and excuse me for being maybe nineteen and a half years late on this information, but I recall that CMC had the only detox unit in the state nineteen years ago. But the problem they had then, and I'm assuming that it was eventually eliminated...nineteen years ago they only had six beds for the state, and it was also shared with mental health patients. Maybe talking to the hospitals around the City to find out if they still have these...I believe back then they called it a Rush Unit. If they still have this...if not, why not? We do need something like this. We need something in an emergency basis. The Farnum Center and the Serenity Place are doing great, great work, but they're not emergency centers where if an officer or somebody finds somebody intoxicated on the street and he needs detoxification, they have to bring him someplace. The alternative right now, I understand is, they bring him in for four hours for safe-keeping. That doesn't work.

Mr. Boldin stated everything that you're saying is accurate. I also believe that we've had conversations with the hospitals and Serenity Place and Farnum Center, and I think that they would all welcome the opportunity to continue figuring out how to solve that resource gap.

Chairman O'Neil stated if I may, Alderman Forest, your discussion about...you talked specifically about tobacco use at schools. We probably should include tobacco use in municipal buildings. We have public facilities in some of our municipal buildings, so that may be something worth discussing as things move forward.

Alderman Forest stated I found myself doing it here, and I know we have some gripes here about smokers at the front door. I don't object going across...going to a smoking area, and I think...I've gone a couple of times where I've stopped and even now I find myself going into places where now they are non-smoking restaurants; they're all smoking outside. The problem is they're smoking at the door, and I find it objectionable sometimes, as a smoker, to walk into a restaurant where everybody is congregated at that front door, and I think we have to find ways, you know again, the fairness of smokers, but the thing is you can't have all smokers, because it's non-smoking inside, congregating at the front door. So there has got to be a way to move the smokers away from the entrances to buildings. All schools in the City are drug-free zones, and I believe that if it's a drug free zone, we shouldn't be smoking in front of the school or on school property.

Alderman Lopez stated I sat on the committee the Mayor appointed with a lot of professionals, for the youth homeless ten-year program, as well as homeless in general. Everything that you've mentioned on here is a major task, no matter who does it. And the cost of doing some of these is expense. As you move forward into a new era of doing some of these things, I think we need a blueprint from the organization that plans on doing it. Like one of the suggestions that I made is that all the people that are involved in the ten-year homeless plan, one of the most concrete things that we came out is that somebody has got to coordinate all of this stuff, and that's a big thing. Take it piece by piece. It might be a two-year program, but I think everybody has got to buy into it. It's amazing that all the experts that sat around this room, about 26 of them, all had the ideas on how to solve some of these problems, but yet some of them are not solved for the simple reason it takes money and it takes people to solve some of these problems. You mentioned one area that we're going to need: truant officers. One truant officer cannot do it for everything. So that's a school issue and somewhere along the line as we develop these particular programs, we're going to need input from these people. What is the mission they're trying to accomplish? What is it going to cost? Personnel? Is it referral? Whatever the case may be...And I think all the statistics are very important because for me, for an example, youth homeless...I just don't see how it's possible that could happen, but I know it does. And what are the laws of it? Is there homes out there that somebody could take these kids in? It's a one on one situation when you're talking about human beings, no matter what category you're talking about. So it is going to be something that needs to be done piece by piece. We're not going to solve everything, but we need the experts to lead us.

Alderman Pinard stated question for Dr. Aliberti: As I ride around the schools, and especially Memorial, and we're talking about the non-smoking. I know that it's a thousand feet, or whatever it is, but does the resource officer ever take a walk around the high schools and see these kids on the corner smoking? I've seen it on

Weston Road. I've seen it all around Memorial when I drive through there. I've seen it around Central. If we're going to try to fight this element, I think it's up to us to try to put our heads together and come up with a solution. And I think the solution starts with the resource officer in that school. If they're inside the school and things are happening outside, my question is, to the Police Department and to you, sir, do they frequently go outside in between the breaks? Because that tennis court sometimes is about ten or fifteen kids, and a cloud of smoke.

Dr. Aliberti stated policing of schools for drug use, tobacco use, is really the responsibility of every adult that works within that building, whether it's a teacher, a paraprofessional, an administrator or even the resource officers. So one of the things employees try to do within the school setting is, within that school, within the school grounds and area, they try to police those kinds of issues to make sure that students are conducting themselves according to Board policies, as well as laws that may be in effect as far as the state goes. We can report different issues if we observe something that's happening. We have a police presence in our middle schools and high schools that can actively intervene when necessary.

Alderman Pinard asked do they report, any of the schools like that if, we'll say the teachers are walking outside and see somebody? Do they report to somebody? Is there some kind of a record in place that Memorial High School, there were ten kids that were caught smoking? Is there such a thing? Maybe that might be a witness, I think is the right word.

Dr. Aliberti stated it's interesting that you're mentioning Memorial High School because just recently I had a chance to see a summary report from Memorial that Mr. Adamakos printed out for me. And on that report it definitely identifies issues around drug possession, tobacco use, and being under the influence. Those were three categories that I noticed in which we had incidences. So the school is policing and actively involved in trying to address those issues as they occur.

Chairman O'Neil stated again, I want to thank Dr. Aliberti for being here, and the other department heads that are here. Are there any other comments, questions? I think something that would be important as we move forward is that we ask the departments and the School Department to assign a person. It can be the department head or it can be someone else that would be the regular person from that department regularly involved with these discussions. My guess would be that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen will probably want this Committee to be more active starting in January than it has been. I think it would be great if we could ask...and I think I have the departments correct: CIP, Employee Assistance Program, Health, Library, Mayor's Office, Police and Schools, to identify a person that could be the liaison from that respective agency, and attend these meeting regularly when they're scheduled. It was determined in the staff meeting that

Parks had a very, very limited role, and Welfare was there but it was determined that their role would be very, very limited, and if they do come across an issue, there is already something in place that they can refer it to.

On motion of Alderman Forest, duly seconded by Alderman Pinard, it was voted to ask CIP, EAP, Health, Library, Mayor's Office, Police, Schools, and OYS to be regularly involved with the Committee.

Alderman Forest stated unfortunately this may be my first and last meeting on this Committee. After January I will be back in civilian life, but what I'd like to ask, if possible, and this Board has the authority, is that I be kept informed when you have meetings. I would really love to attend. My email isn't going to change, so if there is any way of notifying me about when the meetings are I would appreciate it.

Chairman O'Neil stated you've been involved with many of these issues over the years, and even though the Committee hasn't been as active as it could have or should have been, I think that's a great offer. Thank you very much. Is there anything else that any of the departments or the District would like to bring up?

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

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee