

**CHARTER COMMISSION  
PUBLIC HEARING**

**January 23, 2013**

**6:00 p.m.**

**Chairman Duval** called the meeting to order.

**Chairman Duval** called for the pledge of allegiance, this function being led by Alderman Craig.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Commissioners Duval, Girard, Martin, D'Allesandro, Lopez,  
Pappas, Clayton, Ashooh, Infantine

**Chairman Duval** stated before we start, Clerk Leahy has put in some effort to better connect with our Manchester citizenry. Clerk Leahy, could you fill in for viewers and those watching public television what we have so they can better communicate their views to the Charter Commission?

**Clerk Leahy** replied what we have done is created a new email account for the Charter Commission and there is a link to it from the City's homepage on the right hand side. You can also email [chartercommission@manchesternh.gov](mailto:chartercommission@manchesternh.gov) and any emails would come to me and then I can disperse them to the committee members so if any constituent wanted to get a hold of them that would probably be the best way to go about it.

**Chairman Duval** stated thank you, Clerk Leahy, for your efforts. For viewers at home, it will give them a little bit easier access to communicating with members of the Charter Commission which we encourage them to do at all times throughout this charter review process.

**Chairman Duval** advised that the purpose of the public hearing is to receive information, views, comments and other pertinent material relative to its functions; that each person will be given only one opportunity to speak; that comments shall be limited to three minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak and any comments must be directed to the Chair; that any resident wishing to speak come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized, and give their comments. I want to thank members of the public for coming out tonight and taking time on this very cold wintery night to be with us and to participate in this very important exchange of dialogue with the Charter Commission. I'm impressed with the number of people who are here tonight. We always wish for more, but we certainly thank you for coming out tonight to share your views with us, whatever they may be.

**Mr. John Gimás**, 116 Portsmouth Avenue, stated:

Thank for this opportunity to speak. I have two hopes for the commission this evening. My first one is that the commission recommend to the citizens of Manchester this fall that the spending cap remain in its current form. I truly believe, as a business owner for 28 years, that the only way the Manchester taxpayers are protected from wasteful spending is to maintain this current spending cap. The second wish that I have for this commission is that you recommend eliminating the School Board at-large positions and the aldermen at-large positions. The reason that I think this would be a good idea is that one, what little money is used to fund these positions, I know could definitely be used

elsewhere. I also feel that if this overlapping representation is needed, it seems like the ward representatives really aren't doing their job. Why have at-large positions when you have all the wards represented by individuals? That's it.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jim O'Connell**, 265 Prospect Street, stated:

I am a parent in the city of four children. I am the president of the Hillside parent teacher organization and I also have the honor and privilege of being the president of Citizens for Manchester Schools and we did make a presentation to you a couple weeks ago so I won't be redundant with that. One of our members will read our thoughts shortly. I would emphasize that that document to be presented to you was the considerable opinion of the membership of our group which we spent some time on to try to narrow it and concentrate on the areas that we thought were important for you to review. I have come before you tonight because, separate from those organizations, I would like to talk about the fact that... First of all, I was very pleased and I thought it was an important thing for the City that the meeting that you held two or three weeks ago on education people were frank and open. It was very healthy so that was very welcoming and as an aspiration, I wish that more such conversations could be had in the City of Manchester in the same way where there is less acrimony and more construction. I wish to say tonight that the while the charter has to look across all the issues covered by the city charter, I think you rightfully chose education as the first one to deal with. I think it is a fundamental issue in the City of Manchester as it is today. We have a significant problem. The Charter Commission cannot deal with all the things that we would like to see related to education, but I think any person looking at the politics and the economy and the nature of society in Manchester today can recognize that the issue of education is the most serious one. I would use an analogy that if one were to have a Charter Commission ten years from now and the Manchester airport had deteriorated to the place where it now only had three

operating gates, two airlines flying to two destinations and instead of 5 million we were down to 1 million passengers per year and that was clearly the case and the empirical evidence demonstrated that, then it would be right for the Charter Commission to look at whatever it might be able to do to help that situation. I would say that that is a legitimate analogy where the Manchester school system finds itself today. It is an anchor on the image and the prestige of the city and in so far as the Charter Commission can do something about it, it should. I would say that with regard to the tax cap and this is my opinion, I think you can help on the tax cap. If it is not feasible or you can't reach agreement around eliminating the tax cap, I think it would be helpful to then retain the tax cap, but change the nature of the override to a simple majority as opposed to a supermajority. I think that would mean that a small group of public representatives could not hold hostage the city on the things that our public representatives feel that our schools need. Thank you very much for your work. This is a wonderful exercise; we welcome it and we are appreciative of it.

**Ms. Leslie Want**, 623 Belmont Street, stated:

I want to thank you all for everything you are doing. I know it is a tremendous sacrifice of your time, energy, talent and your experience. I really appreciate everything you are doing to help our city. I am very hopeful for this whole process. I think it is one of the very best hopes for our schools in Manchester. I would like you to consider the spending portion of the tax cap because what is going to happen next year is we are going to get multimillions of dollars coming from the federal government and we are not going to be able to spend that money for education because we have a spending cap. A lot of people don't realize that the tax cap it not just the how much money we collect; it is how much money we can spend. What is going to happen is we are going to get that money in to be spent on education and it is not going to be able to be spent on education. Instead, it is going to get sucked into City government and it is going to end up reducing

taxpayers' rates. I can't see that at this junction that we are at with our city and how desperately we need to help education in our schools that we would get money in from the federal government for education and not be able to spend it on education. I, in fact, would implore you to look at the spending portion of the tax cap. I also feel very strongly that it is a conflict of interest to have the mayor on both the board of aldermen and the Board of School Committee. If we are going to have leadership on both of those committees, there ought to be a different person advocating in each of those domains. Those are my two main things. I would also say that I am pretty sure that we need to move the deadline earlier for the school budget. I'm very concerned that we are losing a lot of teachers because they drift off to other schools. By the time we solve our budget and we come around to hiring more teachers again, we have lost some of the very good teachers who we have pink slipped. Those are my main concerns. Thank you for everything you are doing. This is a terrific process.

**Mr. Nick Want**, 623 Belmont Street, stated:

I am actually here tonight representing our organization, Citizens for Manchester Schools. We had planned on having several people present the key elements, but due to some illness we have two key people who are unable to attend due to personal illness and illness in the family so I would beg a little indulgence, if I may of the commissioners, my presentation may take just slightly longer than three minutes. I am reading a prepared statement from the membership of CMS to the commissioners. Dear chairman and commissioners, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to your commission in regards to city charter issues in regards to education. This letter will summarize the recommendations that will be provided tonight on behalf of our organization. First, we want to thank each of you for your work on this commission and for your commitment to improve this great city, a city that is clearly at a crossroads. We have four recommendations that we ask the commission to take into consideration. First,

keep the School District intact rather than reverting back to making it a City department. We understand that the primary motivation for this idea would be to claim to save money by creating efficiencies through shared services such as HR, payroll, IT, finance, etc. However, we know that the School District is already very efficient and extremely lean in its administrative overhead. The work and expense required to merge the School District with the City would entirely outweigh the benefit. Due to the pure size of the labor force of the School District, the City administrative staff could not take on the additional requirements of serving these additional employees without increasing staff on the City side. Also, to merge the management systems of the two entities would also undoubtedly also require great time and expense. We respectfully suggest that there are many serious issues in our school system that must be the priority so let's focus on the challenges of educating our children rather than getting sidetracked and creating bureaucratic work that yields little benefit to education. Others stated the need for a school department as a solution to improve communication between the respective wards, rather than practical effectiveness of the process. We must remember that schools were previously managed as a department in the City and there were significant problems that led to the creation of the more efficient School District that we have now. Therefore, we recommend that the School District remain as is rather than once again becoming a department of the City. Secondly, we would suggest moving up the school budgeting timelines. The charter currently requires the City and school budgets be approved by the second Tuesday in June and in the case of a veto, as happened last year on a budget vote, it could be extended to June 30<sup>th</sup>. Due to these rules in our last budget cycle, the budget wasn't decided until June 28<sup>th</sup>. This is simply far too late to be able to plan appropriately when the teachers and principals have completed their school year and are gone. It means that planning doesn't really start until the midnight hour and we witnessed the impacts of that this year including some classes with as many as 40 plus children. As a result, many classes were ill-equipped, lacking the

proper number of desks, chairs, textbooks and in some cases, classroom occupancy actually violated fire code. Some teachers were hired back the day before school started and some were asked to teach subjects, courses or a grade level that they had never taught before and were left with literally no time to prepare. These impacts are all results of late budget decisions that are currently made in our City. With the vast majority of the School District costs being fixed and predictable, it is possible for budgeting decisions to be made earlier in the year with a high degree of confidence and expectation for successful fiscal compliance. Other surrounding communities use March 31<sup>st</sup> to finalize their school budget which allows planning and organization to occur before the summer recess. We have witnesses that these communities are hiring at the same time that Manchester teachers...

**Chairman Duval** interjected Nick, I'm going to ask you to pause right there. Is there anything else in there that has not been stated already? Can we have a copy of that for the record as well?

**Mr. Want** replied we will provide a copy. I don't believe this has been stated in public.

**Chairman Duval** asked is there anything else new that hasn't been stated? We have to be fair to everyone and try to stick to the three minute time limit.

**Mr. Want** stated there are two additional items that we would ask you to explore, additional to the four items that we have previously have reiterated. There has been some discussion that the School District will become a taxing authority with a right and obligation to set its own tax rate. The presumption is that this would allow the district to raise the money it needs for education, but it does not guarantee the delivery of an adequate education. No other community approaches

school funding in this matter. We recommend that your commission research the pros and cons of having a separate taxing authority for the schools and consider its potential benefits in Manchester.

**Commissioner Girard** stated with due respect, this letter was read to us two weeks ago at our working session and this letter was given to the commission two weeks ago at the working session.

**Mr. Want** stated with respect, Mr. Commissioner, this letter was in fact not read it is entirely; it was paraphrased due to the content.

**Chairman Duval** asked are you wrapping up?

**Mr. Want** replied I am wrapping up. In closing, we sincerely hope that the items we have recommended will be helpful to the commission and its work. We are available to discuss and explore these and other educational issues at your request and we look forward to continuing the conversation of public participation. Again, thank you for the service to our City and we look forward to your recommendations.

**Ms. Erin Kerwin**, 291 Ray Street, stated:

I have come here today to talk to the Charter Commission about the schools. I currently have a daughter in the first grade at Webster and a three year old son who will hopefully be joining the Webster family in the near future. I have been nothing but pleased with Webster. There are many things that the public schools in Manchester can offer my children that they cannot get anywhere else in New Hampshire. There are excellent teachers, great principals; the school has a safe, warm welcoming feel to it. What I also appreciate about Manchester is that my children are in a class with many different types of kids. There is a rainbow of

colors, religious backgrounds, socioeconomic backgrounds, learning styles and values. I appreciate my daughter's opportunity to learn about people who have had a different experience than she has. It is an important life lesson to learn how to handle yourself in situations where everyone is not the same as you. There are not many places in New Hampshire that can offer this. I feel that letting our education system in the City spiral out of control will eventually kill the City. As much as I believe in exposing my child to the type of diversity that Manchester can offer, I'm not willing to sacrifice his or her education. If things keep spiraling down the drain, I will move my family away from here, which will not only mean that Manchester will not get our tax dollars, but I will probably move my family out of the area, meaning my husband will leave his job in Manchester. If people start fleeing the city to neighboring towns or states, the home prices in the city will plummet. I think the Charter Commission has a great opportunity to change the way that the City values education. A few suggestions that I would like to see the Charter Commission take on: One, I would like to see the budget schedule moved up to allow for better preparation for the following school year. If the school budget process was moved to the end of March instead of June there would be more time for planning. My daughter's first year at Webster, I was shocked at the pink slipping that went on. I was even more shocked to find out that this happened yearly. This does not seem like a good way to keep good teachers and to keep continuity in the schools. It does seem like a great way to kill morale and to lose some of the best teachers to more stable jobs. Hopefully by changing the date of the budget it will allow for more planning time and less pink slipping and it won't cost the City a thing. I feel that the role of the mayor on the School Board needs to be removed. Two, even if I liked the mayor, I feel there are too many conflicts of interest for the mayor to be the chair of the Board of School Committee. The mayor is elected by the people to run the City; the School Board is selected by the people to run the schools. Since each ward has elected their School Board member, the School Board should be able to elect their own chair.

This way the citizens who elect the School Board can hold the School Board accountable for the decisions. Three, I would like to suggest keeping the School District intact rather than reverting back to making it a City department.

Considering the work and expense that would be involved in merging the two, I do not believe there would be any significant savings. To run the schools, the City would have to hire more staff people. It would also make the lines of power fuzzy. As a voter, who would I hold responsible for decisions that I either liked or didn't like? Four, I would like the language added to the charter that requires Manchester to provide an adequate education to all children in Manchester schools. I can email you the rest. I have three more points.

**Chairman Duval** stated please go to that site and email them to us so we have them.

**Ms. Kerwin** asked is it on the website?

**Clerk Leahy** it is. On the right hand side there is a direct link.

**Ms. Kerwin** asked on the City's webpage?

**Clerk Leahy** replied yes.

**Commissioner Infantine** asked Mr. Chairman, would she be allowed to give me her three points in three sentences.

**Ms. Kerwin** stated my other one is that I would like to see the School District become its own taxing authority because I can't think of a better way for the School District to be accountable to voters than to try to pass the levy. Finally,

changing the tax cap to a simple majority, not a supermajority to override the tax cap and a mayoral veto. Thank you.

**Mr. John Naeger**, 420 Lowell Street, stated:

I was a teacher of eight years at Memorial. I would still like to be doing that. That is not why I am here tonight. That experience gave me a lot of insight into the schools as well as my wife, who has been in the School District much longer than I have. I just can't stress enough, I have watched these meeting for years, I have attended meetings here and didn't really see a lot happening. I really appreciate what you guys are doing, I think it is important, but there have to be systems in place and this is the process to do it to make some changes in our schools. One of those, as others have mentioned, I will reiterate some things, but I'm trying to put a point, the timeline for getting a budget in place has to be much sooner. From the student's point of view, as little as teachers talk about it and very few of them talk other than amongst themselves, the kids know what is going on. It is a huge distraction in the schools with the circus that goes on almost yearly when the budget process starts. It just seems like it goes on all the time. It has to be shorter. Somehow it has to be refined so that it happens faster. You are the people who can look at it all, but it has to be settled much sooner than it is. As others have said, we have to provide adequate funding according to State standards for our kids. My perspective, I had 25 years in a career and then started teaching for eight years. It is so important, for any teacher in the system, it is so important to have them here and to give them what they need. I struggled with the budget that I had. I did fine because I am fairly resourceful, but it is not necessarily about the money. It is having the City impress on the children in our care that school is important. I just think that we have to make some changes. I think you are working hard to do that. I am here to support your efforts. I hope I continue teaching, if that comes back around again, but we have to give our kids what they need. I have one child still in the School District and another one is off

at college and graduated, but I have had the experience of teaching kids who didn't get the emphasis from their parents necessarily, how important school was. We just need to fund it appropriately and properly.

**Ms. Kim Hebert**, 355 Bridge Street, stated:

Thank you all for allowing us the time to talk. We really appreciate it. I could list a hundred things about education that I would love to see change and I'm sure that you all could too, but I'm very concerned about the all or nothing for the Charter Commission. I'm worried that we are going to have a big list and nothing is going to get passed like last time. I want to focus on one thing that I think could make a big difference and that is changing the deadline of the budget. I would really love to see the school budget decided by the 31<sup>st</sup>. I was at a School Board meeting earlier this year and a teacher was speaking about how she was pink slipped and then she was offered a job at another school teaching another grade so she went out and started to train for that and buy supplies for it and get herself excited about it to be prepared to be at a different school, teaching a different grade. Then she found out she was going to stay at her original school teaching another grade so she moved all her stuff back to the school and then she ended up at the same school, teaching the same grade that she was teaching the whole time. She went through all this shift and this just seems like such a waste of resources and time and energy. I think if the budget could be decided by the 31<sup>st</sup>, I think that would help a lot so we are not making these decisions and we have everything organized, whatever the budget is, but of course I would like more budget. I think having it and being able to have it decided and prepared beforehand would be really helpful. Again, I'm just very concerned about the all or nothing and having the opportunity wasted where you are working so hard and we have such an opportunity here. I would really like to see some change made.

**Ms. Judy Martin**, 71 Delaware Avenue, stated,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. I am very excited about this Charter Commission. I am here, like everyone else, for the education. I love Manchester and I used to see it as a vibrant city where people really wanted to live here and now not so much. I think a lot of it has to do with the school system. As a parent, I am very concerned that my children aren't getting the education that they used to get when they were younger. Now I have a junior in high school and an eighth grader. It is not from the teachers. The teachers are wonderful, they are professional and they are doing everything they can. I think this is an opportunity to get some change. I agree with the points that some other people have made. If we could put a clause in to say to the School Board we have to at least meet the minimum standards of the State... There is just no excuse that my daughter has more than 30 students in her classroom. Also, I really feel strongly that the schools should stay a separate entity; it should not become a City department. I think the School Board and the superintendent need to be able to do their job and look into the issues and work on a budget. The only way they can do that is with the removal of the mayor's position. I just don't think the mayor needs to be on the School Board. I think the School Board members can come up with a chief on their own, a chairman, to run the school meetings. Again, the budget is really an issue. One gentleman had stated that the children know. The children are very aware of what is going on in the school system. My kids come home and tell me that Mr. so and so is going to get cut and so and so got a pink slip today and so and so was crying. That is unacceptable. We can't just have that going on in the schools. If we move the date forward, really we could keep a lot of really good teachers who we lose every year because they go to other school systems where other children can benefit. Thank you very much for your time and all your work.

**Ms. Jaimee Thews**, 293 Sagamore Street, stated:

I just wanted to reiterate a lot of what of other people said. I'm not going to reword everything, but I want to say thank you to all of you for your time and dedication to all of this. I think it is really important. I'm glad that Manchester voted to have you guys take a look at this because I think it is very important. As a citizen, taxpayer, and parent of a child in the Manchester School District, I'm also secretary of the PTO at Smyth Road, I respectfully request that the community and its leaders focus on the importance of providing an adequate education for Manchester's current and future citizens. It is our responsibility to ensure that the children of our community are provided with an education that will enable them to meaningfully contribute to the future of this city, state and this country. How else will we thrive as a community and a nation? By not appropriating the appropriate resources into education we are setting ourselves up to fail. We have made a lot of important investments to the City's infrastructure to make this a place that people want to live and work in, but how long will people stay if they see that the community is not investing in education? If we don't prepare our children to be productive members of the community, if we don't prepare them to complete in the global economy, what will the City look like in ten, 20, 50 years? In order to achieve that goal of an adequate education, although I really don't think we should just be going for adequate; we should be going for great. Adequate is just average and I think it is pretty pathetic that we are not meeting adequate right now. I think we should be great, not just adequate. We need to ensure that we have a clear direction and purpose. Most businesses have a mission statement to ensure that their business strategies and decisions are in line with their mission. What is our mission statement? Let's set a clear direction and have clear agreement on what is important for our School District. This is a subject that came up at a forum at Manchester Memorial High School in the fall and that was something that we talked about in our breakout sessions. It makes

sense to me. I see it at my own work; we have a mission. Are the decisions we are making, are they in line with what our mission is? There are also concerns brought up at that meeting about outdated curriculum and I think if we had a clear direction as to what we wanted for our school system and we were looking to make a strategy to fit with that mission statement I think you will find that there are a lot of opportunities to improve things to better educate our children. Successful businesses also make budget setting a priority and they allow themselves sufficient time in advance of the coming fiscal year to ensure that they can execute on the mission and deliverables. The current school budget setting process is far too late to have any hope for a smooth execution in the district's mission and deliverables. We all know what happened this year and I really don't want to see that happen again. No business would deliberately operate in this fashion. I'm in favor of the current proposal to move the budget finalizing to March 31<sup>st</sup> if not sooner. I am also in favor of keeping the School District intact rather than making it a department of the City and allowing the School Board to elect their own chair person. I really want us to get down to business and work to resolve the issues so we can have a School District that we are proud of. It is too important not to focus on this. Thank you.

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

If I look out of place it is because I did a show at 12 o'clock today on channel 23 and most of you people will not see it because you are too busy. The three minutes that you allow us to speak is totally inadequate and that is what I am here to talk about. As far as budgets go, I was wondering how you make a budget for the snow plowing. You don't know; you just guess. If you say that you are going to put aside \$1 million and you have an awful lot of snow and it costs \$2 million you just get another million, that's all. Isn't that what you do? You can't leave the snow there. Let's get down to business here. I just want to say that there are approximately 55,000 voters here and out of that, on the public participation nights

when you are allowed to speak there is a total, over the years, between three to six people. Tonight is a little different because the subject is about the budget and that is important so therefore you are going to have a larger number of speakers. The thing that I am talking about is that the three minutes is a selfish amount of time. I find it inadequate because sometimes I have come before the board and at the end of three minutes I haven't gotten to the crux of what I really want to say. Maybe that is me. I have a plan. Here is the plan: up to 12 speakers, why can't you allow one to five minutes? I am looking for an additional two minutes. Do you have a couple minutes? Is that a long time? The thing is that that is really what I am all about here. I think that the two minutes should be allowed for speakers who come here to speak. And another thing, public officials can speak forever and ever and sometimes it becomes very boring, not only for me, but for the public out there. That is about the size of it. Another couple of minutes are not going to kill you and it is not that farfetched. Thank you and good evening.

**Ms. Kathy Kierstead**, 144 Wildwood Street, stated:

I really didn't have anything prepared, but since sitting here and listening to everybody, I believe we all have the same concerns. I have a daughter who is now in high school, tenth grade, and in elementary school, Highland. I was the volunteer coordinator and I have gone through this process since then, since she was in kindergarten. Every single year these pink slips are given out, their lives are disruptive, the children's lives are disrupted. Maybe as much as the teachers don't want to that to interfere with their current classes, when you are handed a pink slip, you are a human being, you are going to have emotions and that is going to show. At an elementary level that may not be as noticeable, but I can tell you that in middle school and in high school, my daughter has experienced teachers verbally lashing out to anyone about how upset they are, how much they hate the principal or they hate this or they hate that. Again, we are human; we are going to say these things whether we are trying to be as professional as possible. Every

year these people have to have a disruption in their lives and not know if they have a job. It is really not something that has to happen. I think we can correct that by moving the budget, as everyone else has said. The most important thing is that the kids know what is going on and if the kids know that we can't conduct business in a fashion that is professional and not put these people through this every single year. The kids know what is going on and it does filter down, whether the teachers are trying to be professional or not. Supplies and books are all just pathetic. Every year we are buying more and more supplies. Teachers have more and more requests: I want a two inch binder, I want a three inch binder, I want this kind of paper, and I want this pen and notebook. I understand that they all have their own system and everything, but let's be honest; not everyone can afford a \$5 binder for every subject plus the paper plus the pencils. The books that these kids have, half the time the teachers don't even use them. They will issue a book and they will say don't bother, I'm going to get my own stuff off the internet. The books are in really bad shape. I think we have all seen that. My kids' teachers are asking them to bring in tissues and donate this and that. It is pretty sad that it has come down to that. That is pretty much it. Like I said, I wasn't really prepared.

**Mr. Jeff Hanson**, 50 Heathrow Avenue, stated:

Thank you for letting me talk and having this forum. I probably would reiterate most of the points that people are making, but I too have the concern of getting a charter that has the ability to pass. I am concerned about that. To me, the most powerful thing that this commission can do with regard to education is to put language into the charter about providing an education that meets minimum State standards. I think that is something that is very doable, something that is passable. It doesn't say that it has to be done with x amount of dollars, it just means that you have to meet the minimum standards. We don't do that now. You can argue that it is State law that we have to meet State minimum standards, but no one is holding the City accountable to that. The citizens themselves can't hold the City

accountable. I don't know why we aren't being held accountable. I don't know why the State isn't down here asking. I find it unfair and I hate to use the word unfair because life isn't fair, but our sending schools have contracts that say the City has to meet these standards for them and they want to leave. They have a contract and we are breaking the contract with them and they are leaving. The citizens of Manchester don't get that contract. That is what the charter can provide; it can provide a contract between the citizens and the City. The City has to provide us certain things that we assume should happen. A public education that meets State minimum standards is a contract that the City could make with its citizens. If they can't make that commitment and can't meet that responsibility then I don't know that they should be in the business of providing education. Maybe they should roll up all the schools and say we can't do it. That is the most powerful thing that this commission could do to make education stronger in this City, put language into the charter, make a contract between the citizens and the City to make that possible.

**Mr. Kevin Phelan**, 1378 Wellington Road, stated:

Thank you all for serving. I want to keep my comments brief and succinct. The danger that I think we need to sidestep when proposing changes to the charter is swinging for a homerun. I don't know about you, but I would much rather get a double than strike out trying to get a homerun. Some of the things that I would like to see changed: First, I don't think the mayor should be on the School Board at all. I think the School Board really needs to have their own voice. That doesn't just mean the mayor who is in office right now, it is really any mayor. I think we need to have a clear voice from the School Board, working with the school department and having that clear voice will allow them to better manage. Right now I think there are too many cooks in the kitchen. We are not driven by a mission statement. I really think that is hindering the school's performance and planning. Secondly, I don't really understand why some people think this is

controversial, but I have heard that some people really are not in favor of moving the date for a deadline for the school budget. That is a layup. I don't know anyone who would really think about it and have a conversation about it, why they would hesitate on that point. Right now, by ending in June, the school department just does not have enough time to shuffle the deck chairs. If we give them more time, they will have more time to plan. Third, I do not want to see the School District become a school department. Some argue for efficiencies, but I don't know that that is true. I think what we would gain is the issue of having too many cooks in the kitchen. I think what we need to do, instead of politicizing the process further by making them a department, I think we need to take the politics out of it and have a clear voice from the School Board. The only way that is going to happen is to keep them separate, in my view. Lastly, I have heard many other proposals for the charter such as going back to partisan elections. Those issues I really think are ancillary. I don't know that anyone is dying to see that happen or is opposed to that. It is really a chance to improve the schools. Keep it simple. Let's face it; most people who are going to see these proposals most people are going to see them for the first time when they slide that curtain behind them. We need to be able to make it clear to them what the changes are and what effect it will have on the City. Keep it simple. Again, don't strike out swinging for the homerun.

**Mr. Carl Hebert**, 355 Bridge Street, stated:

Thanking you for serving. I know this is a tremendous amount of work for those of you who are undertaking it. I just wanted to say that I echo a lot of the very simple changes and I hope that the Charter Commission keeps the proposed changes pretty simple because I don't think the average voter is going to take the time to read a treatise on the back of a ballot, never mind know what it means. I would strongly encourage you to move the budget date forward for the schools. It is a no brainer. There are no businesses out there that wait until the last day of the

fiscal year to make very important staffing decisions, especially when it comes to contracted positions. I would also say that I do not believe that the School Board should have the mayor as its chair. That goes for any mayor from any political stripe. I think the board should be allowed to elect its own chairperson and it should be that person's job to be the chief advocate for our City's education. It should not be a solely political position of one elected position in the City. I would strong encourage that the School District remain separate from the City and not become a department. I think it should have its own individual voice and not be enrolled in the City. I think that is pretty much it. I would like to echo that I think there should be language within the city charter that says we must meet State minimums. I am a proud alumnus of Central High School and I can't remember any of my teachers who shaped me and got me to where I am in life who said go for the minimum. I think we should at least put some language in that says we should meet the minimum State requirements. It is sad. I know that when I say it in a funny way everyone chuckles, but that is really sad. Thank you for your time.

**Ms. Karen LeClerc**, 340 North Gate Road, stated:

I had no intention of speaking until I got here. I have a first grade daughter at Webster School. She is in a class of 27 other children. I really believe in the diversity and the education that is provided at Webster. I have to say that she got into the Mill Falls School and I turned it down because I wanted her to go to Webster, I wanted her to go to the neighborhood school and I really believe in all the things that community can bring, but it is tough to watch this. I have watched this in the paper every year, but now that I am living it because she is in public school for the first time, it tough to watch. I don't want to go over all the points because I agree with everything that everyone said, but again, the date change, to me, is huge. We should strive for excellent education, not good, not moderate, and not anything but excellent. We should definitely get rid of the mayor on the

School Board. Thank you for all this. Thank you for all that you do and good luck.

**Chairman Duval** stated you could tell that Commissioner Martin was glowing tonight. It may be a cold evening, but I can feel the heat from here. You made her night.

**Mr. Glenn Ouellette**, 112 Auburn Street, stated:

Education. I watch the School Board meetings like I watch the aldermanic board meetings. Last night was very disturbing. I understand that we have x amount of schools and x amount of students in our schools, but we have a school system in this city that is different than any other community in this state because of the amount of languages and the amount of culture in this city. We are an Auburn school. For us to try to teach the same course in all four high schools is not going to work. Every time you move a teacher who is qualified to teach a special course, you have to replace that teacher because that class is no longer being taught. Now you need to find a teacher who can teach the course that you want. It was discussed last night that about \$150,000 per course that you had to do that to. We claim we have no money, but we spend. We live in a community that is great and it is diversified. We should be teaching our kids that they are individuals and not robotic and this is what you are going to learn and that's it. Isn't that why we started the school of technology? First of all, the rule that they made doesn't apply because the school of technology is totally different than the other three high schools. The chairman of the board... I'm not against the fact that the mayor is the chairman of the board. What I am against, because I feel that the mayor is the overall leader of the City... But the mayor needs to play by the rules. On the Board of Mayor and Aldermen he has to follow Robert's Rules of Order. He should be doing the same thing on the School Board. There is no way on the aldermanic board that the mayor will make a motion or second a motion. He will

vote if there is a tie or to veto. The same needs to apply at the school level. We do have a superintendent, who we pay a lot of money for, and we need to let him do his job. Once a School Board gives him direction, we shouldn't have another leader like the mayor who comes to the superintendent and micromanages. That is what I see happening a lot. Another thing is spending. The money that goes back to the City, for example, for plowing. When there are two inches of snow and there is no school that day, and one school gets two hours of plowing in the morning, one hour in the afternoon, and two hours the next morning to start school on two inches of snow that is ridiculous. We need to make some changes, but a lot of it is in spending. I think that the schools should remain separate. That is a definite. It just wouldn't work otherwise.

**Ms. Calley Milne**, 273 Ray Street, stated:

I have a daughter in the first grade at Webster School. I would start first with the points that I agree with. I do agree with keeping the School District intact rather than reverting back to a City department. Two, I agree with moving up the school budget timeline. I think that is a very important one and I think that is one that definitely should and could be passed by the Charter Commission. Three, I also agree with removing the role of the mayor from the School Board. Four, I agree with new charter language to meet the State minimum standards. I think that is essential. I also have a first grader in a classroom of 27. All of the first grade classrooms at Webster School are of 27, which is well above the maximum at this stage. There is no real end in sight in terms of being able to reduce the size of those classrooms. I would say that in support of these things, I think that Manchester is a phenomenal community. I love where I live. I continue to advocate for people to stay within my community, but I also work in real estate and I can tell you that it is the number one thing that people ask for in looking at a town, whether or not you have kids in school or you don't. How well are the schools supported? How well are they funded? How good are they? How strong

are they? I do think that it is having a true impact on the value of our homes, whether it be economic conditions that have pushed our housing values down, being able to see and end in sight and improve those values and the schools' impact to that is going to have an impact on those prices going forward, not just economic conditions. I also have a family member who is a teacher in Londonderry and I can tell you that Londonderry is reaping the benefits of what Manchester has lost. They are truly recruiting Hooksett and Candia students and they are succeeding in that. They will see at last 60 new families next year that are good families that we used to have in our Manchester School District along with their funds that we were receiving that we will lose. You have a tough job ahead. I appreciate what you are doing and I hope you take these considerations for these four points that Citizens for Manchester Schools have put forth. I will continue to think through this and continue to provide feedback and consider the email as well.

**Mr. Sean Russell**, 84 Broadway Avenue, stated:

I just had a suggestion, something I hadn't heard tonight and maybe the point is moot and maybe that is why I haven't heard it. I know some of the discussion a couple weeks ago at the other education meeting was about the tax cap and I just want to build on the point the gentleman earlier talked about with hitting a homerun with the suggestions and ways to make it really palatable to the voters. My suggestion would be to stay away from tax cap issues since it was voted on and passed and move on some of the other suggestions that people have that would probably make things a lot more palatable for the voter. I would urge someone like the Citizens for Manchester Schools to push for a separate referendum to vote down the tax cap as a separate issue and not something for the Charter Commission. That is just food for thought, but I wanted to put that out there. I think that might be a good approach and some of you have probably already

thought about that because you are very intelligent people. I just wanted to put that out in the open and thank you very much.

**Chairman Duval** stated Mrs. Pilotte, whose husband is a State representative from south Manchester gave me a comment before the meeting. Do you want to come forward and give that comment? I know it is not education related, but you are here, you came out in the cold. Would you want to come forward and give the commission that comment?

**Ms. Gloria Pilotte**, 98 Lancaster Avenue, stated:

I came really to observe tonight and for those of you know who me know that is very difficult. Jerome called me up, even though I promised Mr. Girard I wasn't going to speak tonight, but I love to speak. Thank you all of you for what it is that you are doing. Know that as I was sitting there and watching some of you, I hope that you are being really attentive to people who are here. Some of you, I was really observing, and I wish I could have walked around and see if on your i-pads you are really following what is going on here. I'm not throwing any stones. I did not single, anyone out, Mr. Infantine.

**Commissioner Girard** stated you can read it on my blog, Gloria.

**Ms. Pilotte** stated we do trust all of you and that is why you are here. I had a chance to speak with a few people today and it is about elections. I am moderator in Ward 9 and I'm glad I had the opportunity to speak on that. Everything is important to the City and education especially. As far as elections, in my experience, when we have a primary the city charter says that if there is one position open and there are no more than two candidates who are running there is nothing on the ballot. You probably have come across this. Many people come in and there are just one or two positions to vote for and they ask did I come out for

this? Mainly I feel that it is not fair to the candidates who have come out and said in the primary that they want to run. They need to have their name know and be around and things like that. I think that we are also not being fair to the voters because there is no opportunity for a write-in. I'm not saying a write-in campaign, which could be, but if the names are not on the ballot no one can put in a write-in name. I don't think that is fair to the voters either. I think to be fair all the way around, as far as elections, if we reinstate that all names, no matter how many are running for the position, be at the primary also. I don't envy all the work that you are doing for education. It is a big thing. You have been to school, you have children, grandchildren and that is the primary thing; let's look at the children and what are we doing for them. Their future is in our hands. Thank you so very much.

**Chairman Duval** stated members of the public, thank you for coming out on such a cold night to voice your opinions. Each of us took good notes and we will continue to communicate as we continue to conduct our due diligence for this charter review process. We really appreciate you coming out tonight. Each and every one had very important comments to make. A number of you had really good perspectives on things that we haven't heard before so thank you very much. We appreciate it. I think Commissioner Infantine had an update for us with regard to an issue that he has been pursuing for us.

**Commissioner Infantine** stated I did speak to Secretary of State Gardner about the issue I brought up about trying to allow for a different mechanism to present the charter amendments on the ballot. As simply as he could put it together, he stated that the aldermen have the ability to make amendments to the charter. The Charter Commission's goal is to make a revision to the charter. The distinctions are, as the aldermen can either have petitions given to them or they can make the amendments themselves through public hearings, they are up on a line as

individual charter amendments. Ours is a revision; ours does have to be in a whole as one revision. We can, if we so choose, ask the alderman, if we had two or three different very simple administrative type exchanges to make, we could always ask the aldermen to take that up on their own. The ballot might possibly be confusing in that you would have two or three individuals ones and then a grouping that would be the charter changes as a whole. That is how it could appear on the ballot if we were to do it that way. We have to present it as a whole, which I think we all had an idea that we would have to anyway.

**Chairman Duval** stated commissioner, thank you for that clarification and thank you for your efforts in getting us that information. Before I forget, I do want to acknowledge Alderman Craig from Ward 1 who took the time to be in attendance tonight at tonight's public session.

**Commissioner D'Allesandro** stated I missed last week, but I did talk to Rick Lehmann yesterday when he came by my office. There seems to be ambivalence with regard to the tax cap as it relates to the schools. We have one lawyer who says that it does relate, we have another who says it doesn't relate and in my discussions with Mr. Lehmann he says that it is really silent on the issue. If indeed that is an area over which, at this point in time when they are talking about the budget, a great deal of, I don't want to say controversy, but ambivalence as to whether or not there is an application, would it be in our purview to find out exactly what the situation is because the school superintendent has presented a budget and that budget is what it is. I'm sure that his presentation of the budget is presented on his recommendation that he got from his legal counsel and that plays a role in our discussions. Are we ever going to find out exactly what the answer is to that query?

**Commissioner Ashooh** stated and the answer is, last week we actually asked that question to Attorney Lehmann and the fact of the matter is, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen who do the appropriation to the School District are bound by the tax cap so in essence, in working reality, the school department can ask for whatever they want, but they can only get what the BMA can allocate under the tax cap, at least he seemed to agree with that statement last week.

**Commissioner Lopez** stated I agree with that. I think the argument that the aldermen need is from the school department to override the tax cap. Ten aldermen can override the tax cap. There is nothing in the charter that says that the School Board who has the final authority can submit \$160 million, but at the same time, under 6.03 and the mayor presented his budget to give a number so it is up to the School Board and other people to convince the aldermen who have been elected under the tax cap to override the tax cap. You need ten. I think that was very clear.

**Commissioner Infantine** stated Senator D'Allesandro and I took up a piece of legislation the first week of the legislative session this year that had to do with an unforeseen circumstance with a school district that was involved in an issue with a tax cap and whether or not it was monies that they could use from previous years coming forward. Are you familiar with what I am discussing?

**Commissioner D'Allesandro** replied yes, absolutely. What the legislation said was that if you have layover money it should not be included as part of the tax cap. It was a lapse and the lapse could not be included and as a result of that, you could spend what the board had appropriated and not deduct from what they had appropriated, the lapse. It was a onetime situation.

**Commissioner Infantine** stated my question was to the board and to you, one of the presenters mentioned tonight that if the City were to receive a significant amount of federal money would we be able to receive that because we have a spending cap versus a tax cap. My question is, does the tax cap, as we have it here in this city, is it only for the monies that we raise from a taxpayer versus money that we receive from the federal or state government?

**Commissioner D'Allesandro** stated I'm not a lawyer, I'm not an expert on constitutional law, but I could say this from my experience and from what Commissioner Lopez just iterated, that if that money came in like federal money which basically comes through the Department of Education, that wouldn't be included because it wasn't appropriated by this authority, it wasn't appropriated by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and it wasn't brought in by the City. I think that has always been the case. I served on the School Board for a decade and at that time we used to get money from the federal government based upon our ability to go after Medicaid reimbursement and that never came through the City; that was a direct refund to the School Board. I think grants and things of that nature have always come through and haven't been part of the budget process. I think you can still get that. I would hope that that would be the case because it is un-appropriated money and it doesn't come from the tax base. That is how I would read that. When are we going to discuss the comments that these constituents have given to us? Is there going to be a time when we have an open discussion?

**Chairman Duval** replied yes, absolutely. There will be additional work sessions, commissioner, starting two weeks from tonight.

**Commissioner Infantine** asked do you have an idea, if you could present to us tonight, what you expect the agenda, not specific, but general, for the next two or three weeks?

**Chairman Duval** replied next week I am proposing that we are not in work session. I am proposing that we convene two weeks from tonight for the specific purpose of going over and reviewing the information we collected during the work session, any information we get subsequent to last week's session with Attorney Lehmann to allow him time to get some information together for us and then the information collected tonight as well. I would be asking the commissioners, between now and that time, to perhaps think of the obvious suggestions that have been made and any that you have put together over the past several weeks while we have been working on the topic of education and we have a discussion and exchange of dialogue that evening to try to highlight some of the key elements of possible changes, not necessarily to support or anything else, but possible changes that we might take action on more formally in the weeks and months to come. That will be the agenda for the next meeting.

**Commissioner Martin** asked is it necessary for us to approve the minutes from our previous meeting in order for Attorney Lehmann to have that document to do his work?

**Clerk Leahy** replied they are in draft form right now and he does have a copy of the draft.

**Commissioner Lopez** stated a very important issue and I hope we can get a vote of the commission tonight to ask Mr. Sanders to join us in the following week to explain the spending cap, the revenue. It is very complicated to a degree and I think we need to have him here and the city solicitor so that we completely

understand as a body what the tax cap is all about. I know the aldermen deal with it and the explanations and some of the things you can't do and some of the things you can do because there is bond counsel involved and everything else. I'm going to make a motion that we invite the city finance director to one of our meetings and have the chairman communicate in writing to the city finance officer to explain the spending cap as he knows it as the chief finance officer.

*Commissioner Lopez moved to invite the City Finance Officer and the City Solicitor to the next Charter Commission work session. The motion was duly seconded by Commissioner Infantine.*

**Chairman Duval** stated my only comment would be that that was the whole objective with trying to highlight the essential topics that we were going to try to tackle as part of our due diligence process and thinking about possible charter revisions. We don't want to be rushed in conducting that due diligence, especially with regard to education. I think that if it is important to the commission that we hear testimony from Attorney Clark and Mr. Sanders then I think we should do that and make that part of our due diligence as well. If we have to have another work session beyond two weeks from tonight with regard to the topic of education and any related issues then we will do that as well. We will continue to get it until we get it right.

*Chairman Duval called for a vote on the motion to invite the City Finance Officer and the City Solicitor to the next Charter Commission work session. There being none opposed the motion carried.*

**Chairman Duval** stated will the clerk please extend an immediate invitation to Attorney Clark and Mr. Sanders to be with us at the next work session of the Charter Commission, starting at 6:00 p.m.

**Clerk Leahy** replied yes.

**Chairman Duval** stated we will try to get them done first and then if we have time we will continue to have our work session as I prescribed earlier.

**Commissioner Girard** stated just curious why we are skipping a week, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman Duval** responded decision of the chairman. I just think generally we have been meeting consecutively for a number of weeks now and I think it would be good to take a breather, schedule the two gentlemen and give them time to plan their calendars accordingly and come back and begin anew.

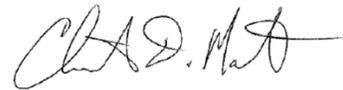
*On motion of Commissioner Girard, duly seconded by Commissioner Martin, it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.*

**Commissioner D'Allesandro** stated I just have a comment. We are all reading the newspaper and what we are seeing, I don't want to say a raid on our student population, but there is a migration of our student population in a variety of areas and there had to be a reason for that. I think that has to be the topic of conversation because we have heard over and over again from the constituency that comes and speaks to us and out on the street that education is vital. It is a very significant aspect in the perception of our city and how people look at our city, how people think about moving to our city and yet, what we are seeing is students from the surrounding areas who have been with us for extended periods of time, leaving the district. It is not only happening to Manchester, it is happening to other districts where we are seeing a competitive nature for students,

something that I will try to find out why, but I think we need to recognize the fact that that is happening and that causes some problems because you get an adequacy grant based on your population and that is quite significant. We also know that our student population is going down in this state. We are seeing a diminishing number of students within the system. Those who are moving to bring more students into their system may be doing it for more than just academic reasons, but there are financial reasons associated with that. We ought to be conscious of that. Again, I want to emphasize how important education is to the economic viability of our community and if we want to sustain that and grow we are going to have to address that. That is a real situation that we are confronting as we speak.

*There being no further business, on motion of **Commissioner Girard**, duly seconded by **Commissioner Ashooh**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.



*Secretary of the Commission*