

SPECIAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

September 4, 2001

5:30 PM

Chairman Rivard called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Robert Rivard, William Gardner, Fernand Gelinas

Chairman Rivard addressed Item 3 of the agenda:

Proposed amendment to the Manchester City Charter:

The proposed amendment to provide for the adjustments to the boundaries for the City's 12 wards is summarized/explained below, and the summary/explanation is followed by the actual text of Charter Section 5.33 Wards as proposed.

SHALL THE CITY OF MANCHESTER APPROVE THE AMENDMENT OF THE CHARTER TO PROVIDE FOR THE ADJUSTMENT OF THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CITY'S 12 WARDS AS SUMMARIZED AND EXPLAINED BELOW?

SUMMARY/EXPLANATION: Section 5.33 of the City Charter describes the perimeter boundaries of the 12 wards that make up the City of Manchester. The proposed changes adjust these ward boundary lines to account for population changes identified in the 2000 census and in accordance with the principle of "one man/one vote". In addition to adjusting the ward boundaries, the proposed amendment provides that a list of all roads and streets contained in each ward shall be kept current and on file in the Office of the City Clerk. If you favor this proposal, vote YES; if you do not favor it, vote NO.

Tenure of Office. This Charter amendment shall take effect June 1, 2002. When this Charter amendment takes effect the incumbents of all elected officials shall continue to hold the same until the expiration of their respective terms.

Chairman Rivard stated a lot of discussion, particularly as it pertained to Ward 6...one of the oversights that we had found and that was brought to our attention at the 8/30/01 meeting was the relocating of Representative Lionel Johnson. Mr. Buckley eloquently addressed that but we already found it and we thank you for bringing it to our attention. We made the appropriate adjustment to move him

back into Ward 4 by moving one street around and 20 people. The corrections have been made and the lines have been redrawn. This isn't a public hearing as we all know but I guess the members of this Committee will open the meeting up for discussion and recognize probably two or three individuals between now and 6 PM because 6 PM is the drop dead time. We don't have a list for people to sign up to speak but I will now recognize Kathy Sullivan.

Ms. Kathy Sullivan, 192 South Mammoth Road, Manchester stated:

I also have with me tonight Representative Ben Baroody of Ward 6. We kind of picked up on something that Secretary of State Gardner said at the last meeting, which was did anyone have any suggestions to make some changes to the Ward 6 boundary to take in to account the concerns that a number of us had with respect to the neighborhood that was being broken up with the ward lines. Over the weekend, Donna Soucy, who could not be with us this evening and Ben Baroody with some assistance from Alderman Pinard, worked on a revised plan that I would like to show you. Mr. Baroody has these sheets with the calculations. In doing this we recognized how difficult it is for all of you to do this but to make a long story short what we tried to do was keep in tact that Ward 6 area that is the traditional Ward 6. In doing that, we recognized that we had to take out some residences in Ward 6 so there is one small area here, which runs up to Page Street, which would go from Ward 6 to Ward 4. Then we took out a portion of this Bodwell Road area, which would go into Ward 8. In order to take that into account, we then had to take a portion of Ward 8 and relocate that into Ward 9 and a small portion into Ward 7. Again, trying to keep in mind the neighborhood concept and also common interests. It struck us that in Ward 8 you have two outlying areas. The portion on Bodwell Road that we are proposing to go into Ward 8 and then the portion that extends into Londonderry/Litchfield. Those are sort of outlying areas and suburban with many common interests in terms of the outlying areas where there has been a lot of development and perhaps need some City services that aren't out there at this point. That is somewhat different from the section that we propose moving from Ward 8 into Ward 9. Again, sort of making this block area. I believe that Goffs Falls Road is used as a boundary. We then moved from Ward 8 a section that runs to Seaward Street recognizing that we don't want to move the Chair out of Ward 8. We like you in Ward 8. Actually, this is an interesting area because there is sort of a...when you drive up Cilley Road and down Jewett to Seaward that is a neighborhood. There is an argument that could be made that this entire area should be in the same ward but given the traditional lines we didn't want to break that up and take out some of those older residences from Ward 8. Also, we have this line that has an addition I believe to

Ward 9. Again, what we tried to do is not break up neighborhoods and not take out anybody who is an elected official by keeping this section of Ward 8 where Alderman Vaillancourt resides in Ward 8 and at the same time recognizing that these two outlying areas would actually have a lot in common.

Mr. Baroody stated one thing with Ward 6 is that Weston School right now is the only public building that we have. Area wise right now Ward 6 is probably the biggest area in the City and we would be held without a public building to hold any kind of meetings or anything. That was my concern. This was a whole neighborhood. We did have to break this up. It was broken up last time. What we tried to keep in tact and I don't know if anyone can tell but this is a neighborhood and right in here where the other proposal was there was a ward line that was going right between two single family residential homes. I guess on the City map there is a paper street there but if you went up it is all lawn and it looks like two normal houses. We broke that right in the middle of the street so we wanted to preserve that neighborhood as much as we could. What we did on the big portion we gave away...this is definitely one distinct neighborhood on Bodwell Road and they have their own issues. Ward 8 comes up to it now. What we did was try to leave the lines as clean as we could. I think most of the changes we made down in Wards 1, 3, 2 and lower 4, 7 and 5 are pretty much the proposed changes on the other plan. Our numbers kind of work out pretty well.

Ms. Sullivan stated I understand that you have to present this to the Aldermen tonight and you only have a few minutes so what we would request is that the Committee consider presenting this to the Board with the recommendation or if you feel that you don't have enough of an opportunity to review it that you present them both to the Board of Aldermen for their consideration and let the Aldermen decide. As I said we tried to recognize again keeping the neighborhoods together and keeping the elected officials in the wards in which they are from. To tell you the truth I haven't had the time because I was away this weekend to look and see what the impact is in terms of party registration, etc. This is strictly about the neighborhoods and keeping together some traditional lines and not having to do with trying to rig this one way or the other for either party. We are just trying to be fair. We would appreciate it if the Committee presented both plans to the Board if you don't feel that you could recommend this one at this time.

Mr. Gardner stated at the first meeting we sort of laid down some criteria and goals. The two main points that we discussed were we didn't want to take anyone who had been elected out of their existing ward and we were going to do whatever we could to maintain that. Secondly, we were going to displace as few folks as

possible so the number of people who would have to go to a new polling place to vote would be as few as possible. I was the most receptive to looking at the problem in Ward 6 and I mentioned that at the last meeting. In the particular plan that you have you are displacing an Alderman aren't you?

Ms. Sullivan replied no we left the tail end of Manchester which goes into Litchfield and Londonderry in Ward 8 because we recognized that Alderman Vaillancourt lives in that section of Manchester.

Mr. Gardner asked what is that line that goes down the street.

Ms. Sullivan replied it ends here and perhaps I should have drawn it all the way down to this line but the street ends.

Mr. Gardner stated the red line ends at the end of the street. It doesn't go all the way to the border.

Ms. Sullivan replied I can draw it to the end of the border. When I was drawing it, I just drew it to the end of the street.

Mr. Gardner asked so it goes to the river or is the street a dead end.

Ms. Sullivan answered it appears to be a dead end. If you would like, I could bring it down.

Mr. Gardner asked how would you bring it down. What would be the physical boundary to bring it down?

Ms. Sullivan answered the physical boundary would be the river.

Mr. Gardner stated the river would be the end. From the end of the street to the river, what would be the boundary?

Ms. Sullivan replied I guess it would just be an extension of the street if the street were to be extended, similar to the old Ward 6 line where there was an extension over Benjamin Street and Benjamin Streets ends and doesn't extend over to another street. That is a dead end too, but there was a line extending Benjamin Street where there is no physical street. I think that is a similar thing. We could just drop it down directly falling parallel to the street line.

Mr. Gardner asked is there any physical way to identify the line.

Ms. Sullivan answered what I would suggest is that the physical way of describing it would be extending Caldwell Street west to the river. Your physical point would be the river. We recognize that it is not a perfect science, but the street does end. If you are looking for a physical marker I think we would just say extending from the end of Caldwell Street due west to the river and that is your physical line. Do you see a problem with that?

Mr. Gardner stated well we had a state law passed since the last redistricting that said that unless it was impossible to fix the boundary somehow that you had to use...it had to be something physical. It had to be a street or a river. It couldn't just be an imaginary line connecting one spot to another.

Ms. Sullivan asked isn't that what you were doing with Benjamin Street. Benjamin Street didn't cut all the way through.

Mr. Gardner answered there may have been a reason. I don't know.

Ms. Sullivan asked if we take out that situation with Benjamin Street or actually what you could do is use Caldwell Street and extend down Caldwell Street along the southerly border. As I said, I think the easiest thing would be extending it as a straight line from the end of Caldwell Street to the river. There is nothing there at this point. I don't know if Caldwell Street can be extended.

Mr. Gardner asked is there a cul-de-sac at the end or do you know.

Ms. Sullivan answered answered it looks like a dead end. It doesn't look like a cul-de-sac. There are two others. There is another street that runs parallel that does end in a cul-de-sac and since they have a couple of those showing cul-de-sacs I am assuming that Caldwell doesn't have one or they would show it.

Chairman Rivard stated if we were to consider that seriously, Highway probably has ways of identifying it. That is another issue. The word neighborhood seems to be getting a lot of attention here and deservedly so because everywhere you go in Manchester there is a neighborhood. I am sensitive to the word neighborhood. I live in a neighborhood as you do and everybody in this Chamber does. When you have too much and you have to give to somebody who has too little, then you have to disturb the neighborhood. When we have a goal of the least disruptions as possible and we tried to distribute it as evenly as possible and now we are talking about some big plugs here. I am not personally prepared to support this change because no matter what happens, a neighborhood is going to be impacted. Somebody's neighborhood is going to be impacted. The least amount of neighborhoods we can impact I believe the better this thing is going to work.

There is no magic formula here. I don't quote Alderman Vaillancourt very often but he said that if you had a thousand different people they would come up with a thousand different ways to do it. Actually he is correct. There is no perfect formula here. You folks have an idea that you think works. I think there are some big plugs in certain places that could be a little disruptive. We took some that you people thought were disruptive and affected the neighborhood. I think we all agree that no matter what happens a neighborhood or a few neighborhoods are going to be impacted. There is no way to do this without impacting a neighborhood.

Alderman Pinard stated the only thing is I go back to what Representative Baroody said. I think it is a shame that you are taking away Weston School from Ward 6. How many wards are there in the City that don't have a school? I think that if you are going to make any changes that is where you should start looking. It would be a shame to take away Weston School that has been in Ward 6 forever.

Mr. Gardner stated I agree with that. If you are going to have a ward meeting there should be a public building somewhere in the ward. I just don't know how...

Alderman Pinard interjected can I just mention that I have held many meetings with the Department of Transportation at Weston School over the past four years and we are having another one in two weeks. Again, by taking that school away you are taking a big chunk and I know you are breaking up five or six neighborhoods but to take away the school I think you better look that over again.

Mr. Gardner asked, Ben, if we just focused on getting Weston School back into Ward 6 how many people...as you were working over the weekend you must have come up with some figure of how many people would have to be shifted.

Mr. Baroody answered on the Bridge Street/Hanover Street block and I don't have the number with me but there were about 500 people in the block that the original plan called to take out. What we did was we kept about half of your proposal and we are displacing about 200 people, which brings the line down Page Street, which is the only street that cuts from Bridge to Hanover.

Mr. Gardner asked if you are going to add 200 to Ward 6 by bringing Weston School in, then is there any ward that borders 6...I mean can you make an even swap. That is the point. If you can do that very simply then maybe we would be receptive to that.

Mr. Baroody answered the problem was the first time I saw the plan was Thursday night. Ward 6 had to displace 1,600 people. We took the whole thing on at once. A big hunk was the one neighborhood, which is the growth neighborhood at the end of the ward. The numbers popped out at us and we said okay we will do that and then we had another 200 or something people, which kind of fit right into the Page Street area. This has been a lot of work. I know what you guys went through.

Mr. Billy Dodd brought in his map. It is plain and simple. Your population overages in Ward 6 as in Ward 12. Ward 7 is under. You do your proposal as planned for Ward 7 and come here and that gives them 800 people. Ward 5 is fine the way it sits right now. Ward 4 is fine the way it sits right now and you keep a public building in Ward 6. You come over here to Ward 12 where there is an overage of population and you bring Ward 11 over this way and take whatever you need to get Ward 11 up and you bring Ward 10 over this way and run them over this way. You make three changes and you are done.

Chairman Rivard stated the West Side is fine.

You make three changes and you get it as equal as you can.

Steve Johnson, 5 Brennan Street, Manchester stated:

The lines that were proposed by you people are nothing more than extensions of the lines that exist now. You are not breaking up neighborhoods. You should leave the proposal the way it is and let's get this thing over and done with.

After some discussion and review, on motion of Fern Gelinas, duly seconded by William Gardner, it was voted to approve the redistricting as amended to include the Weston School block in Ward 6.

There being no further business, on motion of Fern Gelinas, duly seconded by William Gardner, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee