

**MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING AND SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
TOWN OF MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT
September 5, 2006 – 7:00 P.M.
Lincoln Center Hearing Room**

PRESENT: Chairman Howroyd, Vice-Chairman O'Neill, Secretary Zingler, Directors Hachey, Peak, Pelletier, Spadaccini, and Topping (7:10 p.m.).

ALSO: General Manager Shanley and Assistant Town Attorney O'Neil

ABSENT: Director Sheridan

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Chairman Howroyd.

Chairman Howroyd convened the public hearing and stated that the \$8.75 million Manchester Parkade purchase petition and related resolution which are the subject of this public hearing are available to the public and may be obtained from the Town Clerk.

Chairman Howroyd explained that under the Charter the petition is entitled to a referendum vote if the petition request is not approved, and the related resolution rejects the request and schedules the referendum.

Secretary Zingler moved, and the motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman O'Neill, to read the title of the following proposed petition related to the resolution in its entirety and to waive the reading of the remainder of the resolution, incorporating its full text into the minutes of this meeting. The full text is as follows:

**Resolution Regarding the Petition Proposal to
Appropriate \$8.75 Million to Purchase the
Manchester Parkade Property and Issue \$8.75 Million
of Bonds of the Town to Finance Such Project**

Whereas the Board of Directors have received a petition certified by the Town Clerk as meeting the requirements of the Charter;

Whereas the petition requests the Board of Directors to appropriate \$8.75 million to purchase property known as the Manchester Parkade, and to finance such acquisition with the issuance of General Obligation Bonds of the Town;

Whereas the proposal is not in the financial or other best interests of the Town;

Whereas the Town Attorney has provided the Board with a statement of a ballot label question for submittal to the electorate for approval or disapproval of the Proposal at referendum as is required by the Town Charter in the event the Board does not take the action requested by the petition;

Whereas holding the petition proposal referendum in conjunction with the State Election will save tax dollars and provide for the widest possible citizen participation on the vote on the Proposal;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS;

Section 1. The Board rejects the proposal as not being in the best financial or other interests of the Town of Manchester.

Section 2. The Proposal shall be submitted to the electors of the Town of Manchester for approval or disapproval at a referendum vote in conjunction with the general election to be held on Tuesday, November 7, 2006 between the hours of 6:00 A.M. and 8:00 P.M. (EST).

The warning of said referendum shall state the question to be voted upon, and the ballot label shall read as follows:

“Shall the Town appropriate \$8,750,000 to acquire the real property located at 308, 324, 330, 334, and 340 Broad Street in the Town of Manchester, consisting of approximately 19.22 acres of a portion of what is commonly known as the Manchester Parkade, for future town or commercial development purposes, and for administrative expenses, to be financed by the issuance of general obligation bonds and notes of the Town? Yes ____ No ____

The warning shall also state that the full text of the aforesaid question is on file, open to public inspection, in the office of the Town Clerk, that the vote on the aforesaid question is taken under the authority of Chapter III Section 3-10 of the Charter of the Town of Manchester and Chapter 152 of the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut, as amended, that absentee ballots will be available as provided by law in the office of the Town Clerk, and such other or additional language as is appropriate or required by law as determined by the Town Clerk in consultation with counsel.

Section 3. The Town Clerk is hereby authorized to prepare pursuant to Section 9-369b of the Connecticut General Statutes explanatory text for the foregoing question.

The ayes and nays were as follows:

AYES

**Chairman Howroyd
Vice-Chairman O'Neill
Secretary Zingler
Director Hachey
Director Peak
Director Pelletier
Director Spadaccini**

NAYS

ABSENT

**Director Sheridan
Director Topping**

The motion passes.

Chairman Howroyd noted that Director Sheridan had communicated with him earlier in the day and indicated that he will abstain from participation in this item and therefore was not present at the meeting.

Chairman Howroyd opened the floor for public comment at this time.

Marge Nordeen, 48 Delmont Street, gave an overview of possible scenarios should the referendum pass or fail. Ms. Nordeen does not think Manchester needs another big box store and feels a store of that size will not survive in the Parkade location. Her committee's proposal will provide a center for the Town consisting of a new library, adult pool and exercise center, mid-size convention center, an office retail building, and perhaps even a bowling alley and other opportunities. Currently more than 60% of tax revenues are committed to the school budget and renovations and she feels there are other needs in Manchester that require attention.

Craig Nordeen, 48 Delmont Street, agrees with putting this issue on the November ballot because there will be a larger voter turnout and no additional expenses will be incurred. Mr. Nordeen questioned whether this area has enough customers to support another big box store. He feels that a big box store at the Parkade location will detract from the village charm that Manchester is known for. Mr. Nordeen described a state of the art library and provided a drawing of his concept for a new library in keeping with Manchester's local architecture.

David Carlson, 40 Olcott Drive, feels Manchester is losing its identity and appeal. He thinks Manchester should purchase the Parkade property and turn it into a family-friendly mecca. Purchasing this property would be a way for Manchester to control what businesses come into town. He sees this as having a mixed use of public, municipal, and retail space. Although it would come off the tax rolls, it would provide something beneficial to all.

Bob Samuelson, 108 Hemlock Street, stated that he respects the efforts of Ms. Nordeen and the committee, however he disagrees with the idea of this purchase due to the Town's inability to pay for it. Mr. Samuelson spoke about the Town's per capita debt, the location of the Parkade

property, and the quality of the site. Mr. Samuelson thinks the Town should take care of what it currently has instead of purchasing more property it cannot afford to take care of.

Joe Bernard, 28 Teresa Road, asked if the Parkade is a danger to anyone. There is a brook behind his house that he feels is a danger. Mr. Bernard would like to see the Town fix what it currently has without purchasing more property.

Emma Swetzes, 45 Waddell Heights Drive, is against the Town purchasing the Parkade property. She would like to see something built there, but even if the Town does purchase the property, the \$8.75 million does not include anything being built on the site. Ms. Swetzes pointed out that Manchester had two bowling alleys in Town, but both went out of business. She doesn't see the point in building another one at the Parkade.

Terry Werkhoven, 88 Santina Drive, concurs with Bob Samuelson. The Parkade property is classified as wetlands. Mr. Werkhoven thinks it would nice to have many of the recreation opportunities mentioned if we had the money to do so. He is concerned about the taxpayers of Manchester, especially with revaluation coming up. He detailed some bonds the Town is currently making payments on. Mr. Werkhoven would like to see this issue put on the November ballot, not on its own special ballot.

Maria Yates, 59 Glenwood Street, feels this issue should be resolved on the November ballot. She would like to see something go in at the Parkade location.

Ed Pilkington, 211 Homestead Street, would like the Board of Directors to reject this proposal and the voters to reject this on the ballot. The Parkade is a terrible location for a community center. The upgrading of Broad Street should attract interest by private retail establishments.

Milt Perlman, 3 Sanford Road, stated that he didn't think this resolution resembles the original petition. Mr. Perlman does not think there is anything wrong with commercial businesses at the Parkade. A private person should not have the right to say how much the Town should pay for property.

Bill Ogden, 137 Branford Street, commended Ms. Nordeen for all the time and effort she put into trying to spend his money. He asked what building on the property would cost. Currently the Parkade's property owner pays \$200,000 in taxes a year and is not behind. Mr. Ogden thinks people should look at the whole picture before making any decisions.

Joan Weatherford, 48 High Street, mentioned the concerns some people have about this location being over the old landfill. There are no sinkholes. The Town's debt level keeps going up because of things the Town already wrote referendums on. Town properties are getting run-down. There are five pools in Manchester and the last one cost \$1.5 million. She suggested turning one of the pools into a rental property.

Martin Prokipchak, 54 Adelaide Road, commended the Nordeens for their proposal. He does not think this is the right proposal for this area at this time. Mr. Prokipchak asked about

operational expenses in the future. He stated that his taxes have gone up 47% since 1999 and his fuel oil bill has increased 86% since 1999. With people on fixed incomes facing these same issues, why add to their tax burden?

There being no further public comment the hearing on this item was closed.

Director Topping moved, and the motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman O'Neill, that the resolution entitled:

“RESOLUTION REGARDING THE PETITION PROPOSAL TO APPROPRIATE \$8.75 MILLION TO PURCHASE THE MANCHESTER PARKADE PROPERTY AND ISSUE \$8.75 MILLION OF BONDS OF THE TOWN TO FINANCE SUCH PROJECT” be adopted.

There was some discussion among the Board of Directors clarifying the procedure involved in this vote.

Director Topping thinks the Board should move forward on this issue. Before this is put on the November ballot, he would like to see some information available such as the assessed value of the property, the current market value, the appraised value, the last purchase price, and the environmental suitability. Director Topping would like to know the costs of various improvements and how they will affect tax bills.

Director Peak stated that this is the first full year without a lease at the Parkade property. Since this is the first year the owners are actually losing money, he thinks they will be more motivated to sell. Director Peak opposes the referendum because of the expenses it will incur for the Town.

Vice-Chairman O'Neill favors putting this issue on the November ballot. There are many other uses for the \$30,000 saved by doing this. Ms. O'Neill asked if the Town would have to obtain the property through eminent domain should the referendum pass.

Assistant Attorney O'Neil answered that the referendum does not authorize taking of the property through eminent domain. He stated that if the referendum passes, the Town would be required to put forth its best efforts and negotiate in good faith for the property.

Director Pelletier stated that the referendum brought forth does not address the complexities of purchasing this property. If the Town purchases this property, it will lose \$200,000 in tax income each year. If the property is purchased and developed, the tax income could potentially be raised. Director Pelletier stated that if the Town purchases this property there are no realistic building plans and no projected costs available. She is concerned that people will not know what they are voting for.

Secretary Zingler has spoken with many people regarding this issue and has found that many people are concerned about revaluation. Secretary Zingler does not think this is a prudent decision and supports bringing it to referendum. Secretary Zingler explained the manner in

which he was approached on two different occasions to sign the petition and neither time was it explained sufficiently.

Director Spadaccini supports the resolution and will vote against the bond referendum. He commends the group for all its work, but does not believe this expenditure would be in the best interest of the Town. With the cost of purchasing this property, as well as associated costs of development, the budget will increase and make financial problems worse. Instead, commercial use may generate larger tax revenue. A private buyer is about to redevelop this property. Private enterprise is superior to government enterprise. Director Spadaccini does not support the proposed development of this property.

Chairman Howroyd commended the Nordeens and Mr. Carlson for their efforts, however he opposes this project and does not feel it is in the best interests of the Town of Manchester. He thinks most people would like to see redevelopment of the Parkade property but does not think the Town should bail out private businesses. The ideas of a library and community center are wonderful ideas but the Town's current priorities are improvements to the eight remaining elementary schools. The Town needs to balance wants vs. needs and also consider the community's ability to pay.

Upon roll call vote the ayes and nays were as follows:

AYES

NAYS

ABSENT

**Chairman Howroyd
Vice-Chairman O'Neill
Secretary Zingler
Director Hachey
Director Peak
Director Pelletier
Director Spadaccini
Director Topping**

Director Sheridan

Chairman Howroyd declared the resolution adopted.

EXECUTIVE SESSION.

The Board went into Executive Session at 8:55 p.m. and returned at 9:40 p.m. for discussion of land acquisitions. No votes were taken.

Director Hachey moved and Director Peak seconded the motion to go into Executive Session.

Eight Voted in Favor

ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting was adjourned until the September 12, 2006 Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors.

Secretary Zingler moved and Vice-Chairman O'Neill seconded the motion.

Eight Voted in Favor

Adjournment: 9:40 p.m.

APPROVE:

ATTEST:

Secretary, Manchester Board of Directors

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