

**MINUTES**  
**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**MARCH 15, 2017 – 7:00 p.m.**  
**WADDELL SCHOOL**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Moran, Directors Devanney, Eckbreth, Galligan, Gates, Irish, and Jones

**ABSENT:** Deputy Mayor Hackett and Secretary Kissmann

**ALSO:** General Manager Shanley and Brian Wolverton, Budget & Research Officer.

### **1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

**Mayor Moran** called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mayor Moran.

### **2. BUDGET PRESENTATION**

**Mayor Moran** updated the public on where the Board is in the budget process. He indicated we have started the budget workshops with the departments, including the Board of Education, with a second workshop planned for the Board of Education. The Superintendent of Schools has a recommended budget that was approved by the Board of Education, and presented to the General Manager. The General Manager's recommended budget will be presented this evening. He explained that this is a 6-8 week process and clarified that this is the first the Board has seen of the possible reductions to the Board of Education. He then introduced General Manager Shanley.

**General Manager Shanley** explained that there is a lack of certainty about what the state is going to do, and that the town's proposed budget is based on what the Governor has indicated his priorities are to the legislature. Among his priorities is to move 1/3 of the cost of teachers' pensions, currently paid by the state, to the local governments. For Manchester, that would mean \$5.2M. He has also proposed special education funding of \$9.2M. He has reduced the ECS funding, which is the aid to education funding, by \$1.5M. He has proposed to keep motor vehicle tax cap grant, currently 37 mills, at 32 mills next year. The governor's proposal adds approximately \$1.15M to revenue for the Town of Manchester, but it is unlikely to be approved by the legislature as proposed by the governor. We have based the proposed budget on the assumption that we will lose \$0.5M from the state.

The recommended budget has an expense increase of 1.56%. The mill rate increase would be 1.92%. The operating budget for the town shows an increase of only .10%. Debt service goes up considerably by 4.16% with 90% of the increase directly related to the schools. Town government shows an increase of 0.75%. The annual capital expense (amount of money we contribute to improve parks, sidewalks, building improvements, etc.) would be reduced. The recommended budget assumes \$1.7M reduction in state aid; \$1.2M attributed to current year reductions plus \$500k in additional reductions.

The Board of Education budget shows an increase of 2.1%. The recommended education budget of \$113 M includes the Alliance Grant funding of \$3.8M, expected as direct payment to the Board of Education. The governor's proposal includes the Alliance Grant but we are unsure what the legislature will do. We do anticipate Alliance capital funding as well.

The General Fund includes a mill rate increase of 1.92%. Real estate taxes and motor vehicle taxes will be different now. Motor vehicle taxes will be reduced by 8.18%. New tax rates generate new revenue of \$1.3M.

The Fire Fund shows an increase of 2.5% with a proposed mill rate of 4.90. This includes the fourth year of apparatus set aside per Board policy.

Water Fund operations will decrease by 2.4%. Operations increase by 0.4%. Non-operating expenses decrease by 6.5% with a decrease in debt service of \$273k. There is a proposed rate increase of 1.5%.

The Sewer Fund shows an increase of 2.6%. Operations increase by 8.2% based on review of actual utility and maintenance costs following plant reconstruction and additional chemicals to meet new operating standards. There is a proposed rate increase of 2.0%

The Sanitation Fund pays for trash and recycling, including bulky pickup and leaf pickup. Operating expenses increase by 0.8% with a total expenditure increase of 0.6%. Tip fee revenues help to operate the landfill.

### 3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

**Laura Webb, 99 Tanner Street**, thanked Brian Wolverton, Budget and Research Officer, for his time in preparing the budget and for answering her many questions. In her opinion, Manchester provides good services for the taxes she pays. She supports the overall budget but has four concerns including the town's growing unassigned fund balance, the increasing reliance on bond issues, increase in free/reduced lunch percentage and that the Town of Manchester is the largest employer in town. She would recommend looking at moving some of the pieces within the budget.

**Tracy Maio, 57 Horton Road**, said she appreciates all the work that went into preparing the budget not knowing how much the Town of Manchester would be receiving. The two things in town that she does not want to ever see cut are emergency services and education. She emphasized that the BOE has already made cuts including cuts to SAAM and pointed out that the consolidation of schools will cut overhead costs.

**Dan Whelton, 147 Walek Farms Road**, stated he is opposed to any cuts to the education budget. He explained that one of the biggest considerations for where to live is the quality of the school system. He stated that one of the biggest contributors to a stable real estate market is a strong school system. He feels that in order to be fiscally responsible, we need to invest in our

school system. Cutting the education budget doesn't give us good schools. Please prioritize the BOE budget and give the BOE the money they need to take care of our children.

**Scott Hughes, 86 School Street**, read a statement from Rebecca Thereault, previous PTA President, Co-Chair of The Special Education PTA, and mother of two. A cut to the BOE budget is anything but fiscally responsible. Often first to go with staffing cuts are the loss of the paraprofessionals who support our most needy students. We must do what is responsible but must do what is reasonable to protect our children.

**Christina Rossetti, 139 Downey Drive**, said the proposed BOE cuts would negatively affect her children. The paraprofessionals in the school system provide the extra support needed by many of the children in our schools. The proposed budget cuts would adversely affect the children in our schools.

**Ingrid Carangelo, 39 Whitney Road**, indicated she is here to speak for the students who cannot speak for themselves. She speaks for the gifted students who are bored because there are no gifted programs to challenge them. Class sizes are too large; there are not enough paraprofessionals or tutors. Cutting the budget would cut these services even more.

**Rachel Besselsen, 371 West Middle Turnpike**, pleaded please do not cut funding to the schools. She believes the Manchester public schools are struggling and sees students who are not receiving the support they need. The things that are most appealing to the students are the very things that are in danger of being cut under the proposed budget.

**William Farley, 21 Farmington Street**, feels public education is the bedrock of our society. Investing in education is an absolute necessity. Manchester's property values will languish unless we build a strong education system. He asked the BOD to continue to make education a priority.

**Denise Curran, 65 West Middle Tpke**, is concerned with the proposed BOE budget cuts. A reduction would negatively impact school and family partnerships. Class sizes are important; the smaller the classes are, the better the children learn. To increase class sizes would be detrimental to our students. She would like to see budget cuts moved to another place.

**Bill Stevenson, 38 Hilltop Drive**, questioned why the Police Chief was appointed for another three years. He stated that the town could save money by having someone new hired for that position.

**Mayor Moran** clarified that we are not discussing personnel matters this evening but thanked him for his comment.

**Amy Newman, 294 Green Road**, stated she and her family moved back to Manchester 3 years ago. She stated that in those 3 years, her autistic son has gone from being unable to read to being at almost grade level, all thanks to the paraprofessionals, social workers and special education workers in the school. Her son's success story is a testament to the dedication of these professionals. Cutting the budget would affect these positions.

**Rhiannon Crawford, 16 Jacqueline Drive**, stated that as budgets have gotten tighter and tighter the PTA's have stepped in to pick up the slack. Keeney school teachers were asked for a wish list of items they'd like to see in their classrooms; the list consisted of basic supplies that should be readily available to teachers. The cuts you are proposing cannot be remediated by fundraising.

**Stacey Orłowski, 60 Tanner Street**, indicated the schools are in a budget freeze and teachers cannot ask for the things they need to help the students flourish. The Bowers PTA is fundraising to replace the playground equipment. Our students deserve more.

**Lilliana Polley, 230 Tonica Spring Trail**, thanked the BOD and the General Manager for putting the budget together. She does not want to see a tax increase or cuts to the BOE budget. In order to improve the school system in Manchester, we need to support the BOE's proposed budget. Property taxes are already too high. We need to look into other options.

**Sara Bileya, 10 Livingston Way**, remarked that people are leaving Manchester. She believes in public education but asked how she could stay here if she doesn't think her children will get an appropriate education here. Manchester is losing people because of their idea of Manchester education. Please don't take money away from the education budget.

**Mayor Moran** thanked everyone for their comments, and for their passion for our community and our school system. He stated he believes in our community. He explained that all BOD members can be reached through email by first initial last name @manchesterct.gov to answer questions. He stated there is another budget workshop with the BOE on March 28<sup>th</sup>. We will take all the information in and do what we can to make this a community that we can all enjoy living in and have our children go to school in. He also thanked Mr. Shanley for his presentation, Brian Wolverton and other department heads and the Board members for coming. He stated the meeting would be broadcast on Channel 16.

#### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

**Director Gates moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. and Director Galligan seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the meeting was adjourned.**

**II**

**APPROVE:**

**ATTEST:**

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**Secretary, Manchester Board of Directors**