

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MARCH 2, 2021 - 7:00 P.M.
LINCOLN CENTER HEARING ROOM**

ONE MEETING AGENDA

PRESENT: Mayor Moran, Directors Conyers and Dougan and Deputy General Manager Stephanou.

REMOTE: Deputy Mayor Jones, Directors Bergin, Floyd-Cranford and Schain, and Town Attorney Barry.

ABSENT: Secretary Castillo and Director Marois.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - The Board went into Executive Session at 6:05 p.m. to discuss Labor Negotiations and Real Estate. Present were Mayor Moran, Directors Dougan and Conyers, General Manager Shanley and Deputy General Manager Stephanou. Present remotely were Vice Chair Jones, Directors Bergin, Floyd-Cranford (6:25 p.m.) and Schain. Director of Finance Kim Lord and Director of Planning and Economic Development Gary Anderson were also present remotely for the beginning portion. The Executive Session adjourned at 7:00 p.m. No votes were taken.

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER.

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. All in attendance, and virtual, participated in The Pledge of Allegiance to The Flag, led by Mayor Moran.

Mayor Moran congratulated Director Marois and his wife Stephanie on the birth of their first child, a daughter Madeline Emily. He also noted the one year birthday of Deputy General Manger Stephanou's son Liam.

APPROVED - Motion to appoint Director Bergin as Acting Secretary for tonight's meeting.

Jones/Dougan

7 Voted in Favor

2. AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS. None.

3. OPENING OF MEETING TO ELECTORS OR TAXPAYERS WHO WISH TO BE HEARD ON ANY SUBJECT WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. (Sign-up sheet available 15 minutes prior to the start of the meeting)

David Raby, 197 Bush Hill Road, requested that the Town of Manchester appropriate additional funds for the purchase of Lombardo Farm from the Open Space Historical Property Acquisition Fund that voters overwhelmingly approved several years ago. There is approximately \$2M remaining in this fund after the \$900K already allocated for Lombardo Farm. The Land Trust has a deadline of June 30th to secure the funding and complete the sale of Lombardo Farm. Though they are working hard to secure the additional funding, it is extremely difficult in the economy during the pandemic and are concerned their fundraising goals will not be met. The voters approved an open space fund for special properties such as this one. There are very few large parcels of undeveloped land in Manchester. The Town and distinguished Board of Directors have the opportunity to help the Land Trust create a large open space and recreational opportunity for the Town's residents similar to Case Mountain. Finding a parking spot on the weekend for Case Mountain is very difficult which shows there is more than enough demand for more open space

recreation in Manchester. Now is the time to use these available funds. There is currently a petition that will be presented to the Board of Directors at a later date.

Linda Harris, 60 Brookfield Street, speaking for herself and on behalf of the African American Black Affairs Council, thanked the Board of Directors for declaring racism a public health crisis in Manchester in July of 2020. That was just the first step in the process. You must now address the inequities that are faced by the Manchester community. One such inequity is that of ensuring people in public positions are reflective of the community. We have often heard that when there are employment opportunities in the Town of Manchester that no people of color applied so the positions went to people who were not of color. There is currently a vacancy for a Fire Chief in Manchester and she knows of at least one candidate of color who has applied. We need to ensure the hiring committee is diverse, including racially diverse. The community needs to have a voice. It is not sufficient to present only the top two candidates at the very end of the process. When the Police Chief was hired, the community was brought into the process when there were only two candidates left. The community should be involved in the interviewing and hiring process of all qualified candidates especially people of color, for this position. It is time for the Town to move from the talking stage to the action stage.

Colin McNamara, 47 Grandview Street, wished everyone a happy one year anniversary of “fourteen days to flatten the curve.” Last February he talked about the Superbowl ads that focused on 5G and this year was a repeat of that. The push for 5G by communication companies is not about bringing consumers a better product. Consumers will be data-mined constantly which is a huge invasion of privacy and of no benefit for the consumer. There is a new term being floated around called the “internet of individuals” where everyone’s personal health data and activities are monitored and cataloged. This is also tied into 5G. He spoke about Klaus Schwab from the World Economic Forum who spoke about promotion of the fourth industrial evolution, which is omnipresent surveillance of everyone. He is on record as saying this will lead to the fusion of our physical, digital and biological identity. He would like the Board of Directors to consider the long-term ramifications of using 5G on a Town-wide scale. 5G is not necessary to do what we do every day. It is about large bandwidths for collection of data. Fiber is a better option which is faster and doesn’t have negative health effects. Big tech doesn’t share the American values of free speech and open dialogue. The Town needs to consider health issues and privacy. He also spoke about hiring practices, stating the best candidate, no matter their skin color, should be hired. If they’re of a minority, that’s great. It is great to have diversity but as Martin Luther King said, you should be judged on the content of your character, not the color of your skin.

Mandi Dang, 7-9 Walnut Street, stated she has been a resident of Manchester for 31 years and she is asking for the Town’s help. She said she was told to see Ted Cierocki in the Building Department but she has been unable to see him as the building is closed. She has tried to call to make an appointment but has not been called back.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING.

- A. Actions, February 2, 2021 – Regular Meeting
- B. Minutes, February 2, 2021 – Regular Meeting

Bergin/Conyers

7 Voted in Favor

5. COMMUNICATIONS. None.

6. REPORTS.

A. Manager's Report

1. Center Springs Park Master Plan, Bigelow/Main St. Pedestrian Entrance Concept Plan and Update (as already budgeted)

Deputy General Manger Stephanou explained the Center Springs Park Master Plan was developed in 2018 by Town Staff. Director of Public Works Tim Bockus, Director of Leisure, Families and Recreation Chris Silver and Town Engineer Jeff LaMalva are here to provide an update.

Mr. Bockus stated the Center Springs Park Master Plan identified some challenges that face Center Springs Park and identified several opportunities to improve the park as a resource. The plan identified the lack of highly visible and accessible access points to the park. The primary access point on the eastern side of the park is at the corner of Bigelow and Main Streets. It is currently a foot path entrance way into the park but is not very visible. Mr. LaMalva and his team have put together a plan that will enhance this entrance to make it a highly visible and more welcoming park entrance.

Mr. LaMalva explained the goal is to gain visibility and enhance this area to show it as a main entrance to the park. In order to do this, we would need to cut down the grade of the land from the back of the sidewalk approximately 3-4 feet. This would create a flat area with the same elevation as the adjacent sidewalk and create a retaining wall that wraps around the entrance. Landscaping, lighting and an informational kiosk would be installed in this area. An ADA acceptable sidewalk would be installed that meets up with the current loop around the park.

Mr. Silver stated they always look for opportunities to add creative elements into any park improvement project in Manchester. There are currently three healthy trees where this entrance would be installed and rather than removing the trees, they are working with an artist who will cut the trees to a height of 13 feet and then carve them into wooden sculptures. The sculptures will be preserved and remain rooted into the ground. The eye-catching sculptures will help to draw attention to the park.

Mr. Bockus explained the grade of this land lends itself well to installation of a sitting wall and allow us to build this sculpture art with the trees while leveling out the remainder of the corner for a more easily accessible entrance to the park. He stated that if the root structure of the wood sculptures begins to fail over time, the artwork can be put on a new foundation. There is a preservation technique used on the carved portion of the tree to protect it. The majority of the work will be done by Town staff.

Mr. Silver stated the transformation of the trees to art will be filmed and will be available for viewing. He noted the kiosk will help with wayfinding and encourage people to use Center Springs Park as a connection from Main Street to Broad Street.

Mayor Moran noted a lot of people have commented that they didn't know Center Springs Park was there. It's not only a great additional entrance to the park; it helps to spruce up that section of Main Street.

Deputy General Manager Stephanou stated this work has already been funded, thanks to the work of past Boards. We are very fortunate to have Town staff that can do most of this work for us. Not every Town has internal staffing to take on projects like this.

Director Dougan noted there is no public parking in this location. She asked about the grade of the walkway between the Lincoln Center parking lot and this entrance to the park. She wondered about using this entrance for wheelchair access.

Mr. LaMalva explained that the new portion connecting the entrance to the loop path is ADA compliant but that there are some grades within the current loop of the park that don't meet ADA accessibility. He recommends using the Lodge Drive entrance for wheelchair access.

Director Conyers stated it is a great pedestrian entrance but asked if the parking at Lincoln Center would be considered the main parking area for people looking to use this entrance. He suggested this might be a good location for flashing lights to highlight the crosswalk.

Mr. Bockus stated Lincoln Center would be the closest public parking available to this entrance. The entrance will provide connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods. He noted that Main Street is a State road, so changes to the crosswalk would need to be approved by the State.

Vice Chair Jones stated we have done a really good job of promoting public art in Manchester. She has been thinking about our representation and wondered if we considered an artist with an indigenous background. If not, we should consider that.

Mr. Silver stated the artist is a white male. We did not seek his artistry. It was a unique situation that was brought to our attention that he could repurpose the current trees, rather than cut them down.

Vice Chair Jones appreciates the design element of the wall because it seems to mimic the wall at the corner of Main and Center Streets.

Mr. Bockus explained we are fortunate to have a very talented and creative engineer in Mr. LaMalva, as a lot of the design features seen in Town come from him.

Director Floyd-Cranford is excited about this project. She asked if there is going to be more accessibility for bicyclists getting through Main Street. There is a lot of traffic and she has had some close calls with traffic when biking.

Mr. Bockus indicated there has been extensive discussion about bicycle traffic and bike lanes, which will be addressed in the next presentation, as part of the Complete Streets Policy. The Park Master Plan looks at the connectivity between Town parks.

Director Dougan asked if the public could watch the sculptor as he creates the wood art at the park entrance.

Mr. Silver stated the priority is to protect the area first. They did not discuss promoting it because of the heavy traffic in the area. It will take approximately two weeks to complete the sculptures.

2. Downtown Capital Improvement Plan for 2021 season

Deputy General Manager Stephanou explained the Director of Planning and Economic Development Gary Anderson will provide an update on the Downtown Capital Improvement Plan. Director of Public Works Tim Bockus and Town Engineer Jeff LaMalva will also provide an update on proposals to Purnell Place.

Mr. Anderson stated an online survey was done in December of 2020 to get feedback on some of the recent Town improvements. The survey was promoted widely on various Town channels and conducted via Survey Monkey, with 339 responses received. Approximately 90% of respondents were Manchester residents. Respondents included customers, business owners, property owners and employees of Downtown businesses. He spoke about the Market Lights on Purnell Place, “One Manchester” mural on the side of the Work_Space building, temporary outdoor dining and the closure of Purnell Place to vehicular traffic to accommodate outdoor dining. Responses received were overwhelmingly positive.

Respondents would like to see more outdoor dining, additional areas for public seating, additional pedestrian connections between Main Street and parking areas, bicycle improvements (bicycle lanes, bike racks, etc.), parking improvements and additional murals. Respondents requested more public gathering spaces, increased safety (more lighting and police presence), traffic calming to improve pedestrian safety, more parking and additional events/programming. Specific properties of concern to respondents included Mary Cheney Library and some privately-owned buildings. When asked what desired businesses they would like to see Downtown, they requested a bakery, book store, post office and more restaurants.

Mr. Bockus stated there was a lot of positive feedback on changes that had been made to Purnell Place. Purnell Place is the geographic center of Downtown. We asked Mr. LaMalva to come up with a design to make this change more permanent.

Mr. LaMalva explained that currently there are very wide curb cuts when entering Purnell Place from Main Street. A few years ago, the goal was to try to discourage using this as the main entrance to the parking lots and to encourage using Birch Street and Oak Street. The sidewalk was widened on the south side as part of the project to create an asphalt walking area. This is phase 2 of that project and is more looking at the upper end near Main Street. They will work within the confines of the existing bump outs and not lose any parking. The first consideration is pedestrian safety. They are proposing to make the entrance to Purnell Place more like a driveway apron where the sidewalk remains flush from one side to the other. They also plan to reduce the radius on the north side because it is a one-way street and doesn't need such a wide curb radius. They would bring in some landscaping, spaces for outdoor dining and signage for businesses further down Purnell Place. They are hoping this can be a pilot for some other areas along Main Street.

Mr. Anderson stated they would like to better connect the public parking at St. James lot and Park Street, to Main Street and down to Purnell Place. The goal is to make this space as flexible as possible for outdoor dining accommodations, pedestrian safety improvements, additional usable public space, Purnell-area business assistance and creation of a public destination. Mr. Silver has some ideas for a mural on Purnell Place. Another project they are looking at is for a market light installation at the alley way between Work_Space and Key Bank similar to what is on Purnell Place. It would be a little different, with perhaps more color. Lights can help to provide safety for pedestrians and also help to illuminate the One Manchester mural at night. This is a relatively small installation that we think could make a big difference.

Mr. Bockus explained there is an internal working group currently looking at ways to improve this corridor, to accommodate more pedestrians, bicyclists and allow more accessibility to Downtown businesses. They have come up with many creative ideas and once they have come up with more better-defined projects, they will present them to the Board of Directors. They anticipate using more surveys to get feedback from residents. There is a lot more space Downtown without losing parking that they can work with to encourage people to come to Downtown.

Mayor Moran stated he is starting to more activity now that residents are getting their vaccines. He likes the idea of closing Purnell Place. There is a more European flow to the Downtown area, which is more community-friendly.

Director Bergin asked if the cobblestone area near Purnell Place that gets used for parking is part of this plan.

Mr. LaMalva stated this area is being looked at within the scope of this project. It is an area that could be much better used.

Director Dougan asked if property and business owners' feedback is being included in this project and how their concerns are being addressed. She also asked who is responsible to install and take down the removable planters.

Mr. Anderson stated they are receiving a lot of feedback from business and property owners and have done their best to respond to the feedback they have received. They are working to accommodate the major needs of everyone, which the flexibility provides. He will present this plan to the DMSSD and to the business owners next week for additional feedback. Public Works will install and take down the planters.

Vice Chair Jones asked who owns the property where Great Harvest used to be and if that is an area they are looking at. She noted the Town's new Deputy Director of Public Works Courtney Lindberg is on the call and welcomed her.

Mr. Anderson stated that property is privately owned and has been vacant for quite some time, and the Town would like to see something go in there. He has reached out to the property owner several times and has directed potential developers to the property owner, but the property owner is not interested in selling at this time.

Mr. Bockus said we are very fortunate to have our new Deputy Director of Public Works Courtney Lindberg. She brings a wealth of creativity and new ideas to us and is a great addition to our team. She has been working hard with the Sustainability Commission.

Ms. Lindberg stated she has been with the Town approximately 3 months, which in some ways feels like 3 minutes and in some ways feels like 3 years. It was interesting moving to Manchester in the middle of the winter and during a pandemic to try to get into the heart of the culture of this Town. Town staff and residents have been so welcoming. The Sustainability Commission just had a two series retreat for some long-term planning. She is happy to be part of the team and looks forward to meeting the Board members in person.

Director Schain appreciates the vision for Downtown and the park entrance. It is exciting to see the transformation in Town.

Mayor Moran stated the parking improvements over the last several years have been phenomenal, including the improved signage. He has noticed that a younger crowd is now coming to Manchester establishments.

Director Floyd-Cranford talked about the Manchester Mall on Main Street. She would like to see more visibility for the businesses within the mall and have a tie-in with the other Main Street businesses. Manchester is becoming more of a destination with all the improvements and new businesses in Town.

Mr. Anderson stated the Manchester Mall is a very unique building with distinctive shops. He would love to see more promotion for the mall and we would be happy to work with the mall owner in this regard. It is difficult to see from the road what is in the building but if you could see the corridor from the road, it would draw more people in.

Mayor Moran asked Mr. Silver to talk about the great mural that went up Downtown. The community has been so impressed with the powerful message of the mural. It really draws you in. If you haven't seen it, make a point to go see it.

Mr. Silver stated this was a no-cost project through RiseUP Hartford. They are a non-profit that empowers youth to be the catalyst that uplifts and inspires their communities. They had funding in place for the project and they needed to find a location. The funding required that the mural be completed by Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. He received a phone call from them and was able to make it work for Manchester. The excitement of the community and the organization prompted a second phase of the project to do the other three walls in time for our Juneteenth celebration which will take place on that site in June. The feedback from the community from that mural was quite impactful. It was a last minute project that will likely lead to a strong and long-term relationship with RiseUp. To find out more information about phase 2, go to <http://nafl.townofmanchester.org/index.cfm/better-manchester-magazine1/>.

3. Communications Update

Deputy General Manager Stephanou stated the Communications Manager Brianna Smith will provide us with an update on Town communications and engagement. We are very fortunate to have the support of our elected body for communications and engagement in this community. The past year has shown the importance for it.

Ms. Smith appreciates being part of an organization that values communication. There have been a lot of challenges with trying to set a foundation for communications in the midst of a pandemic. One of the top projects over the past year was forming a COVID-19 communications team with employees from the Health Department and Human Services. The goal was to ensure communications regarding the pandemic were available to our residents via the Town webpage and social media channels. In this socially distanced world, many people turned to technology for information. A web page and dashboard COVID page was set up for residents to get updates, which is still active. Communications are now focused on vaccinations.

Quarantine changed the mood and energy in the community. In partnership with Better Manchester, they launched a #happythings campaign online where residents posted their photos of the silver lining of being in quarantine. They then partnered with Work_Space to display those images. Through the COVID webpage they provided information for COVID testing clinics and now vaccine clinics. They got into a very effective process for sharing information with the community.

Last year, they launched Your Voice Matters (YVM) in a pilot with the Parks & Facilities Master Plan. On this platform, they have a COVID-19 page and a community feedback page. The platform's purpose is to open up an area for two-way communication. One of the biggest takeaways in launching the project is noting there is a great need for community engagement. This platform is going to have a very successful long-term journey as being one of the many tools that will help us connect with and create a space for residents to share their thoughts without being judged in a way that is convenient for them. The Town had Facebook and Twitter accounts and now has an Instagram account to try to reach new audiences. From December 1, 2019 to today, Facebook followers have increased by 71.6% and Twitter by 35%. She posts

an average of 3-4 times per week. They had a social media consultant/DEI specialist analyze our social media platforms recently and we were given a report of areas we are doing well in and areas we can grow in. This will be very helpful in creating guidelines for the Town departments and divisions who all have their own social media.

Deputy General Manager Stephanou stated that the new business that came into the Manchester Mall has done a very good job on Instagram. The younger-owned businesses cater to a crowd that is on Instagram more than some of the other social networks. Social media is an area where the Town and its following can help promote a local business and is a way to reach a wider audience. Having a Town Instagram account helps to target people that might have been missed in the past.

Ms. Smith worked with the departments/divisions more in-depth based on what needed to be reprioritized due to COVID communications. It was important to be able to understand where every department and division is with their communications. She identified Communications Ambassadors who are staff members from each division responsible for their own communications, understanding that each is very different in terms of their passion, resources and understanding of communication. Communications isn't just a role; it is imbedded in everything that we do. It takes a team to get information out in a way that resonates to be able to bring feedback in. Identifying ambassadors has been very helpful. When embarking on a larger initiative, she reaches out to the ambassadors for feedback. Each of the ambassadors is involved in larger communications processes, while simultaneously working on their own projects. A portal was provided for the ambassadors which includes documents, resources and links for them to utilize.

Town website redesign was also initiated. There was a very large spike in Town website visits over the past year, from residents looking for information. It is so important that we create a website that is user friendly and inclusive for all residents. We went out to bid in December of 2020 for website redesign through an RFP process. Redesign will kick off in the Spring of 2021. The first phase is about discovery and getting feedback. Surveys were sent out to the Ambassadors and all Town staff to get feedback on what they would like to see on the Town website. Feedback will also be solicited from large key stakeholders, community leaders and residents.

Director Dougan asked when the new website is expected to be up and running. She also asked if we have any demographic data on who is using the website.

Ms. Smith stated website redesign is an intensive project. Typically websites are redesigned every year and it has been many years since the Town of Manchester has revamped the website. There is quite a lot of work to do, both visually and on the technical side. Once a vendor is selected, they will provide us with a timeline. She will pull some Google analytics' data to find out who is visiting the website. In terms of demographics, we are limited to the information we can obtain.

Mayor Moran asked if the Board of Directors will be able to see the rollout before it goes public.

Ms. Smith stated there will be a chance to view the website before it goes live. There will be a larger launch plan with marketing and communications.

Deputy General Manger Stephanou explained it will be important that we make it clear to residents how to navigate the new website. He had a conversation with a resident today about her frustration that some of the COVID information that we put out was not in Spanish. COVID information is now available in Spanish. We are conscious and aware that we have shortfalls, and need to ensure that we are getting critical information to the entire Manchester population.

4. COVID-19 Update

Mayor Moran noted that the Town is trying to do our best to provide residents with information about COVID, testing and vaccines. There are some roadblocks but we will continue to do our best to ensure our residents have the information they need.

Deputy General Manager Stephanou stated Director of Health Jeff Catlett has been working tirelessly as we have shifted gears from testing to vaccine distribution. The challenge still remains vaccine supply. With the approval of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine and increased supply of Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, we are hoping the shift will go from a supply problem to more of an education campaign and overcoming any hesitancy residents might have about receiving the vaccine. State policy has changed over the past week and we have adjusted accordingly. Our two priorities right now are to ensure our teachers and educational staffs are vaccinated and to ensure we are targeting communities that have been disproportionately affected by COVID, especially people of color. We are trying to be more intentional about how we are distributing the vaccine.

Mr. Catlett stated that March 11, 2021 will be one year since the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic. As of this morning, there have been more than 28M cases of COVID in the United States and 511K deaths. In Connecticut, there have been 282K cases with 7.6K deaths and in Manchester there have been 4K cases and 145 deaths. Early on in the pandemic, the Health Department's role was learning what COVID was and figuring out how to get the information out to the community. The Health Department has done a tremendous amount of contact tracing. All new positive cases come through the Health Department and we contact the individual and the people they came into direct contact with. Contacts receive initial communication from our staff or the state health department within 24-48 hours approximately 90% of the time. Initially we felt a strong obligation to provide COVID testing to our residents. Early on, it was difficult to get a test, so we formed a partnership with First Choice Health Centers and held seven events throughout Town, between September and December. Through these clinics, we provided no-cost tests to 1,086 individuals, from which we received very positive feedback.

We are now in the vaccination stage of this pandemic. The Health Department is an essential part of the vaccination effort, though unlike vaccination efforts in the past, Towns are not the sole provider for vaccines. Connecticut has 195 vaccination locations including hospitals, pharmacies, health centers, mega-sites, and many other providers. The Town's plan was to administer the vaccines first to critical workers and those with underlying medical conditions, but Governor Lamont announced last week an age-based approach to the vaccine. This approach was implemented because 96 percent of COVID-19 deaths in Connecticut have occurred in people over the age of 55. As of March 1, 2021, vaccine eligibility expands to age group 55 to 64 (also Educators). On March 22, 2021, it expands to age group 45 to 54, on April 12, 2021 it expands to age group 35 to 44 and on May 3, 2021, it expands to age group 16 to 34. We have implemented a call center at the Sr. Center for individuals looking to get the vaccine. We are required to have the vaccine clinic open to all Connecticut residents.

State officials have reported significant racial disparities in Connecticut's vaccine rollout. Officials with the State Department of Public Health report white residents are more than two times more likely than Black and Hispanic residents to have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine shot. We have requested but have yet to receive Manchester specific data from the CT DPH. CT DPH asks that providers commit to the Connecticut COVID Vaccine Provider Equity Commitment, which we adopted early on in the pandemic. This includes ensuring that vaccine supply is directed to vulnerable communities and that we administer at least 25% of available vaccine supply to the residents in vulnerable communities in Manchester. It also

asks that we commit to collect, track, and report data regarding race and ethnicity for vaccines administered and to take corrective action to improve the equity of our efforts. We are making investment in outreach to vulnerable communities, especially communities of color, and we are reserving spots for these individuals.

In Manchester, we have done community outreach to lower income housing, senior housing, and through the Manchester Public Schools. We put a flyer out through the schools in English and Spanish, in the hope that the younger individuals would help older individuals within their homes register for the vaccine. Through our clinics, we can schedule an individual for the vaccine with only a name, date of birth and phone number. Our clinics have filled up very rapidly, with our last 50 vaccine clinic filled within seven minutes. We have had discussions with key community stakeholders including the Manchester Latino Affairs Council, the African American and Black Affairs Council, the Manchester Area Conferences of Churches and other partners, which provided us with solid effective pathways to reach community members. We have partnerships with community health providers including First Choice Health Centers, Walgreens, CVS, and ECHN/Prospect.

We have a long-standing emergency preparedness partnership with the Town of Glastonbury, and share vaccines at about a 60/40 split with Manchester receiving 60% of the vaccines. We are holding a joint mass vaccination clinic on Thursday, which will be our 14th clinic over the last 7 weeks. We have administered approximately 1,220 vaccine doses. The main limiting factor is vaccine allocations from the State and CDC. We have a much higher capacity to vaccinate. Another challenge is the uniqueness of the COVID vaccine vs. a traditional vaccine. A COVID vaccine experience could be up to 45 minutes on site. We have to limit the number of people in the building due to social distancing and there is a waiting period after the injection to ensure there are no adverse side effects. The Health Department's current/future COVID initiatives include vaccinating as many school system employees as we can in the month of March, continuing to focus on the equitable distribution of vaccine in our community and focusing on the next priority phases of the vaccine in Spring and Summer.

Director Floyd-Cranford talked about the lack of availability for vaccines through the VAMS website locally. Many people were offered appointments on the other side of the State because of a lack of availability in this area. She is glad to hear that the Health Department is reaching out to vulnerable communities. She has heard of people having a fear of getting the vaccine and even more hesitation to get the one-dose vaccine. She understands vaccines are being given at the Senior Center, but suggested giving the vaccine in other areas of Town where more people of color are apt to see other people of color getting the vaccine. When we look at how we appeal to people of color, there are a lot of blind spots that we have to be aware of. We have to look at where the weariness comes from and who we put in the forefront to get the vaccine in these communities. It takes people who look like you to lead the way.

Mr. Catlett stated the Town has been giving vaccines for 7 weeks but has only gotten approximately 100 doses/week. We are just beginning to get more vaccines, so we can get creative in who receives it. The Senior Center was chosen to administer the vaccine because the building is currently closed due to the pandemic.

Deputy General Manager Stephanou explained the unavailability of appointments in Manchester is an issue of not having enough supply of the vaccine. The skepticism from communities of color is understandable given this country's history with vaccines. Having people of color that are comfortable receiving the vaccine will make it clear to other people of color that it is safe. They are currently brainstorming ways to get people of color to feel safe in getting the vaccine, including a public service campaign showing a public figure of color receiving the vaccine.

Director Floyd-Cranford has heard a lot of suspicions from people of color about whether urban areas are getting the same vaccine as suburban areas. They are also questioning the Johnson and Johnson vaccine which has a history of recalls and cancer causing agents.

Mr. Catlett has been asking the CT Health Department how distribution models are determined. Manchester is a very diverse community and a larger community. We have the ability to distribute vaccines. It is frustrating to hear that people have to go outside the community to get a vaccine. We are trying to increase our partnerships to try to bring more vaccines to Manchester residents. He understands the frustration and they are working to get as many people vaccines as quickly as possible. Transportation has been an issue but the Senior Center has been great with picking people up to get them to the vaccine clinic.

Director Dougan has received calls from residents who are not able to physically go out to get a vaccine and need someone to administer it in their homes. She asked what is being done to help these residents.

Mr. Catlett explained that pharmacies and hospitals did get a large amount of vaccines for community outreach. Hartford Healthcare, for example, has reached out to communities, schools and senior housing to administer the vaccines. The Health Department has a plan in place to do more community outreach once they receive an adequate supply of vaccines. The trick with administering the vaccine to residents in their homes is that the vaccine is temperature sensitive. They are also aware of the hesitancy to receive the vaccine and are working to better educate residents about the safety of the vaccine.

Director Bergin asked what the strategy was for the Manchester/Glastonbury vaccination clinic for educators and how individuals were selected and notified for this targeted effort.

Mr. Catlett said the Health Departments, Town Managers and Superintendents from both towns came up with a strategy. They provided school nurse coordinators with time slots and they chose who would get the vaccine based on what their assessment of risk was. Manchester chose to go school by school. School employees were encouraged to register in VAMS so that when they arrived at the clinic, we simply had to type in their email address and their name popped up.

Vice Chair Jones asked about the allocation of vaccines to towns. She has heard stories that some Connecticut towns were receiving disproportionately more vaccines than others, which generates some distrust in the system. She wondered if there is a role the Board of Directors can play in communicating with CT DPH or with legislators to get more transparency around how these decisions are being made.

Mr. Catlett stated the Public Health Directors have also heard the rumors, though they can't confirm them. He would 100% support outreach by the Board of Directors.

Deputy General Manager Stephanou stated that any effort to lobby to get more vaccines to Manchester residents would be welcome.

Vice Chair Jones has heard of people who make several appointments for the vaccine to try to get it sooner and closer to home. She wondered if that is contributing to the backlog and availability of appointments, and asked if that is the best course of action at this time.

Mr. Catlett recommends residents take a vaccine appointment when they can get it and then check in with the Town periodically to see if we have any availability within the community. When the announcement was made to have educators vaccinated, it created a false sense of security that the Health Department

could administer vaccines to educators but vaccine availability is not equal to the number of educators we have. If someone can get vaccinated quicker at another location, they should. We are only going to get out of this pandemic when the bulk of the population is vaccinated.

Mayor Moran thanked Mr. Catlett for the update. He appreciates all the efforts by Town staff.

B. Other Reports. **None.**

7. PRESENTATION OF BID WAIVER REQUESTS. None.

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS (formally advertised).

A. Appropriations to Special Projects as follows:

1. Manchester Police Department - CT Center for Digital Investigations\$31,200
for continuing digital investigations to be financed by an annual amount from Newington, South Windsor, Glastonbury, East Hartford, Wethersfield, Vernon UConn and Windsor Locks.
2. Federal Asset Forfeiture Account.....\$5,632
for continuing narcotics investigations, equipment, and/or training to be financed by proceeds from narcotics investigations.
3. Senior, Adult and Family Services - Rental Assistance Program\$10,000
to be financed by a grant from Manchester Interfaith Social Action Committee.

Mayor Moran opened the floor for public comment at this time. There being no public comments, Mayor Moran opened the floor for Board Members' comments. There being no comments, Mayor Moran closed the public hearing on the above items.

B. Appropriations to Education Special Projects as follows:

1. Hartford Foundation for Public Giving COVID-19 Reopening Grant.....\$25,000
for FY 20/21 to support costs for PPE, cleaning, minor building improvements, technology to support virtual services/remote staff, staff health screening, etc.

Mayor Moran opened the floor for public comment at this time. There being no public comments, Mayor Moran opened the floor for Board Members' comments. There being no comments, Mayor Moran closed the public hearing on the above items.

C. Approval of an amendment to the Town of Manchester Pension Ordinance, Section 70-56, Contributions, by re-writing this section to be consistent with the Collective Bargaining Agreement with Teamsters Local 671.

Deputy General Manager Stephanou explained that as part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement with Teamsters Local 671 which represents Public Works and Water & Sewer employees, the Town agreed to allow employees to increase their contribution toward their retirement fund up to 9%. The Town's match will remain at 6% but IRS regulations allow a contribution up to a certain amount each year and this would allow the employees to contribute an additional amount if they choose to. This requires a change in the Pension Ordinance.

Mayor Moran opened the floor for public comment at this time. There being no public comments, Mayor Moran opened the floor for Board Members' comments. There being no comments, Mayor Moran closed the public hearing on the above items.

9. CONSENT CALENDAR. (Item 8C added)

8A. Appropriations to Special Projects as follows:

1. Manchester Police Department – CT Center for Digital Investigations\$31,200
for continuing digital investigations to be financed by an annual amount from
Newington, South Windsor, Glastonbury, East Hartford, Wethersfield, Vernon
UConn and Windsor Locks.
2. Federal Asset Forfeiture Account.....\$5,632
for continuing narcotics investigations, equipment, and/or training to be
financed by proceeds from narcotics investigations.
3. Senior, Adult and Family Services – Rental Assistance Program\$10,000
to be financed by a grant from Manchester Interfaith Social Action
Committee.

B. Appropriations to Education Special Projects as follows:

1. Hartford Foundation for Public Giving COVID-19 Reopening Grant.....\$25,000
for FY 20/21 to support costs for PPE, cleaning, minor building
improvements, technology to support virtual services/remote staff,
staff health screening, etc.

C. Approval of an amendment to the Town of Manchester Pension Ordinance, Section 70-56, Contributions, by re-writing this section to be consistent with the Collective Bargaining Agreement with Teamsters Local 671.

12A. Appropriation to Special Projects (under \$500) as follows:

1. Police Donations Revenue Account - Manchester Police Explorer Post.....\$30
to be funded by a donation from Ian Webster in memory of Valerie
Saglio which is gratefully acknowledged and accepted.

Bergin/Dougan

7 Voted in Favor

10. ACTION ON ITEMS OF PUBLIC HEARING. None.

11. UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

TABLED - A. Appointment of an at-large member to the Repurposed Schools Committee to fill the vacancy left by Karl Reichelt.

Dougan/Floyd-Cranford

7 Voted in Favor

B. **TABLED** - Appointment to the Repurposed Schools Committee as a representative from the Robertson neighborhood to fill the vacancy left by Maureen O'Reilly.

C. Appointments to Boards and Commissions which have members with terms expiring in November 2020 (*except as otherwise noted).

<u>Board/Commission</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Term Expiring</u>
<u>Cheney Brothers National Historic District Commission</u>	A- Courtissa Anderson, 31 Ashworth St (D)	November 2022
Floyd-Cranford/Bergin		7 Voted in Favor
<u>Ethics Commission</u>	A-Donna Brunoli-Conyers, 26 Coleman Rd (U)	November 2023
Dougan/Jones		7 Voted in Favor

D. TABLED - Appointment of a member (R) to the Housing and Fair Rent Commission.

APPROVED - Motion to take item 11D off the table.

Jones/Floyd-Cranford **7 Voted in Favor**

Director Conyers explained that there are currently two vacancies on the Housing and Fair Rent Commission, as sadly Anthony Patrone recently passed away. He was a beloved son, brother, uncle and friend, and a previous member of several commissions including Planning and Zoning and Housing and Fair Rent Commission. He was a constant presence at events in Manchester and will be missed. We offer our condolences to his family and friends during this difficult time.

Mayor Moran noted Anthony's friend Mike Dyer, also active in Town, had passed away a few months earlier. It is very sad to see these two young men in our community pass away at such a young age. We will have the additional vacancy put on next month's Agenda.

APPROVED - Appointed Kevin Hood, 83 Sass Drive (R) to the Housing and Fair Rent Commission with a term expiring November 2023.

Dougan/Conyers **7 Voted in Favor**

E. TABLED - Appointment of an at-large member to the Repurposed Schools Committee to fill the vacancy left by Bob Rosenberg.

F. TABLED - Approval of a one year tax assessment agreement for Napolitano and Soverns Developers, LLC for property at 623 Main Street, also known as 2-4 Pearl Street.

12. NEW BUSINESS.

B. Tax Assessment Agreements - Orford Village Housing Development Corporation

1. Krauss Gardens
2. Crockett Fields

Deputy General Manager Stephanou explained Attorney Malcolm Barlow, representing Orford Village Housing Development Corporation will join us to discuss this item.

Attorney Barlow explained that Orford Village is a non-profit corporation. The Town gave Orford Village a tax abatement agreement to pay \$26,400 per tax year for grand list years beginning in 2013 and ending in 2019. The agreement does not cover the grand list of 10/01/2020. Orford Village is requesting an extension of the 2009 agreement to begin with the grand list of 10/01/20 in order to continue to maintain Krause Gardens at low rents. Town Ordinances §§285-27, 285-28 and 285-29 allow for the Board of Directors to consider this request. This allows taxation on elderly housing to be done per the limitations of the rent. Michael Grant is the Manager of Krauss Gardens on Hartford Road and is here to answer questions if needed.

Crockett Field is the property that was known as 190 and 208 North Elm Street that Orford Village purchased for \$100K in 2019 and have completed extensive renovations on the property since then. This property includes 20 units to remain as low rent elderly housing. All units have been updated and are fully occupied. The tax deal from the Town on this property included no taxes for two years, which ends with the grand list in October of 2021. We are asking the Town to give this property the same tax treatment that it has given to Krauss Gardens. The Ordinances were set by the Town of Manchester pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §8-215 which talks about reduced rates on elderly housing for lower to moderate income elderly persons.

Mr. Grant explained Krauss Gardens restricts resident eligibility to a maximum household income of 50-80% of the area median income (AMI). A single person household at 50% AMI earns \$34,090/year. Their screening policy does not allow them to take more than 40% of the household income toward rent, which calculates to \$13,636/year for housing (\$1,136/month). Orford Village Board of Directors has historically kept the rents below this amount as it seeks to provide quality housing to seniors most in need of the affordability aspect of the property. In the 7 years since Krauss has existed, there has been one rent increase of \$20 for 1 bedroom and \$25 for 2 bedroom units. Any increase in real estate taxes, certainly if they went to full tax, would be a hardship on residents. According to the current assessment, full tax would result in a \$54K per year increase over the current \$26K, up to \$81K per year. Crockett Fields' deed restriction with the Town of Manchester requires that rents are 15% below the published HUD Fair Market Rents on an annual basis. The current HUD FMR would allow \$927/month rent for 1 bedroom and \$1,145/month for 2 bedrooms. He stated that a tax increase based on FMR of the building would result in an increase of over \$100/unit per month from each tenant to keep the property open.

Attorney Barlow explained there are two other Manchester properties taxed in this manner, Birch Mountain Apartments and Orford Village Commons, both rented to elderly and low income residents.

Vice Chair Jones stated the agreement made between Orford Village Housing Development Corporation and the Town of Manchester for Crockett Fields included repairs to be performed on the units. She asked if there are multiple rent structures in the complex outside of the 1 bedroom and 2 bedroom format.

Mr. Grant explained that during the renovations, there were other rent structures but there are currently not. Rents were at \$700 for a 1 bedroom unit and \$750 for a 2 bedroom when they took over the property. Once the units were converted, the rents were increased to \$844 for the 1 bedroom units and \$1,045 for the 2 bedroom units. The increase in rent was more than offset by the decrease in the cost of utilities since the renovations. Utility bills for residents pre-renovation were as high as \$400/month and since the renovations residents reported that utility bills are \$100 or less per month.

APPROVED - Motion to suspend the rules to continue meeting past 11:00 p.m.

Director Bergin stated subsidized affordable housing is a great value to our community but has questions on the origin of the abatements. He asked if anyone makes a profit off of these properties, and also asked what period of time they are asking for tax abatement on the properties.

Attorney Barlow explained that Orford Village Housing Development Corporation is not allowed to make a profit. If there are extra funds, they are reinvested into the property for improvements.

Director Floyd-Cranford asked about the vacant units and if it had anything to do with the rent increases.

Mr. Grant stated no one left due to rent increases. Some residents vacated on their own and others passed away. Five units were vacant when they took over the property. Residents were very pleased with the improvements to the property and no one has left due to rent increases.

Mayor Moran explained there is lot for Board members to digest. He suggested revisiting this item at next month's meeting.

C. Board of Directors approval of Innovation Fund Applications, as recommended by Innovation Fund Committee.

Deputy General Manger Stephanou explained that local governments have been experimenting with ways to create a culture of innovation and finding ways to fund projects that result in a return on investment not normally seen in a traditional budget process. In 2019, the Board of Directors approved allocating fund balance toward this initiative. Staff worked with the Board of Directors to draft guidelines for this fund which included investment characteristics that supported greater efficiencies, emphasizing priority outcomes and quality of life. Departments that are on the front lines often have ideas about ways to improve government services. The Innovation Fund is a way for departments to submit proposals that could increase value for residents/taxpayers. Value is defined as results per dollars spent. The goal is to go with proposals that will get more results for the same money, same results for less money or more results for less money. Seven proposals for this fund were received and the Innovation Fund Committee chose to approve four of them. The guidelines were set up so that anything above \$25K needs the approval of the Board of Directors.

Director Schain commended the past Board of Directors for establishing this program. He thanked Town departments for submitting proposals offering new innovative approaches. The Committee had a good review of the projects and believes this is a good mix of projects aimed at improving the efficiency of Town services and operations.

Director Conyers appreciates putting funds toward this type of work. These projects can have very positive effects on Town government.

Director Bergin asked for more information about the proposed kiosks. He is skeptical about the benefit of the kiosk. The Town has a high collection rate so it will probably not increase revenues, but it may add a convenience factor provided that it is outside of a building.

Mr. Wolverton, Budget and Research Officer, stated the proposal is to have the kiosk located outside of Town Hall with an exact location yet to be determined.

Mayor Moran asked if we reached out to other communities that use kiosks for their feedback.

Ms. Lord, Director of Finance, explained the idea was initially proposed as a result of pandemic restrictions when Town buildings were closed to the public. We were approached by several kiosk companies. She doesn't know of any towns in Connecticut using kiosks, but they are being used throughout Massachusetts. The idea is to have it located somewhere away from Town Hall to collect tax and water/sewer payments. The kiosk would allow cash payments.

Director Dougan wonders if residents will be concerned about the security of paying cash at a kiosk.

Deputy General Manager Stephanou stated security measures would be put in place.

Director Dougan asked for more information about the proposed electronic document management system, and the mobile outreach vehicle.

Mr. Wolverton stated the electronic document management system would interface with our financial systems and would be used across Town departments for financial documents and invoices.

Deputy General Manager Stephanou stated one of our priorities over the past few years has been to move from a paper intensive process to a more streamlined online process. This would provide a mechanism to move the forms along much more quickly throughout the Town. He explained that the mobile outreach vehicle would provide existing Human Services' staff with a means to get out into the community to meet with residents who require assistance.

Ms. Lord stated that having a module attached to financial software would definitely bring efficiency and collaboration across departments.

APPROVED - C. Board of Directors approval of Innovation Fund Applications, as recommended by Innovation Fund Committee.

Schain/Conyers

7 Voted in Favor

D. Rules and procedures for remote and virtual meetings.

Vice Chair Jones stated a draft proposal was presented at last month's meeting to codify hybrid meetings. She did not hear any objections or concerns with the draft, but with two Board members not present tonight, she recommended discussing this item at next month's meeting.

13. COMMENT AND DISCUSSION BY BOARD MEMBERS ON ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA OR OF GENERAL CONCERN.

Mayor Moran stated Budget Workshops begin next week.

Vice Chair Jones stated that in light of some of the residents' comments and as we head into budget season, she would like an update on staffing and recruitment for open positions within the Town.

Director Conyers stated that the VA is now offering COVID vaccinations for Veterans of all ages.

Director Floyd-Cranford stated that since she has been on the Board of Directors, she has noted the lack of diversity of Town staff. She heard a resident speak earlier about judging a person by the content of their character. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke about not judging a person by the color of their skin, but by the

content of their character. He was speaking about discrimination and marginalizing people of color because of their skin color. Our character was being overlooked. Town staffing continues to be overwhelmingly over 90% people of non-color. We need to take a deep look at which direction we are going in, and if we're going to back up our words. She stated only two people of color have been hired in Town leadership positions since she has been on the Board of Directors and that the community is taking note. It is concerning. She has heard from several residents about a very qualified African American woman who applied for the Fire Chief position. The community would like to be part of the hiring panel and be able to look at all candidates for this position. We are at the point where we need to make a concerted effort to diversify Town staff at all levels as positions become available, realizing the best candidates may be someone who is not white. Manchester's leadership is overwhelmingly people of non-color. She hopes we really work to make Town staff more reflective of the community.

Director Dougan thanked all the Town residents who work on our Boards and Commissions. There are a lot of residents who give their time to this community. She would like to see more oversight in how information is received from these committees. She was unaware that Mr. Patrone had passed and unknowingly called his home to ask him about continuing to serve. It is the responsibility of the Board of Directors to appoint residents to these Boards and Commissions, so we need to ensure we are in proper communication with them. She asked how we reach out to the community to tell residents about available positions on Boards and Commissions.

Mayor Moran stated that Board of Directors also talked previously about training for members on Boards and Commissions. Some commissions do Minutes and others do not. There is room for improvement. It has been almost a year of virtual meetings. Thanks to those who work behind the scenes to allow these meetings to take place.

14. ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting was adjourned until the April 6, 2021 Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors at 7:00 p.m. in the Lincoln Center Hearing Room.

Adjournment: 11:58 p.m.

Bergin/Conyers

7 Voted in Favor

lgl

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

Secretary, Manchester Board of Directors