

COMMITTEE ON JOINT SCHOOL BUILDINGS

October 13, 2026 at 5:00 PM

Chairman O'Connell called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Bonilla, Fajardo
School Committee Members O'Connell, Turner, Hamer

Absent: Alderman Thomas

Messrs.: M. Lenfest, H. Cobanoglu, J. Chmiel

Chairman O'Connell: Before we begin, I'd like to recognize Vance Freeman for his work on this project for the last three years. Vance is one of the principals at Consigli Construction, and a Manchester man who lives here amongst us, and has told us recently he is retiring very shortly. So, Vance, thank you for your work on this project and the work of your company. Thank you for sponsoring various events in the district as well. That's appreciated and doesn't go unnoticed. You've been a good community and corporate sponsor, so thank you for that and for the wonderful work that's been done at McLaughlin and is being done at Hillside. And personally, Vance, it's been a pleasure working with you, and I wish you well in your retirement.

1. Presentation from LeftField regarding the School District Priority One Project to date.

Mark Lenfest, Senior Project Manager at LeftField: The update summary, you'll notice we've made some progress over at Beech. I don't know if anybody's been able to make it out there. There is a lot of earth work going on. Exciting time over there. McLaughlin we're at 99%, we're doing punch list, which means just the finishing touches, minor corrections and work, and things of that nature. Normal procedure. Hillside is tracking ahead of schedule. We'll share that with the group in a minute. But again, successful turnover at all four middle schools getting the teachers and students back in on time. Again, that addition is tracking ahead of schedule. So the last 30 days, I know we missed last month's meeting so this is kind of going to be a little compilation of the last 60 days. Again, very exciting times. McLaughlin, full school turnover. Hillside, renovation turnover. Both Parkside and Southside had phases of their renovation's turnover as well. All of the addition construction continues. We have resumed Hillside site work. The furniture, fixtures and equipment and technology installation has started at all schools, all four middle schools. We had a ribbon cutting at McLaughlin Middle School. For those of you that were able to make it, that was a big milestone. Very good turnout. Very exciting time. Again, Mr. Chairman, I think Vance and his folks did a great job helping host that event for us. Beech continued procurement coordination with New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services regarding soil management site improvements. Again, a lot of earthwork going over there, high end earthwork, continued coordination meetings, cost management, schedule, refinement and communication. The 30 day look ahead, the OAC

meetings for all projects will continue with the exception of McLaughlin. Those are by special schedule only as we've wrapped that up. But there is pretty much daily communication going on with the district and with the principal on wants and needs at that school as we button up for operations. Group one punch list completion will be happening for Hillside and McLaughlin. Punch list, small things. The FFE for group two and Hillside, that's furniture, fixtures, and equipment. So the big thing here is furniture. We're looking to procure furniture. So we're in the selection process: colors, fabrics. It's quite a process through the district for each of those three schools and how they will be mobilized to the additions as those spaces become available. Hillside continued addition construction. So again, we are tracking ahead of schedule. Consigli has done an excellent job out there. If you've had an opportunity to get out there, the addition looks amazing. A lot of square footage for new programming. I'm going to call it class A space; looks fantastic. We're tracking for a mid to late November turnover, which is going to be very advantageous for the district. On our move in, it'll be much less hectic than what you deal with on a what is called a summer slammer, which we just got through four of those. So group two addition construction continues. Space is looking fantastic if you get a chance to get out there. There's still some group two procurement ongoing. Again, those are phased construction. So there are multiple phases. Logistics are a little more complicated with moving people around. A lot of good participation. I'm fortunate Hamdi handles that, but a lot of good coordination with the principals and their staff on the logistics of the schools and making sure that all the programming needs are met. The Beech schedule refinement is ongoing. Again, continued procurement. Again, we still have soil management continuation. No surprises there. Again, that's just a note that will be ongoing while we're doing the drilled shafts, age piles, and anything subsurface out there along with the foundations, which have started. And then the usual: continued logistics development for all projects, coordination meetings, cost management, schedule, refinement and communication.

School Committee Member Turner: The ribbon cutting for McLaughlin was fantastic. The energy in there, the students that were able to participate. And obviously there were some elected officials there that got resounding screaming. It wasn't you, Jim, sorry. The energy over the excitement of a new learning space was palpable and very exciting to witness. So bravo to Vance, he was part of that as well. Gratitude towards everyone involved having that feel like such a special event. I attended as a parent at the Hillside open house and other parents we met in one of the flex spaces on one of the teams, down on the ground floor. Some of the schedule had changed so that the families were meeting the team of teachers in their new breakout spaces on their teams. But then it struck me as odd, and I've already talked to Doctor Chmiel about it, but it struck me as odd that I'm sitting there looking at the furniture going this doesn't look right. And lo and behold, it's not right, but it's the furniture. I'm just saying this so that the public is aware, because I had a few side conversations with a few parents, but the furniture that will populate that place is not here yet. It's not arrived yet. So the furniture that is there is just so that school, they patched it together so they can use that space because the space is ready to be used. We just didn't have the furniture there.

M. Lenfest: So, Principal McCafferty has done a great job. He had an opportunity to take to repurpose the science room tables to those spaces, so you get that higher countertop feel. That being said, we're making a slight change to the millwork science tables that were delivered. So the modification will be done on those within the next three weeks.

Those will be finalized with the new stools. And then the appropriate chairs will be with those repurposed tables. But yes, the new tables, the new furniture for those spaces, will be arriving with the turnover of the additions. Which will be that winter vacation time frame.

School Committee Member Turner: It's my understanding, the reasoning behind that is for affordability.

Jennifer Chmiel, Manchester School District Superintendent: Yes, and kind of. What we've done is we've essentially staged in the furniture as it's coming into the school; we've modified our original plan. Originally, we were going to wait to do all of the furniture for all of the addition renovation to be completed more, more like what we did with McLaughlin. However, what we now know is by getting that addition early, we want to make sure that that space is usable, so we're furnishing it sooner. So what we're doing is essentially phasing in the furniture as we phase in the new spaces. One key piece of that is as we move furniture around a building, if we're putting it in a room, emptying a room, putting it back into another room, it's going to get wear and tear. So what we've tried to do is really just extend the life of the furniture by not dragging it through multiple moves and multiple relocations within the school settings for the purposes for those classroom designs. So it is purposeful. We do have our teams putting up some signage in the schools, letting the community know it is under construction and not really done yet. However, if anyone has seen McLaughlin to date, similar furnishings will be going into the other three schools.

School Committee Member Turner: Excellent. I knew, having toured McLaughlin, what the finished product looked like and knowing that Hillside wasn't quite across the finish line. I don't think that the community was aware of that. I just wanted to comment on that and thank you for the clarification. I'm pleased to hear about the mid to late November turnover; that seems ahead of schedule. I know that we haven't gotten to the timeline yet, but I know that the additions will be ready in early winter or late fall. I guess there's some stuff on the exterior, including moving modulars and the storefront, the entrance of the building. I know that is going to get an update as well. I recognize how some of the new additions will be used as flex space in some instances to renovate other parts of the building. How do we renovate the vestibule, the entrance, with people coming in and out somewhat constantly there?

M. Lenfest: That will be during the summer, outside of hours of operation. What will happen is the addition will be turned over, it'll be moved into, and then there'll be site work, the demobilization of the modulars. And then when Consigli goes to do the front of the building, that will be during the summer.

School Committee Member Turner: The front of the building, including the vestibule?

M. Lenfest: Correct and the rest of the wing.

Chairman O'Connell: Hillside will be different from Southside and Parkside. So Hillside, there will be no work going on inside the school during the school year. So there won't be kids moving into the extension and moving back out, etcetera. So all the work that will be done in the existing building at Hillside will happen next summer. And so when the extension is opened at Hillside, the students will move into the extension as they are meant to be in their final condition as opposed to Southside and Parkside, which has been

done on a phased basis. So it's different. What happens at Parkside and Southside is, as one part of the school is renovated, it's blocked off and sealed off, but as it's renovated, that gets completed. There's flex space happening. People move in there, move out. Other kids move out of another space and that will go on during the school year. It's not that disruptive because it's not as though it happens every week. I mean, it happens every quarter or whatever time it takes to do those things. Effectively at the end of November, the building will be handed over during the month of December. It will be whatever the decision is made about when it's ready to occupy, but then it will be occupied and done with, and then it will sit in that condition until we get to the summer when not just the lobby and the front entrance, but all those rooms, the music rooms, the current offices, all of that will all be demolished and rebuilt. Then the modulares will be moved out in the spring, right?

M. Lenfest: February or March; they'll go out early.

Alderman Bonilla: In regards to the modulares, is it two months after we've turned over the building that the modulares get moved? Or is it specifically for McLaughlin?

Chairman O'Connell: Some modulares, there's not a plan to move them right now and some there are. The three sets that have to move in order for the project to be complete, are the ones at Beech Street, Hillside and Southside. Hillside can't be completed because those modulares need to be taken out so that the final work and artwork and the parking lot has to be completed. So they will move first, and that will be around February. I don't have an exact date yet but in the spring of this year. That will be followed by the modulares at Southside, because Southside can't be completed until they move, because they're currently on the new road work, etcetera that is going on there. So they will move and that won't happen until after Southside is handed over in the fall of 2027. And then Beech Street is the third. The Beech Street modulares will be the third to move. They will move when the new Beech Street school is complete in the fall of 2028. And in order for the new soccer field and basketball court and other things to go in when that school is being demolished, those modulares will get moved then. So that leaves modulares at McDonough, at Gossler Park and at McLaughlin. There is not a current plan to move those right now. So that part will be impacted by multiple things. One is what the administration, what the district, and what the board decides will happen in phase two, or whatever will happen with future construction and how they might or might not be used as part of that. And that's a blank page right now. There's also the opportunity to sell these modulares. We bought them so that if a school district or any other entity in New England or wherever wanted to purchase them, they can purchase them. And so those could be made available for sale, but only after we as a district decide that they're not necessary for use. To reiterate, the three that I named will be moved in the order in which I was just saying, and I think to get your point, you asked about McLaughlin, the McLaughlin, McDonough and Gossler modulares do not have a plan to move today.

Alderman Bonilla: I was just thinking about Jewett.

Chairman O'Connell: Hillside is going to Jewett in the spring of 2027. That's the first move.

Alderman Bonilla: Looking at the timeline for the Beech conceptual schedule, thank you for the website updates. I noticed that the construction for the Beech Street site restoration

should start in July of 2028. But overall my point is, do we have concepts yet for the Beech Street site restoration developed through SMMA that are available to us or coming soon so that we have an idea?

Hamdi Cobanoglu, Senior Project Manager at LeftField: You mean phase two site restoration?

Alderman Bonilla: Phase two of phase one.

H. Cobanoglu: Phase one is doing the new Beech Street elementary school and phase two is demolishing the existing one and restoration of that site.

Alderman Bonilla: Are we going to get them anytime soon by any chance? Was there ever a plan to have them? I've had a lot of community members ask for them. They'd love to see what we've said about what we want to create, what will happen. I feel like visually seeing that would mean a lot.

Chairman O'Connell: I can tell you that the plans have been developed and that they're currently with the Department of Public Works, a proposal at least, it's not a final plan.

M. Lenfest: There's a conceptual drawing with a proposal currently in review.

Chairman O'Connell: My understanding is that is before the Department of Public Works for review because it ties in with Parks and Rec. So they're looking at it, but it's conceptual. So it hasn't been finalized. And so it's in the court of the DPW right now to come back to this team with what their view of the initial proposal by SMMA was.

Alderman Bonilla: Do we have an estimated timeline of when this would be complete?

M. Lenfest: There's a conceptual drawing now that is complete. There's a proposal of what it would take to bring that from conceptual to a full set. The reason why it goes to the DPW is Parks and Rec is part of that. And anything we do with any athletic fields, the basketball courts, any of that, we run through them. So are you asking when that plan would move from conceptual to full?

Alderman Bonilla: Yes, I'd love to see it.

M. Lenfest: I can get back to you on that, I would have to check. There hasn't been a sense of urgency on it; that work doesn't happen until the summer of 2028. I know they've been looking at it. They've had a lot going on. They're recreating some of the park obligations we had previously through the city's commitments. But I can ask that.

Alderman Bonilla: We already have the concept for the new Beech Street already approved; that site is part of that concept and is part of the phase one project is part of the \$306 million. I keep getting this question over and over. I feel like through that perception that the images haven't been created, people are thinking that we're going to keep the building or that's not going to even happen. If you're able to put a little pressure. Of course, my love to DPW. I recognize that they're doing a whole lot with added

infrastructures and temporary infrastructures, as well as the major improvements, I do appreciate that. But I'd love to see it, too.

Chairman O'Connell: Alderman Bonilla, I share your frustration or anticipation of seeing this. Harvey Construction is engaged to do that work. It's part of their contract, as you rightfully said, under the \$306 million. So they can't leave until that work is done. They will have completed the Beech Street school in the summer of 2028. And they will want to roll right into and they may overlap, but Harvey will be on the ground doing that work on that, the demolition of Beech Street School and creating what's going to be created in its place so that work would begin in the summer of 2028. So a final plan for that field and for those things is needed before that work can happen. So that certainly has to happen in 2027. It would be great if we could get through this concept, get through the conceptual piece, and move further towards design so that we can do exactly what you're talking about and so the public can get excited and see what's coming. We're here in the fall, heading into the winter of 2026. If we don't have this before us by the spring of next year, in the next six months, then we should be starting to say we need this plan. But you're right, the DPW is doing a lot of work. I've made note here again and again, because I think they deserve the credit that the amount of work that's been done by the school district and the Department of Public Works in this city without adding personnel or without adding costs. We're giving them work to do and not giving them budgets or people to do it.

Alderman Bonilla: A complete Beech Street site restoration would be complete in November of 2028?

M. Lenfest: Looks like the end of November, beginning of December.

Alderman Bonilla: We really want to see it because there's so much anticipation. And at one point, we could have had this conversation a while ago, but a track is not coming. Correct?

M. Lenfest: Yes. Correct.

Alderman Bonilla: I just wanted to put that out there because I don't think we talked about a track. It was a field, a basketball court, irrigation and lighting, correct?

M. Lenfest: Correct.

Chairman O'Connell: For former member Potter's benefit, water bubblers or water supply and seating.

M. Lenfest: We'll let the DPW know that there's a little sense of urgency there and it'd be great what we could share. That being said, the DPW has been a phenomenal partner with Manchester School District on these projects. They are involved in everything. They've helped out. They attend several meetings a week. They send experts regarding the buildings, the trainings, the existing conditions. I mean, they're a fully committed partner on this. We'll ask and I'm sure we'll get something. They actually facilitated the furniture vendor for us which you wouldn't expect from the DPW.

Chairman O'Connell: And we should recognize we have Josh Gagne in the room who's in our audience tonight. And Josh has been integral to this. He's leading the effort on behalf of the DPW in the city and attends so many meetings per week. I don't know where he finds the time, but there's a lot of work that goes into these things. So thank you.

M. Lenfest: As well as Mr. Clougherty, and Jason Houle and I'm going to forget some names, but they come out in force. So the updated budget, we are tracking on budget, all projects are within the \$306 million. This is a snapshot of last month. That being said, we actually executed this month's financial package. So that will be updated and included in the updated report that follows this meeting. The updated schedules, there are no major schedule changes to report to this group. And that brings us to the websites which are updated. I can't take the credit for that. That is a result of Consigli and Harvey as well as the school IT department which has been integral in taking over those responsibilities that were previously contracted out.

Chairman O'Connell: I think it's worth noting because we went by it, that since we last met, that we did have the groundbreaking, the ribbon cutting and the opening of McLaughlin Middle School. And that's a big deal. This is the first of these five projects delivered on budget and on time. And that's a credit to everybody. We continue to thank people for their work and giving them credit for the work. I want to assure everybody and you that the day that criticism and other things are needed, that that comes in equal amounts. But the reason, if those listening to us and watching these meetings say, we see your meeting every month and it's everything's great. And the reason is because everything's great. So three big measures: on budget, yes; on time, yes. And is everybody going home safely every week? Those are the three big measures. And we're meeting those every day. So the first of our four schools is done. We talked about Beech Street being complete in the November time frame of 2028. That's all the groundwork, right? The school will be opening for September 1st, or whatever the opening day of school is of 2028. So the building will be complete in the summer of 2028. And kids will be in there learning, playing, and enjoying that space in September of 2028.

School Committee Member Turner: When I was commenting on Hillside furniture, that was one side of the coin just noting that it was not quite the right furniture. But on the other side of the coin was the families that were in the building, peeking into the bathrooms and peeking into classrooms and fresh paint and wayfinding and new signs. I mean, everybody was like, wow. I even noticed that the current ninth graders came back to Hillside knowing that they could access the building during open house. So they came. They maybe had family there. Probably not. They just really wanted to see what the renovations looked like. So they were very excited and a little bit jealous that they just missed the boat on that. In the time between when we've met and now, myself, Jim, Gary, we got to go through Parkside and Southside as well. I just couldn't be more pleased with the progress. I feel like I have to pinch myself every time I'm actually walking through or driving past Beech Street, the groundbreaking that's happening there. Looking back five years, this was all a dream. And now it actually is a reality. So super excited to be a parent in the community at an open house, seeing other parents looking around and peeking into bathrooms going, wow. Yes, we can have nice things, it's finally time and it's so satisfying. I couldn't be more pleased.

Alderman Fajardo: Regarding some of these tours that you were just mentioning, I thought that I would be invited to them. I was traveling, unfortunately, for work for the McLaughlin ribbon cutting, which I couldn't make. I'm hoping that everything else can land on my calendar.

J. Chmiel: It was sent to both Boards. The day we were at Southside was actually the day I was texting with you because someone said, I think I just saw her go by the front of the building. So I texted you and I think at that point you said you were out of town or you were somewhere that day. The invite was all in that whole thread when we sent them over. When we do the invites, we do send the invitations to both Boards so that we make sure both sets of Boards have the time to get into those buildings. There will be more.

Alderman Fajardo: That's helpful., I think that I misunderstood that there were just some invitations that were just for this committee. I thank you for clarifying that, and I will be sure to follow up more closely on the subsequent invites.

2. Monthly status and financial report submitted by LeftField for the period ending September 2026.

*On motion of **School Committee Member Turner**, duly seconded by **School Committee Member Hamer**, it was voted to accept the report and submit it to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and Board of School Committee for informational purposes.*

*There being no further business, on motion of **School Committee Member Turner**, duly seconded by **Alderman Bonilla**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.



Clerk of Committee

*Meeting Start Time: 5:00PM
Meeting End Time: 5:33PM
Minutes Prepared By: Michael Intranuovo*