

March 28, 2011

To the Town Council:

As a supporter of the two-school option, I am disappointed by your decision to not go forward with that plan. This is an issue on which reasonable people can disagree, and frankly, I was prepared to accept the rejection of the two-school plan, either by you or at referendum. That being said, I am extremely disappointed by how your decision came to pass, and while there are many dissatisfactory elements of that process I could point out, I want to highlight two here.

First, I question some of the arguments made to support the decision to vote against the two-school option. In particular, on repeated occasions the 2006 *Plan of Conservation and Development* was cited as evidence that the objectives of the school building plan are not pressing and are more 'wants' than 'needs'. The *Plan of Conservation and Development* is a land-use document authored by the Planning and Zoning Commission. While it was quoted accurately, the status of the schools was largely a tangential issue for that plan. Both the reports of the Board of Education and the School Building Committee are far more relevant documents concerning the needs of the school system. As evidence of the deficiency of using the PZC document for this purpose, consider this sentence from the Board's report: "The initial request from the Board to the Council in 2005 was for the creation of a building committee 'to review the capacity and condition of the town's four school buildings' " (MBOE report, p. 3). Note the timing of this: The Board's request was made *before* the Plan of Conservation and Development was published. I don't think this reflects a failure of the PZC to adequately consider the schools; I think it is much more a reflection of the fact that the status of the schools was largely tangential to the land use issues that the PZC's report was meant to address.

I think it's important to acknowledge that reasonable people can differ in their assessment of the urgency of the objectives of the school building project, and I am not taking issue with anyone's assessment. However, I do object to decisions being either made or justified on less than the best evidence. Using the PZC report as the basis for a decision on the schools is akin to concluding that the theory of evolution is false because it wasn't mentioned in a prominent book on physics. Whether the conclusion is true or false, it simply doesn't follow from the argument.

My second objection to your decision process is that the decision should have been framed as which of two paths to take, not simply as whether we take a particular path or not. You have, in the classic sense, painted yourselves, and us, into a corner. I believe that you those of you who voted against the two-school plan should have offered a specific alternative, and the relative merits of those two plans should have been discussed. Perhaps that's what you thought you were doing, and that by default it was either the two-school or three-school plan—Option E or Option A—but in fact that's not the case. Doing nothing, which you've done so far, is not the same as endorsing Option A. There is as yet no consensus about the time frame of the maintain-and-repair plan, whether the town will apply for any reimbursement funds from the state, or even what our priorities are for investing in the schools. Simply put, after all this time and effort, we still don't have a plan.

At this time neither the Board of Education nor the residents of this town could possibly glean the Council's priorities with regard to its objectives concerning our schools. To remind you, and to quote from the Board's report: There are substantial potential savings in terms of "maintenance, energy costs, and redundant staffing". There are "current and anticipated needs for roof repairs or replacements, plumbing and electrical work, gym floors, gym partitions, boiler replacements, oil line replacements, and septic field work". There are "temporary, relocatable classrooms... nearing the end of their life cycles" and in need of replacement. There are safety concerns, both with access to the school buildings and with vehicle access and pedestrian safety. And last, but not least, there are clear educational benefits that would result from creating 'improved, dedicated spaces' for special education, 'larger, more uniform' and more adequate classroom sizes, and "state-of-the-art library/media centers".

I'd agree that these objectives are not all equally urgent, and that some are more pressing than others. But at this point it is impossible to know what the Council views as priorities. You would put the School Board in an impossible situation if you don't give it guidance on these issues before sending the matter back to them.

Finally, I want to reiterate that while I disagree with your decision not to go forward with the two-school plan, I don't find it entirely unreasonable. However, I do object to both how you made that decision and some of the evidence used to justify it. I'm here tonight to voice these objections, and to voice my concern that you address the objectives identified by the School Board and do what's in your power to continue to keep our schools strong.

Sincerely,

Jay Rueckl
128 South Eagleville Road

March 28, 2011

From: Betty Wassmunt, stans

At the budget presentation session, I listened to you discuss how you felt about the increase in the tax burden due to the new budget. I would prefer to hear you discuss the value that you are giving to the tax payers for their money. You are the stewards of the public's money.

For you to assess value, you need to understand the operation of this town's government; you need to question this operation. Last session you were told there would be a new position for a sustainability coordinator. Do you know what such a person will do? I hope you'll tell me. You were told there will be a need for additional building inspection hours due to the Downtown. I think back to Carl Panciera who did all the building inspection when there was a lot of construction in town. We had just Carl and we had Charlie Bradley to do septic inspection. Now we have departments for both building and septic, yet we need more man hours. I wonder why, do you?

I'd like you to question why it takes 50% more employees to operate Mansfield than it takes Coventry to operate. I think Coventry has more residences than does Mansfield.

Instead of listening to you debate how much more money you can reasonably take away from people, I'd like to hear you review programs and departments for efficiency. I'd like to see you seriously set out to regionalize those governmental functions which lend themselves to such. I'd like to see cost containment. What I see so far is continued expansion of Mansfield's government.

Comments + question ^{grammar}
Realistic assessment of school required repairs
I consider it irresponsible for previous councils to
have spent all the Dequett money you had without
properly funding the Fund Balance.

Why did you borrow money from EDR at 8%
interest ~~instead~~ when you could bond at 3%?
Is that responsible use of the citizen's money?

Memo

To: Town Council
From: Matt Hart, Town Manager *Matt*
CC: Town Employees
Date: March 28, 2011
Re: Town Manager's Report

Below please find a report regarding various items of interest to the Town Council, staff and the community:

Council Requests for Information/Council Business

- *Council Communications* – A fair amount of staff time and paper is spent clipping and photocopying articles from the Chronicle, Courant.com and other online news sources. Staff has requested that we discontinue this process or move to a paperless system whereby articles will be clipped, scanned, and emailed to the Council rather than reproduced in the packets.
- *Community Center Fee Waiver* – Item number 10 in your council packet is a letter from a citizen requesting a 90% fee waiver for her membership to the Mansfield Community Center. Staff will contact the citizen to discuss the fee waiver application process.
- *Emergency Service Call* - Staff has reviewed the call for service that was brought to the Town Council's attention regarding a response to a child that was choking. Ric Hossack has provided us with a letter from Taylor Tangari, the babysitter that called 9-1-1. Ms. Tangari performed very well and in the best interest of the child in her care by contacting 9-1-1 when she became concerned about the child choking. The 9-1-1 dispatcher that received the 9-1-1 call followed proper procedure and processed the call quickly while providing a calming influence to Ms. Tangari. Mansfield Fire Department personnel, both off-duty and on-duty, responded quickly and arrived in short order. Upon arrival the child was assessed and it was determined that it was OK to allow the child to remain at home with Ms. Tangari and the other caregivers that had arrived on scene prior to the departure of fire department personnel. The fire department plans to acknowledge the efforts of Ms. Tangari, the dispatcher and the MFD firefighters that responded to the call.

Departmental/Division News

- *Emergency Management* - The Town of Mansfield was recertified as a HEARTSafe Community by the Department of Public Health. The three (3) year re-certification recognizes the Town of Mansfield's commitment to placing and maintaining public AEDs (Automatic External Defibrillators) in public buildings, and making training opportunities available to staff and the public. To date, fifteen (15) public use AEDs have been placed in municipal buildings, schools and recreational facilities. All of the AEDs have been purchased and placed in service utilizing a combination of grants from the State and Federal governments. The Mansfield HEARTSafe program is a multi-departmental partnership, (Parks and Recreation, Eastern Highlands Health District, Mansfield Board of Education, Region # 19 and Emergency Management) that is coordinated through the Office of Emergency Management. Fran Raiola, Assistant Director of Emergency Management, is the lead staff member for this program and should be commended for his commitment to this program.
- *Library* – The Friends of the Mansfield Public Library will hold their long-awaited 'February Book Sale' on Saturday, April 2 from 9 - 4 and Sunday, April 3 from 9 - 3. The delay, caused by unusual amounts of snowfall, has had a significant impact on purchasing materials for the Library. No new adult books, DVD's, CD's, reference books or audiobooks will be purchased until the results of the April sale are known. Due to the delay of the February sale, the June sale date has also changed to the *end* of June, with the Library receiving the Friends' June donation in FY 2012-2013 rather than in FY 2010-2011.

Major Projects and Initiatives

- *Independent/Assisted Living Project* - Masonicare plans to purchase the property on Maple Road within the next 90 days. Staff recommends that the Council meet with Masonicare in the near future to discuss Masonicare's planned program. I would also recommend that the Council give some thought to re-establishing the advisory committee to serve as a liaison to Masonicare for this project.
- *Storrs Center Project* – The Mansfield Downtown Partnership is planning to provide a project update to the Council and the community in April; more details to follow.

Upcoming Meetings*

- Regulatory Review Committee, March 30, 2011, 1:15PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- **Special Town Council Meeting**, March 30, 2011, 6:30PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- **Public Information Session on the Manager's Proposed Budget**, March 31, 2011, 7:00PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Planning and Zoning Commission, April 4, 2011, 7:00PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Beautification Committee, April 4, 2011, 7:00PM, Conference Room C, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Four Corners Water and Sewer Advisory Committee, April 5, 2011, 7:00PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Mansfield Advocates for Children, April 6, 2011, 5:00PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Mansfield Downtown Partnership Board of Directors, April 7, 2011, 4:00PM, Downtown Partnership Office
- Community Quality of Life Committee, April 7, 2011, 7:00PM, Conference Room B, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Housing Code Board of Appeals, April 11, 2011, 5:00PM, Conference Room C, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- **Public Hearing on the Budget/Town Council**, April 11, 2011, 7:30PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building

**Meeting dates/times are subject to change. Please view the Town Calendar or contact the Town Clerk's Office at 860-429-3302 for a complete and up-to-date listing of committee meetings.*