

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
DOWNTOWN MANCHESTER SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT**

August 08, 2026

8 AM

Meeting held at Work_Space, 903 Main Street

MEMBERS PRESENT: Glenn Gerhard, Chair (v)
 Esther Jeffery, Vice Chair
 Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary
 Sophia Dzialo
 Ryan Fagan
 Ken O'Hara

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT:
 Gary Anderson, Director Planning and Development

ALSO PRESENT: Richard Clark
 Adam DeLaura
 Constable Patrick
 Kelly Ray
 Donna Powell
 Emma Petersen
 Sgt. Doyon

STAFF PRESENT: Kate Sulick

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tarek Ambia

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
ABSENT: Millie Texidor – GMCC Representative
 John Lautenbach, Faith Representative

STAFF ABSENT: None

Call to Order:

- Ms. Jeffery calls the meeting to order at 8:01 AM.

Roll Call:

- Ms. Jeffery noted those present and absent.

Minutes:

- A motion to approve the minutes of June 9 and June 10, 2026 is made by Ms.

Dzialo, seconded by Mr. O'Hara. All approve.

O&G Update:

- None present

Public Comment:

- Ms. Sulick notes that the new library's grand opening is September 14, 2026.
- Ms. Sulick informs the Board that Ms. Tedford has submitted a "Bike-Friendly Business Program" which she would like Downtown Manchester to consider in order to make businesses more cyclist friendly. Ms. Petersen notes that Manchester has been certified as being "bike-friendly" but this business program would bring the scope down to the individual business level.
- Ms. Powell reminds the Board that Silk City Fest will be held on August 22. She also represents Imagine Manchester and they are partnering with Urban Lodge for the upcoming event which will feature expanded childrens' programming and musical acts. She notes that the event will impact parking in some parking lots between 8:00 AM and 9:00 PM on the day of the event. Ms. Powell says that the Orange Lot and possibly the Purple Lot and Purnell Place will be affected. Mr. DuBaldo asks for clarification on the closure of Purnell Place, as there are several private parking lots that use Purnell Place as their sole means of access; additionally, in past years, Purnell Place remained open for ease of emergency vehicle access and handicap parking. Ms. Powell says the closures have not been finalized yet.

District Chair Report:

- None at this time – Mr. Gerhardt asks for the report to be tabled until after the presentation.

GMCC Report:

- None present

Planning & EDC Report:

- Ms. Petersen presents the Manchester NEXT Plan. Ms. Petersen says that the mid-term recommendations run between 2027-2029, and that there are a number of recommendations in this plan that are broken down by feasibility of implementation. Ms. Petersen would like to review the language and plans, as well as identify other opportunities that the plan could achieve. She states that the POCD is a framework, not a checklist or adopted policy. She further states that there are many other groups involved in making these goals move forward, not

just the Planning Department, and there are many ways to connect with these plans to keep the planning engaging and accessible.

- Upcoming recommendations:
 - Celebrate Manchester's evolving cultural identity by celebrating the wide variety of nationalities and cultural identities that call Manchester home. Ms. Sulick says that the food event from last year featured restaurants celebrating their separate food culture comprising more than 12 countries. Ms. Dzialo would like to see that transform into more of a "Taste of Downtown" as a multi-day event so people can take their time to savor the food cultures. Mr. Clark says that Hartford and Middletown have both completed their "Taste of" events.
 - Continue to encourage and support neighborhood arts events. Ms. Petersen feels that the way the Second Saturday events are structured, they do a great job achieving that goal. Ms. Dzialo would like to see greater collaboration with the Town with regards to permitting events like sidewalk art shows, etc. so that businesses are more comfortable with an easy process. Ms. Dzialo says that Locable has joined with "Districts" which should allow for opportunities for the Downtown to have a more interactive area on the website for showcasing art and events.
 - Utilize current civic cultural assets to create a thriving arts, culture, and entertainment market. Ms. Petersen explains that this is about showing the value of the arts community and bringing those members together cohesively. Ms. Sulick says that the CT Main Street Association does have many recommendations about identifying public art spaces and the art themselves to create a database of points of interest. Ms. Petersen says that it's good to have feedback from larger organizations, but sometimes those don't align with the current capacity of the District. Ms. Dzialo recognizes that there is a capacity limit to what the District can handle. Ms. Petersen agrees and says that illustrates why they would like to know the priorities of each group. Mr. Anderson says that a lot of this is about connecting dots so that we know what the capacity of each group is, so the ongoing processes keep moving forward.
 - Strive to make Downtown Manchester welcoming and inclusive to all residents. Ms. Petersen recommends that this line could tie well with the QR code project identifying not only art, but under-represented populations. Mr. O'Hara says that the events are inclusive but we still have

room to inspire and grow the business populations. Ms. Jeffery says that there are a lot of women-owned businesses that people may not be aware of. Ms. Petersen says that a lot of this goal requires networking and crossovers and collaborations between groups. Ms. Jeffery agrees that communication is key and is dependent upon groups all working together.

- Continue to keep the Town of Manchester website calendar updated with local festivals, events, and entertainment options. Ms. Petersen would like to know if it's a lot of work to get events on the Town's website. Ms. Sulick says that it would be much easier if they could pull data from the Downtown calendar rather than have the District or its constituents duplicate posts. Mr. O'Hara would like to see a monthly data export to alleviate a lot of the burden from both parties. Ms. Dzialo says that there is, at times, an inconsistency between the posting of events and the accuracy of the events; sometimes events are or aren't posted on the Town's site. For instance, the 2026 Memorial Day Parade was not posted to the website, but the historical data was available. Ms. Sulick says that there is a company she's aware of that aggregates calendars so that groups can post their own information and disperse it to other calendars.
- Incorporate an inclusive understanding of community needs and cultural awareness in to Downtown policing practices. Ms. Petersen appreciates how connected Ms. Sulick is with the public and the police, but would like her input as to how to be better. Ms. Sulick says that our police are fantastic and deal with people of various cultures and mental states. She says that she has always encountered empathy from the officers she has dealt with. She is concerned about the mental health issues in the general public and understands how difficult it can be to manage those individuals successfully and compassionately. Sgt. Doyon says the community officers try to treat certain issues with continuity so that it's not always new officers responding each time. He recommends that the Town and Downtown be as explicitly clear as to what exactly their expected responses should be in certain situations of individuals refusing assistance. Mr. Clark feels that the police aren't social workers. Sgt. Doyon says that today's police wear many hats now including acting in that capacity. He feels that events like Cruisin' have very minimal problems and huge social benefits. Ms. Petersen says that human services now has an individual whose job will be homeless management. Ms. Sulick would like to have a separate meeting to discuss that along with the community police. Ms. Petersen says that there should

be a balance of resources available and policies in place. (Mr. O'Hara exits 9:01).

- Consider a night market to celebrate local businesses, highlight creative talent in the reguin and bring the community together.
- Survey minority populations to determine what would make Downtown feel more inclusive and welcoming.
- Support existing initiatives and identify new ones that encourage teens, college students, and young adults to spend more time Downtown.

Faith Community Update:

- None present

Finance Committee:

- Mayor's Program for Manchester Children - Mr. Gerhardt says that the marketing team has worked very closely with the Town to enhance the last events of the year. The Town felt that our events worked very well to support children.
- SBM Grant - Additionally, there is some overlap to submit grant proposals for the coming 2027 year.
- New Sponsorship - Ms,. Sulick reports that Hartford Healthcare has joined as a sponsor for the Health and Wellness event.
- YTD Budget – Mr. Gerhardt says that we're only one month into the new year, but last year appears to have ended appropriately, and the first batch of numbers for this year also appear to be tracking correctly.

Report of the District Chair:

- Mr. Gerhardt says that we have around 170 businesses in our files and feels that having a simple pamphlet for indicating business availability and locations would be very helpful, and he would like to see updated versions throughout the year. Mr. DuBaldo notes that the District used to do that in the past and it was very beneficial, but maintenance of those lists were challenging. Mr. Gerhardt believes that there are tools that could facilitate the maintenance of those lists. Ms. Dzialo believes a large obstacle is making sure that the website information is updated correctly with one accurate database and ensuring that database stays intact.

- Merchandise plan – Mr. Gerhardt would like to facilitate items for purchase without having excess inventory around. Ms. Jeffery believes that merchandising is a good idea and many other towns appear to have successful programs. Ms. Ray says they would also make good prizes during events. Mr. Clark would like to see a Manchester Welcome Center at the former Mary Cheney Library space selling that type of merchandise.

Parking Report:

- Mr. Fagan reports that the Maple drainage issue was approved in November, the Town says design and construction should be next year. He further reports that there haven't been many numbers changes over last year, there may need to be some clarification about whether the revenue Passport reports is actual received revenue or posted revenue. Constable Patrick says that there are other issues with revenue of handicap parking being reported as our income though it's not and would like clarification on that. Mr. Fagan would like to see the updated reports presented on a monthly basis. Mr. Clark believes that the Town should perform more active traffic enforcement. Mr. Fagan notes that fees for daily and other permit fees cost roughly \$1500 per year. He states that our parking prices are significantly under market rate and we don't need to bring them to market rate, but there should be some adjustments especially to the daily rate. He proposes a move towards \$4 per day. Mr. DuBaldo asks if that would require updated signage. Mr. Fagan says that signage is an issue and we would need to make requisite changes should the rates change. Mr. Fagan feels that the back lots could revert back to 2 hour parking so everything is the same limit, update signage and wayfinding. update the website, increase permit fees, increase violation fees of no parking zones from \$20 to \$35 but recommends leaving overtime parking as-is which better represent going rates. Mr. DuBaldo would like to see the data for no parking zone violations vs overtime parking. Ms. Fagan says that there would also need to be a reevaluation about parking post-streetscape renovations. Mr. Anderson asks about the change from 3 hour to 2 hour parking in the rear lots due to long discussions about that in the past which brought the two hours and three hour limits. Mr. Fagan says it's about consistency. Mr. Anderson says that the rear lots were meant to have the longer duration turnover for stays stays like dining and lengthy shopping/strolling. Mr. Gerhardt says that three hours of free parking seems a little long to him and notes that Willimantic is 15 minutes free, .75 per hour after. Mr. Fagan would like to have a defined long-term goal about what the parking processes should be. Constable Patrick says that the Town may need to approve fee changes.

Marketing Update:

- Ms. Dzialo reiterates that the first grant submission should be in today for the remainder of this year's events. Over the last week, there was Cruisin' on Main and the Downtown Health & Wellness event. Those were very hot days downtown, but the events were very well-received. Some businesses, like Run Manchester, held an early-morning run to kick off the event. Other businesses from within Manchester also came to Downtown to join the events.
- Future DMSSD Events - BookFest will be held Sept. 12. There are about 70 authors represented. Constable Marvin was able to pass out information about that event to the local businesses. October should bring about the Scarecrow Festival and Halloween Trick or Treat. Holiday on Main is slated for November complete with Mr. & Mrs. Claus and trolley. Increased integration with Facebook should help with pulling information from Facebook through Locable which minimizes the amount of information the businesses need to update to get their information in both places.

Maintenance & Beautification:

- Ms. Sulick reports that there will be continued repainting of the Downtown furnishings, benches, barriers, trash cans. Ms. Sulick says that the paint colors will be Liberty Sage and Charter Oak green. She also informs the Board that October 3 will be a Downtown cleanup day between 9-11 AM.

Manager's Report:

- Ms. Sulick attended a CT Main Street event which she found very enlightening.

Old Business:

- None

Public Comment:

- Mr. Clark says that Cruisin' seemed extremely successful, some access points closed early for car admission, so it was very well-attended.

Executive Session:

- A motion to enter executive session to discuss the manager position is made at 9:48 AM by Ms. Dzialo, seconded by Mr. Fagan. (Public and non-voting members exit)

- Executive session ends at 10:23 AM with no actions taken.
- A motion to approve the Downtown Manager's position summary is made by Ms. Dzialo, seconded by Mr. Fagan. All approve.

Adjourn

- There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting is made by Mr. Fagan at 10:24 AM, seconded by Ms. Dzialo. All approve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder