Manchester Development Authority

Regular Meeting

Minutes

March 20, 2025

 9:00 a.m.

The Manchester Development Authority Board of Directors held their monthly meeting on March 20, 2025, at 9:00 am at the MDA office located at 117 Callaway St. Manchester.

Board Members in attendance were Danny Wadsworth, Solomon Ferguson, Glen Gosa, Jimmy Mitcham, Suzanne Bartels Pengelly, and Beverly Wadsworth.

MDA staff present- Jodi Sharpe

Guests- Tom Mosley- Manchester First Methodist, Dawn Woodard- Meriwether County School System, Virginia Strait- citizen, Mayor Mark Trimble, and City Manager Mark Pullium.

1. Call to Order- Chairman Danny Wadsworth called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. Tom Mosley led in prayer.
2. Approval of Agenda for March 20, 2025, Regular Session – Glen Gosa made a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of Mayor Trimble as citizen comment. Beverly Wadsworth seconded, and all were in favor.

Approval of Minutes for February 16, 2025, Regular Session- Beverly Wadsworth made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 16, 2025, Regular Session. Solomon Ferguson seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

1. Citizen Comment- Mayor Trimble

Mayor Trimble stated that he started in December trying to pull both the MDA and Downtown Development Authorities together to look at the strategic plan and that moving forward in the same direction. He said they discovered that there were things that the DDA and the MDA needed to straighten out. The city was neglectful of record keeping and that of the boards. He needed to get the boards straightened up. The city does not have founding documents and bylaws for the authorities. He said he was looking at the state laws of how the development authorities were formed. He said that it originally formed in 1975 or 1976. He said that we needed to have the most efficient boards. He wanted a clear definition of how the boards are supposed to function according to state law. The formation of the development authority had the sole purpose of is for increasing trade and commerce. (He said he was paraphrasing.) He said that those specific actions were to bring new companies and jobs. He indicated that Danny Wadsworth and Jodi Sharpe were present when the strategic plan was initially founded. Specific assignments were given to the MDA and DDA that centered around new businesses and new jobs. He said he didn’t know, and he had to know his responsibility to see how things are operating and what we are missing. He said his entire goal is to unify this city- all its boards, and authorities and march forward in a very clear, defined path to bring this city back.

He said he was not casting dispersions about what has been done by previous boards, because that doesn’t inform him. What does inform him is where we are at this point in time and how to move forward to advance this city. He said he was here to help, not to overlord. He said he wants to make sure we are together- communicating and functioning. How do we straighten this out so we can advance this city. He said that was his single purpose.

Chairman Wadsworth asked, “What are we straightening out?” Mayor Trimble said that he thought that he, no the city was demanding that we focus at this time… first of all what do we focus on. He said, “Record keeping is not our problem, you inherited a huge. Heas much a problem as the city inherited on January 1, 2024. He said that this was the group, or committee that can…What can we find, what can’t we find?

Danny Wadsworth said to the mayor that he told him he would do that. Mayor Trimble said that there were still discrepancies on records of reappointment of board members. Those have not been worked out between the MDA and city. Ms. Sharpe said that she had sent the most current list. Mayor Trimble asked Ms. Sharpe if he was commenting or was he defending? She said that she was just clarifying his statement. He said what had not been taken care of were the terms that were filled that were unexpired. You cannot just add four years to on those it messes up the cycle. Ms. Sharpe stated that that was not what she did. He said that the terms were still not clearly defined between the city and the MDA. He said looking back in the city council records we (the city) have a clear path of who was appointed for who and the timeline left in their seats. He said there was still discrepancy between the city and MDA records, and we have to solve that.

Danny Wadsworth said to the mayor that he had asked for a list of what he needed, and he had not gotten the list yet. The mayor said to Mr. Wadsworth that he told him the only requirement legally that the MDA reports to the city is financial. The law requires a financial statement, and the MDA has done that. The mayor said what we (the city) are trying to do is reappoint, that is the sole function of the city council. Mr. Wadsworth stated that he had been asked for a list of things from Mayor Trimble and City Manager Pullium. He said when he asked why, they told him it was state law. The mayor told Mr. Wadsworth to be careful. Mr. Wadsworth said he was yet to receive that list of what is required. The mayor said that there was only one requirement of reporting and that it was financial. The mayor and Chairman Wadsworth both agreed that that had been done. Mayor Trimble said the rest was cooperative. He said that we (the city) don’t have records of the Bylaws and reappointments. He said if it is the responsibility of the council to reappoint then we (the city) need to make sure that we are tracking that properly. He said when they reappoint someone to the board, they have to have the Bylaws so they can educate them of what their job is and their terms. To do so efficiently, well planned, and so that the MDA and the city as a whole can move forward without questioning. So, the next group doesn’t have to guess anymore.

Chairman Wadsworth asked the mayor, “What do you need?”

The mayor said that he needed to work out the two versions, the version from the city’s minutes is where they are taking the appointments.

City Manager Pullium asked if he could make a statement. He said in the packet when there was a change in the board when 4 members had to step down it was in the council’s packet. The packet had their term dates and Angel has a copy of packet. The packet had their term end dates. He said that is what the mayor and council voted for so that the integrity of the staggered terms for continuity. He said Ms. Judy (Judy Taylor Foster Pike) was the one who put together the list and brought it to the mayor and council for a vote. He said that was in the records. He also stated that that was all he had to say, he did not have any public comment he was just clarifying that there was a time frame, and it was in the clerk of the city’s records.

Mr. Glen Gosa asked for a better understanding of what was owed to the city. He said his understanding was that the financials were owed to the city. He asked if that had been done, and the mayor responded yes. He said the only other issue was appointments. He asked what the MDA needed to do to make sure the appointments were correct. Mr. Pullium said that mayor and council would have to take that up, that wasn’t something for the MDA to do. It would have to be put on the agenda and voted on by the council. He said he had another comment he would like to add. He said that he had a conversation with Danny (Wadsworth) recently where Danny asked if there was a legal list of things that were required. He said he told Mr. Wadsworth that there was no legal list that he knew of. Where the requests were coming from was when he and the mayor had attended a small cities conference and the panel presenting- lawyers from the Carl Vinson Institute, and they indicated that it was “best practice” for authorities to give copies of their minutes and bylaws to mayor and council so they can be kept by the city clerk. That was the recommendation, and he thinks it is good practice. He said had this been done in the past there wouldn’t be as much confusion. He then asked to speak about the financial statement. He said the DDA, and the MDA are considered component units of the city. He said we did not have to have the same auditor, but it makes it easier if we do. They will include the MDA’s audit in with the cities in final reporting. He explained where you could find the MDA and DDA’s report listed on the city’s audit.

Mr. Wadsworth stated that the MDA was a little remiss about appointing the people who wished to continue to serve on the board. He said everyone did and it should have been done in December, but we have a six month period that these board members could continue to serve until we got the approved.

The mayor said, “Yes it’s a perpetual board.” The mayor then added that his last statement would be he was not prepared with the documents he would have liked to had, but he only has one goal and that was not to take over or get rid of the MDA. He said the city council is declaring a flag in the ground on the strategic plan of how to restore the city. He said the MDA has a critical job. The most difficult job in taking part in this. He said that the will of the council is that we move forward together with the strategic plan. He asked, can I demand you to do that as the mayor or representative of the city council. He said that the answer was no. I can implore, direct, and fund or not fund things that support that. I consider things to be on mission or off mission. I would like every group, committee, department head, staff board, authority to be unified in this and take up their section of what has been collectively put together as a way to restore our city. There is no attempt at overtaking, but discovery of information obviously stirred problems and I apologize for upsetting you, but I don’t apologize for going after the information We are cleaning up the streets, we are cleaning up our operational plans, and the way things are done so we can save money, stay on budget, and accomplish our goals. Pulling the authorities, having the support of the authorities, and boards, is part of that and defining how to fix this city. That is my only goal. I’m here to help this city. I don’t like getting you riled, its not my purpose. I do ask as the council because the strategic plan is there that I am allowed to come and present that so we can enjoy clear direction that fits your state stated purpose. I’m not asking anything else outside of that. He clarified that what he meant by state law, the purpose we just talked about.

Ms. Bartels Pengelly said that she feels that we are onboard that the city moves ahead as a whole, the problem is and it has been brought up to both of you (Trimble and Pullium), the lack of communication from the city so that we can do our job. She said we have asked over and over again for information that we have not been able to get and that was a problem. Mr. Trimble said that he appreciated that, and we want to move to change it. That is one of the things that we need to cleanup.

Ms. Bartels Pengelly said that would be a great way to start, to communicate with us about how he wished to go forward with that.

The mayor said that the mess that we find ourselves in. I’m going to make this statement, “No one prior to this group here, I’ve checked and I’ve talked with two city managers, besides this one. The MDA has not been on task since it was formed. That was the statement from two previous city managers, covering 35 years of service. He asked what does that mean and then went on to explain ‘improving commerce, and trade for our city, defined in that statute by jobs and bringing new business. That is one of the toughest jobs. He said that everyone here including you, patting the Executive Director on the shoulder are untrained and we have to educate ourselves. We will make that possible anyway the city can help to do so.

Chairman Wadsworth said that he appreciated that. He said, “I for one love Manchester, and want to see it succeed. It is very tough and a tough agenda for us to recruit industry because we are isolated and rural, we have members to talk this morning about the school situation and we need to see how we can help and how the city can help with that. Communication is the number one item that needs improvement. The mayor interjected, “I’m in.”

Mr. Wadsworth continued, “From this point on I would like an open line of communication from the city to Manchester Development Authority.”

The mayor asked, “How do I do that if I can’t get a meeting?”

Mr. Wadsworth continued, “And vice versa. As a member of both I think it is necessary.”

Mayor Trimble told Mr. Wadsworth that he was the connection. He was the elected official that was the connection between these two groups. He said let’s start with getting the information and have the meetings necessary to have the discussions necessary.” The mayor then asked city manager Pullium, “Do we have that commitment,” and Mr. Pullium responded, “yes. I’ve already spoke with you and Danny about this.”

Glen Gosa asked, “what do we need to do on the financial side of things?” Mr. Pullium answered Mr. Gosa that the audit was completed by Mauldin and Jenkins and the city had received a copy. Nothing needs to be done.” Mr. Gosa asked about the need for the MDA to provide records. Mr. Pullium said that Jodi (Sharpe) was already taking care of that. Ms. Sharpe said that she had sent the city clerk what had been requested and that all minutes from December 2024 to present were now available on the MDA website. Mr. Pullium requested that they be sent to the city clerk when they were completed. Ms. Sharpe said that she would comply. Mr. Pullium added that it was based on best practices from the Carl Vinson Institute. Chairman Wadsworth asked Mr. Gosa if that answered his questions. Mr. Gosa then asked about the list of appointments, what do we need to do on the list of appointments. Mr. Pullium began to answer, but Mayor Trimble answered, “what is the communication means, who do you want us to work that out with, you?” (He was addressing Chairman Wadsworth) “You are the chairman, we will look at what you are proposing, and we will dig out from our minutes, and that will finalize it.” Mr. Wadsworth said “that would be fine”, and Mr. Gosa asked if it was just a matter of getting the terms staggered and who did this person follow?” Mayor Trimble said, “Yes, we will handle all of it. We will get that established and all of our records to match.” Mr. Pullium added that ever since the MDA has been in place there has been staggered terms for continuity. He said that there is a list that Angel has and could share it with anybody, of who and what the terms are.

Suzanne Bartels Pengelly asked about the new code that have recently been put in place. She said she was unsure of how to approach them. We don’t have a copy of the rules put in place.

Mr. Pullium said we can make sure you get one today. The mayor asked, “For which?” Ms. Bartels Pengelly talked about special events. Mr. Pullium told Ms. Bartels Pengelly that those were online, and he thought that Jodi (Sharpe) might have a copy. Ms. Sharpe stated that she did not, she only had the Food Truck permit.

Ms. Bartels Pengelly asked about the carnival that was renting property from the MDA. She said she felt that since the MDA was not hosting the carnival just allowing the carnival to use the property that she did not feel the MDA should be named as the applicant. The mayor said that if the MDA did not want to have the event, then the city would take it back. Mr. Pullium told the mayor to leave it alone. Ms. Bartels Pengelly said that they were renting the property like they always have. The mayor said that the MDA does make some money from the carnival coming to town. That is a way to help the MDA.

Ms. Bartels Pengelly attempted to explain to her point that the MDA was not hosting or organizing the event, the carnival company was renting the property for a very small fee, and she didn’t feel that it was accurate to name the MDA as the applicant on the Special Events Permit. The mayor began to address Ms. Bartels Pengelly, but was cut off by city manager Pullium who said, “I am going to address this, you are a quasi-governmental entity and it is saving the carnival from paying fees, by having it on your property they are not subject to all the fees, which would prevent them from coming. So, because it’s on your property they don’t have to pay the fees, and you are going to make a little money off of it. Ms. Bartels Pengelly asked what the first line of the application said. Ms. Sharpe told her, “Name of applicant.” Ms. Bartels Pengelly said we are not applicants. Mr. Pullium responded, “You can’t deny its on your property, you voted for it, you can go back in your minutes and see where you voted for it.”

Chairman Wadsworth requested that the meeting move forward and we could continue discussing this at a later time.

1. New Business
2. Guest- Dawn Woodard – Meriwether County CTAE Program

Ms. Woodard presented to the board a thorough explanation of the CTAE program that is taught at Manchester and Greenville high schools. (power point attached) Ms. Woodard graciously answered questions that the board and guest ask. Ms. Woodard announced that she would be retiring from the school system, but her replacement would be Ms. Carrie Chambers.

Mr. Solomon Ferguson took a moment to speak to the board about concerns he had about the conflict going on between the city and the MDA. He said, “we can’t as a development authority and a city be at odds and make progress for the city. That is not going to work, and whatever it is, we need to straighten it out, so we can move forward. I want to see this place, the place where I was born, graduated from high school, came back to and worked, I want to see us grow. We all know that we have all kinds of potential in the city, but we don’t need to squander our opportunities, so whatever we need to do, we need to get it right so we can move forward.”

1. Board Member Appointments- Update

Ms. Sharpe said that she had gone back through the MDA minutes and stated that she would like a copy from Angel to compare. She gave the list that she had to the board. Ms. Sharpe stated that when Marty Mitchell resigned from the MDA board the board voted to reduce the number of board members to seven, however, in a discussion with Nathan Lee she learned that this was not possible because in 1992 a resolution was passed by the city to make the number of board members the maximum number allowable by law of 9. Ms. Sharpe said that she had sent the board terms, and the interest of Jimmy Mitcham and Solomon Ferguson to be reappointed to the MDA to the city clerk, city council, and city manager without response.

Suzanne Bartels Pengelly added that in conversation with Nathan Lee, MDA attorney, he didn’t think it was necessary to have such a large board, considering the size of the city.

Mayor Trimble asked Danny Wadsworth to bring this information to him when they met.

1. Bylaws Review

Ms. Sharpe said that in her research into the board appointees she had reviewed the bylaws. She included a copy of an updated set of bylaws in board members’ packets. Ms. Sharpe pointed out the areas that needed to be updated. She requested that the board review the bylaws and see if there were any additional updates needed and at the next meeting they could be approved.

1. Upcoming Training

Glen Gosa made a motion to approve Jodi Sharpe to attend her next class for certification in Economic Development through the Carl Vinson institute at $279.00 and 1-night hotel stay.

Solomon Ferguson second the motion and all were in favor.

Suzanne Bartels Pengelly made a motion that Jodi Sharpe attend the GEDA Spring Workshop in May at the expense of $380 and hotel stay. Beverly Wadsworth seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Glen Gosa made a motion to approve sending Jimmy Mitcham for Development Authority Training in April. Suzanne Bartels Pengelly seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

1. Security Camera for Event Space

Suzanne Bartels Pengelly made a motion to approve the purchase of a Ring security camera to place at the ramp entrance at the price of $179.99. Solomon Ferguson second the motion and all were in favor. Ms. Bartels Pengelly also requested research into purchasing a solar powered camera to use to monitor Freedom Park.

1. Rezoning of Mill

Ms. Sharpe asked that the board members watch the March 13, 2025 planning and zoning board meeting available on the city’s Facebook page. She expressed her concerns about the proposed Central Business District zoning overlay. She stated that she would love to see our Mill village connected to the downtown, but didn’t feel that this was the way to do it. Ms. Sharpe explained that she has been in contact with potential clients for the property and the zoning overlay could cause issues with future projects.

1. Repairs to Butterfly Garden Retaining Wall

Ms. Sharpe said that a week ago something happened to the retaining wall around the Butterfly Garden. She informed the board that she contacted Level and Square Renovation and received an estimate from them and was reaching out to another company to get an additional estimate.

1. Keep Meriwether Beautiful

Ms. Sharpe let the board know that the Spring Keep Meriwether Beautiful Cleanup Day was scheduled for Saturday April 26th. She said this year she would like to have a team to clean up the streets around the Mill.

1. Old Business

Market Days at the Mill

Jodi Sharpe told the board that March 8th was the first Market Days at the Mill for the year. She said 42 vendors had signed up, with several not showing up. She stated that despite the wide variety of products for sale, shopper turnout was low. The next Market Day is scheduled for April 12. Ms. Sharpe announced that at the March market day she was able to raise $206.00 to put towards the Water Tower Fund.

1. Financial Report

Ms. Sharpe provided the Financial Report. Glen Gosa made a motion to allow Ms. Sharpe to move $20,000 from the GA Fund 1 account as needed for expenditures. Solomon Ferguson seconded the motion and all were in favor.

1. Executive Session- Real Estate

Beverly Wadsworth made a motion to leave open session and enter executive session at 11:01 am. The motion was seconded by Solomon Ferguson. All were in favor.

Glen Gosa made a motion to return to open session. Jimmy Mitcham seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Suzanne Bartels Pengelly made a motion to approve making an offer of $150,000 to the Callaway Foundation to purchase approximately 92 acres. Beverly Wadsworth seconded and all were in favor.

1. Adjourn
2. Beverly Wadsworth made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Glen Gosa seconded and all were in favor.