

My fellow Mansfield residents,

My name Prakash Kashwan, I live at 81 Independence Dr. in Mansfield Center, and I am an assistant professor of Political Science at University of Connecticut.

I stand here to support and request your support for the proposition that the Town of Mansfield adopts a responsible contractor ordinance. As many of you know, this ordinance has been proposed by the an ad hoc group of UConn faculty, and has the support of the Connecticut Laborers District Council and the New England Regional Council of Carpenters. The purpose of such ordinances are to ensure equitable labor conditions at publicly funded construction projects in Mansfield. They apply to all large-scale, publicly funded construction sites (new buildings and renovations) in the Town, and often require that all contractors at such sites pay a living wage to their employees (“prevailing wage”). The ordinance could offer stronger protections against discrimination, against the illegal misclassification of workers (a common practice in the industry by which contractors avoid paying into social security or workers compensation), and could give preference to workers from Eastern Connecticut at the point of hire.

To me, this is both a moral and an economic issue. As the UConn Ad Hoc Faculty Committee for Workers’ Rights has shown, the benefits of this ordinance outweigh the costs. It would also work toward ensuring that the money which taxpayers spend on public infrastructure stays in their communities. There is convincing evidence that contractors with a history of labor law violations also provide poor quality work. In a study of 17 cities, the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found a “direct correlation between labor law

violations and poor quality construction” that resulted in high maintenance and repair costs for taxpayers over the long-term.¹

As someone who does research on the political and economic consequences of inequality and deprivation, I also suggest that supporting responsible contracting ordinance is in the long term interest of our society. And, indeed, as responsible and law abiding resident of this great town of Mansfield, I would not want to contribute to any violation of federal, state, or local laws that support payment of minimum wages and other laws at stake. Finally, my inner voice also tells me that it is the right thing to do – it is absolutely important that we create conditions that allow every individual to have the best opportunity they can have to pursue their own aspirations. I look forward to getting to know you over the years to come!

Thank you.

¹ Moshe Adler, “Prequalification of Contractors: The Importance of Responsible Contracting on Public Works Projects,” Fiscal Policy Institute (New York, NY), 3-5.

Jessica Higham

Opening Remarks

Thank you for hearing my voice this evening. As you now know, you have not heard many voices from Southeast families as the community was lulled into complacency by the thought that, since Southeast was the site selected for the proposed one school plan, it would most assuredly be selected for any future school site scenario. Southeast was determined to have the capacity to house a school of 750 students which would serve the entire town. When the recommendation was made to have two schools, the community made what seemed a logical assumption – that Southeast would always be one of the viable sites. Since that appears to not be a certainty, I appreciate your willingness to listen to the voices from the Southeast community tonight and would ask that members of the Southeast community stand so that you can understand the commitment we bring to this cause.

What I will say tonight may not be new; I will tell you that one of the school sites for whatever plan is adopted should be Southeast. I will tell you this with the same passion that two other school communities told you that their sites were preferable. I will acknowledge that any decision that involves children is an emotional one. I will also tell you that decisions of this magnitude must be guided by the heart and made in tandem with the wisdom of the head. This decision must acknowledge the hard data. In her book *The Essential Conversation*, Harvard professor Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot wrote about “truths the hand could touch”. I ask that your decision be grounded in data that can be available and understood and that the end result is schools where the hopes and dreams of children and their families can come to life.

I speak to you tonight as a Southeast parent, a resident of Mansfield and someone who has served on various committees in the town. I am also a taxpayer and I want to be certain that all monies are spent in an efficient manner. I am aware that there is tremendous human capital in Mansfield and I need to be assured that the hard work of all of the committees and town services have been utilized in making this decision. Are the current recommendations consistent with committee recommendations?

Fiscal resources are a key consideration in a project of this scope. I can only wonder why a site would be considered if the purchase of 40 acres at an estimated cost of \$450,000 is required to make it a viable site while the other two sites can comfortably house the footprints of two new schools with no additional land acquisitions. Southeast is surrounded by a state park which provides an outdoor science laboratory for learners. The Fenton River allows children to explore marine life. The Southeast Fields are already home to hundreds of our town's children and the adjacent land provides ski, running and bike trails for the students. No other site being considered can out grace these natural resources.

We have a variety of speakers this evening who will speak about the pertinent issues in this decision – demographics, site suitability, traffic, site accoutrements and sustainability as well as school culture. Through this discourse, you will clearly understand why we believe that Southeast must be one of the school sites. The data demands it.

Before my colleagues have an opportunity to speak, I have a few more thoughts to share. You have a responsibility that I would not want; you must make a decision that will affect not only our children of today but also a generation yet to be born. Your decision is one that transcends mere bricks and mortar. You are the architects of Mansfield's future. Our town has been known and defined by its dedication to excellence in education. It is the reason many of us have chosen to build our lives here. For Mansfield, high expectations are a way of life, the standard we have come to expect and we do not want this compromised. We are, after all, crafting the future and I for one hope that the message we send to that future will resonate with collaboration, courage, compassion and, most importantly, success. I hope it will be one that the future generation will view with respect.

I could speak for hours about the benefits of Southeast as a school site but, since it was the site selected should there have been one school, I understand that you already know all of the benefits or it would never have been selected as the one site that could serve the entire town. Tonight I need to let other voices be heard – voices that were quiet because of a false assumption. Let me close my remarks by noting that schools are buildings that house the future.

Let's make a decision together that makes the brightest possible future available to Mansfield's children. Thank you for your service to the town and to the future of the town's greatest natural resource – its children.

Jana MacDonald / Greg Zlotnick

To all members of the council and guests, please understand that I am of the opinion and mind that NOT ONE of our three neighborhood schools should be closed. Do we as parents NOT realize that it is the TEACHERS that make the schools what they are and why the Mansfield school system is held in such high regard? When my wife Kim passed, ... Peter, Michael and Gregory were 8, 5 and 2. Betsey Parker and the entire staff at Southeast WERE and STILL are the reasons my sons are who they are today. Everyone at Southeast took each boy under their wings and filled each of them with love and compassion that I GUARANTEE one will SELDOM find in larger schools. Our students here are cared for individually and given the attention they need by the teachers within these three schools. The children are not "lost" in a large building because of the hustle and bustle of getting from one room to the next, ... but just the opposite. The distances they traverse are short and they are all cared for and overseen through out the day. I liken it to a home that's perhaps two bedrooms and the kids all stay in one bedroom. Is it difficult at times? Sure it is. But there is a bond to one another that is developed as a result of the closeness that they share. Our three schools offer ALL of our children that same opportunity for that bond to evolve. Are there areas for improvement within Southeast, Vinton and Goodwin, of course there are. We need to assess and prioritize those items that are necessary in each school for the good of our children and THEN put values to them. I live on Wormwood Hill Rd. EVERY day I drive past Southeast at least twice and each time I'm taken back to that most difficult period in my life. However, ... I NEVER feel pain when I do. I feel a simple joy and quiet fondness with the memories of what Betsey and the staff at Southeast did for my children. Each school, in its own way, offers that quiet comfort to those who walk their halls. I will admit most selfishly however, that Southeast is embedded in my soul and shall ALWAYS stay as such. Thank you, Greg Zlotnick

Submitted by
Council Schaefer

Administration to relax holds on spring weekend

By Katherine Tivedo ^{CDC} 7/4/21,
Staff Writer

The administration is relaxing its stance on Spring Weekend, according to Undergraduate Student Government President Stephen Petkis' report at Wednesday's USG Senate meeting. In his report, Petkis, a 7th-semester political science and human rights double-major, said that while certain policies such as the ban on non-UConn students staying in resident halls and an increased police pres-

ence will remain in affect, the university is changing its attitude towards Spring Weekend.

According to Petkis the moratorium of last year is over. The university will no longer encourage students to go home for the week by presenting the campus as an unsafe environment. In addition, student services will operate as usual and student organizations will be able to rent space and organize events for that weekend. The focus is to treat Spring Weekend as simply another

» **SPRING**, page 2

Spring weekend highlighted at USG meeting

from **ADMINISTRATION**, page 1
weekend on campus.

"This is a big victory for us," said Petkis.

Legislation regarding Spring Weekend policies and programs will be presented in Senate in the near future. USG will be working with the administration and other organizations such as SUBOG to create events that, according to Petkis, will benefit students and their families.

On Wednesday, the Senate also approved \$144,995.08 of the \$232,585.86 in funding requested with little debate and no dissenting votes. Those organizations that were denied partial or full funding can appeal if they feel they were discrimi-

nated against. If their funding falls after Thanksgiving, they can reapply later in the semester. Those organizations seeking funding next semester will have to comply with the new funding policies passed on September 19th. The deadline to apply for Spring semester funding is November 2nd.

In an effort to bridge the gap between administration and the student body, USG will host Straight to the Source next Tuesday, October 9. Students will have the opportunity to speak directly to administrators from 3:30p.m. to 5:30p.m. in the north lobby of the Student Union, according to Naqvi. Also on Tuesday, UConn Police Department will hold

a forum at from 5p.m. to 7p.m. in the Student Union theater. Naqvi said the UCPI event is a way to open a dialogue between the student and the police department.

*"This is a big
victory for us."*

*Stephen Petkis
USG President*

The Senate also unanimously passed a commendation of basketball coach J. Calhoun in recognition of his career and substantial contributions to both UConn and the state of Connecticut.

Katherine.Tivedo@UConn.edu