



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS & BRIEFINGS
DATE: MAY 19, 2026
TIME: 7:01 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS LEO CHOQUETTE, VICE-CHAIR;
IAN ABREU; DEREK BAPTISTE; SHANE BURGO;
SHAWN OLIVER; SCOTT PEMBERTON; RYAN
PEREIRA; JAMES ROY

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS NAOMI CARNEY; BRIAN GOMES;
JOSEPH LOPES

Councillor Choquette called the Appointments & Briefings Committee meeting to order, took attendance, and explained that the meeting was being recorded and live-streamed. The Clerk read three Communications into the record from Councillors Carney, Gomes and Lopes explaining their absence. The Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Pemberton.

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of CRISTOBAL JOSE ESCOBAR, New Bedford, MA to the VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD, replacing Christopher Holkamp who has resigned; this term will expire December 2026. (Matter ID #1925) (Referred – December 11, 2025.) (February 17, 2026 – tabled) (March 17, 2026 – tabled) (April 21, 2026 – Remain in Committee)

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: to remove the matter from the table.

The applicant, Mr. Cristobal Jose Escobar, was not present.

On motion by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Baptiste, the Committee VOTED: to recommend that the City Council take “NO FURTHER ACTION” on the COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of CRISTOBAL JOSE ESCOBAR, New Bedford, MA to the VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD.

Mr. Cristobal Jose Escobar, the applicant for the Veterans Advisory Board, appeared after the Committee had concluded its discussion of the second matter under consideration.

On motion by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Committee VOTED: to reconsider its previous referral to take “NO FURTHER ACTION” on the COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of CRISTOBAL JOSE ESCOBAR.

Mr. Escobar was recognized and apologized for the delay in appearing before the Committee. He stated that he is a U.S. Navy Corps veteran and has been a resident of the City since 2018. He further explained that he served in the Navy from 2012 through 2017.

Councillor Abreu asked the applicant what he would bring to the Board. Mr. Escobar stated that he understands the challenges veterans face because he has experienced many of them himself. He further stated that he would like to bring his knowledge and experience to the Board and assist in advocating for the City’s veterans.

Councillor Oliver asked whether he would be able to attend Board meetings regularly, given his inability to attend previous appointment meetings. Mr. Escobar explained that he has completed his studies at Suffolk University and that the appointment letters had originally been sent to an address where he no longer resided. He further stated that he would be able to attend Board meetings as scheduled.

On motion by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPOINTMENT of CRISTOBAL JOSE ESCOBAR, New Bedford, MA to the VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: to take up the following Written Motion; and to remove the following Related Motion and Communication from the table.

WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Pereira and Councillors Abreu, Carney and Gomes, requesting that the Committee on Appointments and Briefings meet with Southcoast Neighbors United to discuss deployment of SCNU air sensors across New Bedford and to further discuss current environmental and health issues in the South End. (Referred – May 12, 2026.)

RELATED MOTION, Councillors Pereira and Gomes, requesting, the Administration and the Office of Environmental Stewardship meet with the Committee on Appointments and Briefings to discuss whether a company can be hired to conduct an odor analysis in the South End of the City; and further, to report to this Committee the amount spent on said analysis and provide a timeline of the study and data once the analysis is concluded. (Referred from Committee – October 15, 2024.) (May 20, 2025 – tabled)

COMMUNICATION, Councillors Pereira, Abreu and Gomes, submitting a PETITION from residents of the South End of the City of New Bedford related to the sewage treatment facility located on South Rodney French Boulevard. (To be Referred to the Committee on Appointments & Briefings, the Department of Public Infrastructure, the Administration, and the State Delegation.) (Matter ID #1584) (Referred – September 26, 2024.) (October 15, 2024 – tabled) (May 20, 2025 – tabled)

Councillor Pereira was recognized and stated that the City, in conjunction with Veolia Water Services, has agreed to install air monitors throughout the City to collect data related to ongoing reports of odors emanating from the plant.

Jim Costa, Superintendent of Wastewater, was recognized and provided an overview of the monitor installation, which consists of a total of four units. Three units are located within the Ft. Taber Park area, while the fourth is located outside the park. The monitors can track odor issues twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred and sixty-five days a year. Mr. Costa stated that the monitors have been online since 2025.

Councillor Pereira asked whether the NB311 app is being utilized to report odor-related issues. He was informed that it is, and that the wastewater office also receives telephone calls regarding odor complaints. Mr. Costa explained that both NB311 submissions and phone calls are time-stamped, allowing the department to identify the approximate time when odor issues may have occurred.

Councillor Pereira then asked Mr. Costa to discuss the department's long-term plans regarding the plant.

Mr. Costa explained that the department is in the process of developing both 5-year and 20-year plans to address rehabilitation and enhancements to the plant. He noted that the plant construction was completed in 1996 and became operational in 1997. He stated long-range plans are to modernize and update the facility to ensure it continues to operate effectively.

Councillor Abreu asked Mr. Edwin McCauliffe of Veolia Water Services to provide an overview of how the plant addresses odor-related issues. Mr. McCauliffe was recognized and explained that plant operations take odor concerns seriously and that Veolia maintains an open line of communication with the City. He stated that Veolia and City officials regularly meet to review daily and monthly logs documenting plant activity and odor-related events.

Mr. McCauliffe further explained that, as a last resort, the plant may release a non-toxic scent masking agent to help cover and neutralize odors. He noted, however, that this is rarely done, as plant operators use several other methods to prevent and reduce odor issues before taking that step.

Councillor Pereira explained that he had asked representatives of South Coast Neighbors United, Wendy Morrill and Tracy Wallace, to get involved by working with neighborhood residents to help document odor concerns and to speak about their research and findings related to the issue.

The Chair recognized Ms. Wallace of South Coast Neighbors United who stated that they had met with South End residents to discuss both the history of the treatment plant and the ongoing concerns in the area. She explained that, through those conversations, it became clear there were two major concerns among residents, the odor issues and what some believe may be a cancer cluster in the area. She noted that they do not know whether the two issues are connected, but the organization plans to continue researching both matters separately.

The Chair recognized Ms. Morrill of South Coast Neighbors United who explained that construction of the plant began in 1994, with upgrades completed in 1996. She stated that many neighbors have experienced health concerns over the years that they believe may be connected to odor emissions from the plant. She said the organization has recommended placing additional air monitors in the area and has also offered the use of its own monitoring equipment to help collect air quality data. Ms. Morrill added that their organization was pleased to hear the City is developing 5-year and 20-year plans for rehabilitation and upgrades for the facility, noting that such improvements are much needed.

The Chair also recognized Mr. Barry Sylvia who shared a printout of the south end showing what he believes could be a possible cancer cluster that should also be investigated.

Councillor Pereira asked the Committee to note any individuals present at the meeting who wanted to go on record expressing concern about the odor issue in the south end. Those residents were recorded as Tim Hart of 72 Oaklawn Street, Lida Morales of 26 Nina Street, and Monica Cohen of 17 Freedom Boulevard. The Councillor also encouraged members of the public to submit written testimony so that the Committee may review their concerns and suggestions.

Ms. Morrill informed the Committee that a meeting to discuss these issues was scheduled to take place at the treatment plant at the end of June.

On a Related Motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Abreu, the Committee VOTED: that the Board of Health and Health Department appear before the Committee on Appointments and Briefings to provide the body with data regarding any chronic or concentrated illness for the entirety of the peninsula in the south End of New Bedford.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To TABLE all three matters at this time.

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Choquette, Abreu and Roy, requesting that Airport Director Scot Servis in conjunction with the City's Conservation agent explore all options for the location of a new hangar at the New Bedford Regional Airport and that the Special Committee on Airport invite the Airport Director and the Conservation agent to a meeting to discuss such options; and further, that any plans to move forward with the construction of a hangar be suspended until such time as the committee has opportunity to consider any and all options that best serve the combined interests of the Airport and the surrounding neighborhoods. (To be Referred to the Special Committee on Airport.) (Matter ID #0532) (Referred – April 23, 2026.)

On motion by Councillor Roy and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: To Receive and Place on File a copy of the abutters mailing list as it relates to the placing of an airport hangar.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Roy, the Committee VOTED: To Receive and Place on File a petition signed by abutters as it relates to the placing of an airport hangar.

On motion by Councillor Roy and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: To Receive and Place on File a letter read into the record by Ms. Jessica Bregoli of 1415 Plainville Road, expressing the neighbors concern as it relates to the placing of an airport hangar.

On motion by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Baptiste, the Committee VOTED: To Receive and Place on File the presentation by Scot Servis, Airport Director.

The Chair recognized Mr. Scot Servis, Airport Director, who presented the committee with a PowerPoint on the airport hangar project previously approved by the Council. The presentation included the following information:

- Construction of five aircraft hangars, to be located just northeast of Bridgewater State University's new hangar and northwest of the existing 32-unit T-hangars.
- A conceptual rendering of the building.
- A description of the building's height and depth.
- A chart comparing buildable property vs. wetlands.
- The lease agreement was previously approved.
- A review of the legal limitations and obligations placed on public-use airports by the FAA.

The Chair recognized Mr. Chancery Perks, Conservation Agent, who explained that the parcel in question would not have come before the Conservation Commission, as it is not part of the surrounding wetlands. As a result, his department would not have jurisdiction over any decisions related to the parcel.

The Chair then recognized Mr. Matthew Provencher, Airport Commission Chairman, who provided the Committee with background on the lease agreement and the Council's role in its approval, noting that the lease was released on April 16, 2025, approved on June 26, 2025, and executed on July 15, 2025.

Councillor Choquette asked whether there had been an issue with notifying abutters about the site plan hearing. He was informed that while there is no requirement to notify abutters, the Planning Board did send out notices, though not to everyone. The Planning Board acknowledged the error.

Atty. Eric Jaikes, City Solicitor, was recognized and stated that he had not expected to speak that evening. He explained that, to his knowledge, there is no legal requirement to notify abutters for a site plan review. He added that if the Council wishes to address this moving forward, it will need to establish an Ordinance requiring such notification.

The Chair recognized Ms. Jessica Bregoli of 1415 Old Plainville Road, who read a prepared statement on behalf of neighbors opposing the design and placement of the proposed hangar. The neighbors recommended relocating the entrance away from nearby homes and suggested installing a sound barrier or planting trees to help reduce noise impacts.

Mr. Mark Meyers of 1418 Old Plainville Road was then recognized and stated that only two abutters received notice of the site plan review meeting.

Mr. Bruce Booker of Shawmut Avenue echoed Ms. Bregoli's concerns.

Mr. Tom Welsh of 1870 Shawmut Avenue also expressed his opposition to the proposed hangar.

The Chair asked if there was anyone present at the meeting that would like to be recorded in opposition of the construction of the hangar. Those individuals were recorded as Ms. Kim Booker of 2033 Shawmut Avenue, A. Wells of 1878 Shawmut Avenue, J. Martin of 1410 Old Plainville Road, Ms. Brenda Ramos of 1431 Old Plainville Road, Mr. John Booker, of 825 New Plainville Road, Mr. Raphael Mendez of 1431 Old Plainville Road, and Mr. Tim Catz of 1415 Old Plainville Road.

Councillor Roy asked Mr. Servis to answer some of the questions and requests raised by those attending the meeting.

Mr. Servis explained that turning the building entrance around wouldn't work because the back of the building is part of the airport's taxiway. He said a sound barrier could be added, but it is not within his budget, and he is unsure where the funding would come from. He also mentioned that trees or bushes could be planted, but once they reached a certain height they would have to be trimmed so they would not interfere with the flight path.

A discussion ensued as to whether the item should be tabled or referred out for no further action. At the completion of this conversation, it was decided that a new motion would be brought before the City Council and that this motion should be referred out for NFA.

On motion by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Committee VOTED: To recommend that the City Council take **“NO FURTHER ACTION”** on the matter.

Councillor Burgo made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councillor Oliver.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence Jr.
Clerk of Committees