



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

**MEETING: SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL PERMITS
& LICENSING**

DATE: JULY 15, 2026

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

**PRESENT: COUNCILLORS IAN ABREU, CHAIR; NAOMI
CARNEY (7:02); LEO CHOQUETTE; SCOTT
PEMBERTON**

ABSENT: COUNCILLOR JOSEPH LOPES

Councillor Abreu called the Special Committee on Special Permits & Licensing meeting to order, took attendance, and explained that the meeting was being recorded and live-streamed. The Clerk read two Communications into the record, one from Councillor Carney explaining her tardiness, and another from Councillor Lopes explaining his absence from the meeting. The Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Choquette and seconded by Councillor Pemberton.

COMMUNICATION, City Clerk/Clerk of the City Council, submitting an Application for a **NEW PRIVATE LIVRY LICENSE**, on behalf of **George Almeida, d/b/a ALL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION**, 32 Liberia Lane, New Bedford, MA. (Term of License July 01, 2026 – June 30, 2027.) (Matter ID #0918) (Referred – May 28, 2026.)

The Chair recognized George Almeida, the applicant. Mr. Almeida explained that he is retired from the Bristol House of Correction. He has been working for a livery company but has decided to start his own business.

Councillor Carney asked how many vehicles he plans to have. Mr. Almeida said he would have two vehicles. She asked if there would be two drivers, and he explained that he would be the only driver and would switch between the vehicles as needed.

Councillor Abreu asked what type of transportation services he would provide. Mr. Almeida stated that he would only be doing medical transportation runs.

On motion by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Choquette, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPLICATION for a **NEW PRIVATE LIVRY LICENSE**, on behalf of **George Almeida, d/b/a ALL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION**, 32 Liberia Lane, New Bedford, MA.

COMMUNICATION, City Clerk/Clerk of the City Council, to City Council, submitting a PETITION, **Anna Thomas, Fall River, MA d/b/a ALL THINGS WITH ANNA, 127 W. Rodney French Boulevard, New Bedford, MA**, requesting a Waiver of Residency in accordance with Section 15-38 of the City Code, to obtain a **LICENSE TO DEAL IN JUNK, OLD METALS OR ANY OTHER SECONDHAND ARTICLES**. (Matter ID #1063) (Referred – June 11, 2026.)

The Chair recognized Anna Thomas, the applicant. She explained that she previously owned and operated a secondhand shop in Fall River; however, the building where her business was located closed. She is now relocating her business to Kilburn Mill in New Bedford. Because she resides outside the City, she is requesting a residency waiver to operate her business at the new location.

Councillor Choquette asked what type of business she would be operating, and she replied that it would be a consignment shop.

On motion by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Choquette, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the PETITION, for the WAIVER OF RESIDENCY, on behalf of **Anna Thomas, Fall River, MA d/b/a ALL THINGS WITH ANNA, 127 W. Rodney French Boulevard, New Bedford, MA**, requesting a Waiver of Residency in accordance with Section 15-38 of the City Code, to obtain a **LICENSE TO DEAL IN JUNK, OLD METALS OR ANY OTHER SECONDHAND ARTICLES**.

On motion by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Pemberton, the Committee VOTED: To remove the following matter from the table:

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Abreu and Oliver, requesting that the City Council engage the appropriate City department heads to explore the feasibility of permitting Host Community Agreements (HCAs) for onsite cannabis consumption establishments, commonly referred to as cannabis consumption lounges or social consumption establishments, in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws and Cannabis Control Commission regulations adopted in 2025; and further, requesting that said departments report back to the City Council with findings, recommendations, and any necessary local actions required to lawfully implement such establishments within the City of New Bedford. (To be Referred to the Special Committee on Special Permits and Licensing, Health Department Director Stephanie Sloan, Police Chief Jason Thody, Planning Department Director Jennifer Carloni, City Solicitor Eric Jaikes and a Representative from the Mayor's Office.) (Matter ID #0178) (Referred – February 12, 2026.) (March 19, 2026 – tabled.)

The Chair recognized Police Chief Thody who stated that not much has changed since this item was last discussed by the Committee. He explained that one of the challenges facing the Police Department is determining whether a person is impaired by cannabis. Unlike alcohol, there is no reliable test that can definitively measure cannabis impairment or the degree of impairment in cases involving operating under the influence.

Councillor Choquette asked whether there was a reliable blood test that could be used to detect cannabis impairment. Chief Thody responded that, while there is a blood test available to detect THC impairment, it would likely not be accepted as conclusive evidence in court. The Councillor also asked what kind of training is available to officers in recognizing cannabis related impairment. Chief Thody explained that specialized training is available, but it requires about 100 hours of classroom instruction. Due to the department's current staffing shortages, he said the department is not in a position to send officers to the training at this time.

Councillor Pemberton asked whether there was any reliable way to confirm cannabis use. Chief Thody said that, at this time, there is no foolproof method to determine a person's level of cannabis impairment, unlike with certain other drugs, such as opioids.

The Chair recognized Stephanie Sloan, Director, Health Department. Ms. Sloan noted that she recently attended a meeting of the Massachusetts Health Officers Association, where the Chief of Staff of the Cannabis Control Commission spoke about cannabis lounges. She said the process for allowing cannabis lounges is in the early stages, as the State is still working through many of the details. According to Ms. Sloan, there are many unanswered questions about how these businesses would operate and be regulated. She noted that her understanding is that communities would likely have to opt in, similar to the current Host Community Agreement process. Among some of the outstanding questions are whether each location would require its own compliance officer, how frequently the Commission would conduct inspections, and what department would be responsible for responding to complaints.

Ms. Sloan stated that, in her opinion, much of the responsibility for enforcing compliance regulations would likely fall to the City. She added that, for now, the establishment of cannabis lounges remains on hold.

The Chair then recognized Atty. Eric Jaikes, City Solicitor. Atty. Jaikes stated that the Administration has not yet started discussing the possibility of cannabis lounges. He also noted that the State's Cannabis Control Commission is significantly behind in its work and is only now beginning to address issues related to Host Community Agreements that have been in place with the City for some time. He agreed with Ms. Sloan's comments, saying that the City is also awaiting guidance from the State regarding the implementation and regulation of cannabis lounges.

On motion by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Pemberton, the Committee VOTED: To recommend that the City Council take **“NO FURTHER ACTION”** on the WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Abreu and Oliver, requesting that the City Council engage the appropriate City department heads to explore the feasibility of permitting Host Community Agreements (HCAs) for onsite cannabis consumption establishments, commonly referred to as cannabis consumption lounges or social consumption establishments, in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws and Cannabis Control Commission regulations adopted in 2025; and further, requesting that said departments report back to the City Council with findings, recommendations, and any necessary local actions required to lawfully implement such establishments within the City of New Bedford.

Councillor Choquette made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Pemberton.

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence, Jr.
Clerk of Committees