CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS & BRIEFINGS
DATE: NOVEMBER 17, 2026
TIME: 7:02 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS NAOMI CARNEY, CHAIR; DEREK BAPTISTE (7:17); SHANE BURGO; BRIAN GOMES; SHAWN OLIVER; SCOTT PEMBERTON; RYAN PEREIRA (7:16); JAMES ROY

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS ABREU; CHOQUETTE; LOPES

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

CITIZEN'S INPUT TIME – Not to exceed the first thirty (30) minutes of the meeting.

Zara Lemieux, 80 Thompson Street, Apt. #2, speaking on "ALPR Technology". (Referred – October 05, 2026.)

The Chair recognized Ms. Lemieux, who spoke regarding concerns related to ALPR Technology.

The matter was concluded.

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of DONALD G. REI, New Bedford, MA to the HOUSING AUTHORITY, replacing the late Bruce Oliveira; this term will expire December 2027. (Matter ID #1768) (Referred – October 22, 2026.)

The Chair recognized Mr. Rei of 452 Loftus Street, New Bedford, MA. Mr. Rei explained that the Housing Authority requires a member representing labor. The position was previously held by Bruce Olivera, who has since passed away. Mr. Rei stated that, having more than 44 years of experience in the labor industry, he was asked to fill the vacant position.

Councilor Roy inquired where Mr. Rei had acquired his 44 years of experience. Mr. Rei responded that he had been employed by Rodney Metals.

Councilor Lopes spoke in favor of Mr. Rei's appointment.

On motion by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Pemberton, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPOINTMENT of DONALD G. REI, New Bedford, MA, to the HOUSING AUTHORITY, replacing the late Bruce Oliveira; this term will expire December 2027.

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of MADELINE PAIVA, New Bedford, MA to the LIBRARY TRUSTEES, replacing Lee Blake, who has resigned; this term will expire April 2028. (Matter ID #1769) (Referred – October 22, 2026.)

The Chair recognized Ms. Paiva of 153 Lafayette Street, New Bedford, MA. Ms. Paiva stated that she had recently retired from Southcoast Health after 38 years of service. She noted that she is actively involved with her local library and agreed to accept the opportunity to serve on the Board of Trustees.

Councillor Roy asked Ms. Paiva for her perspective on the library system. Ms. Paiva explained that she views libraries as places where people of all ages, particularly children and seniors, can connect and gather in a safe and welcoming environment.

Councillor Oliver asked what she hoped to foster as a member of the Board of Trustees. Ms. Paiva responded that she looked forward to working with Library Director Olivia Melo to brainstorm ways to improve community outreach and encourage more residents to utilize the City's library system.

On motion by Councillor Pemberton and seconded by Councillor Roy, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPOINTMENT of MADELEINE PAIVA, New Bedford, MA, to the LIBRARY TRUSTEES, replacing Lee Blake, who has resigned; this term will expire April 2028.

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of THOMAS P. CLARK, New Bedford, MA to the WATER BOARD, replacing Daniel Higgins, who has resigned; this term will expire April 2027. (Matter ID #1770) (Referred – October 22, 2026.)

The Chair recognized Mr. Clark of 200 Riverside Avenue, New Bedford, MA. Mr. Clark stated that he relocated to New Bedford from the Boston area four years ago. With a background in public and government relations, he expressed an interest in serving the City he has come to love and welcomed the opportunity to serve on the Board.

Councillor Pereira asked about his plans for the City's water infrastructure. Mr. Clark stated that he would encourage community involvement, listen to residents' concerns about water services, and work to maintain the City's high standards for water quality.

Councillor Baptiste asked whether he had served on similar boards. Mr. Clark stated that although he had not served on a Water Board, he had more than 40 years of experience working with local boards and departments in the City of Boston.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Pemberton, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPOINTMENT of THOMAS P. CLARK, New Bedford, MA, to the WATER BOARD, replacing Daniel Higgins, who has resigned; this term will expire April 2027.

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of ERIC V. LEPAGE, New Bedford, MA to the ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS, as an ALTERNATE MEMBER, replacing Jane Gonsalves, who has resigned; this term will expire December 2029. (Matter ID #1771) (Referred – October 22, 2026.)

The Chair recognized Mr. LePage of 686 Rockdale Avenue, New Bedford, MA. Mr. LePage stated that he has been an instructor at Bridgewater State University for 28 years and currently serves as the University's Vice President of Information Technology. He expressed a long-held interest in urban design and welcomed the opportunity to serve on the Board.

Councillor Pereira explained that applicants appearing before the Board often seek relief that may affect abutting property owners. He emphasized the importance of carefully balancing the concerns of neighbors with the intent of the legislation when making decisions.

Mr. LePage acknowledged that there would be a learning curve but expressed his willingness and excitement at the opportunity.

Councillor Baptiste asked whether he had attended any Board meetings or reached out to current members. Mr. LePage stated that he had not yet done so but was eager to become involved.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Pemberton, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPOINTMENT of ERIC V. LEPAGE, New Bedford, MA, to the ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS, as an ALTERNATE MEMBER.

On motion by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: To take the following items up together and remove them from the table:

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Abreu, Oliver, Lopes, Choquette and Carney, requesting, that a representative from the New Bedford Board of Health or the New Bedford Health Department appear before the Committee on Appointments & Briefings to discuss the Board's recent vote to adopt a new Cigar Minimum Pricing Regulation, effective January 1, 2025, which restricts the sale of tobacco and nicotine delivery products; and further, that the Committee on Appointments & Briefings also hear from local business owners in the City of New Bedford who retail cigars to discuss the potential economic impacts this may have on their industry. (To be Referred to the Committee on Appointments & Briefings, the New Bedford Health Department, the Administration, a representative of the New England Convenience Store & Energy Marketers Association, and local New Bedford-based convenience, liquor, cigar and retail business community.) (Matter ID #0114) (Referred – January 23, 2025.) (February 18, 2025 – tabled) (February 17, 2026 – tabled) (October 20, 2026 – tabled)

NEW BEDFORD TOBACCO REGULATIONS, (Matter ID #0115) (Referred – January 23, 2025.) (February 18, 2025 – tabled) (February 17, 2026 – tabled) (October 20, 2026 – tabled)

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Morad, Abreu, Giesta, Oliver, Gomes, Choquette, Lopes, Carney and Baptiste, requesting, that the City of New Bedford Board of Health immediately rescind the recently approved Cigar Minimum Pricing Regulation that was implemented on January 1, 2025 for an eighteen (18) month period; and further, that the New Bedford Board of Health seek additional grant funding to allow the Health Department Sanitarians to continue their efforts in education of the City's youth regarding the dangers of tobacco and nicotine product use and to increase the Health Department's ability to police City's retail establishments that are legally selling tobacco and nicotine products; and further, that representatives of the New Bedford Board of Health appear before the Committee on Appointments & Briefings in six (6) months, twelve (12) months and eighteen (18) months to update the Committee regarding their efforts of education and policing. (To be Referred to the Committee on Appointments & Briefings and the Board of Health.) (Matter ID #0230) (Referred – February 27, 2025.) (February 17, 2026 – tabled) (October 20, 2026 – tabled)

The Chair recognized Stephanie Sloan, Director of the Health Department.

Councillor Oliver asked Ms. Sloan to provide an overview of the initial purpose for implementing the Cigar Minimum Pricing Regulation. Ms. Sloan explained that the regulation requires a single cigar to be sold for a minimum price of $2.90, while a package containing two or more cigars must have a minimum starting price of $5.80. She stated that the regulation was introduced to deter underage purchases.

Ms. Sloan further reported that, based on visits to retail establishments, sales to minors have decreased. In 2026, a total of 89 store visits, referred to as youth compliance checks, were conducted, resulting in only four improper sales. This represents an improvement from 2025, when seven improper sales were identified. She also noted that retailer resistance to the regulation has decreased significantly.

Councillor Oliver asked whether any portion of the opioid settlement funds received by the City had been allocated to support this program. Ms. Sloan was unable to provide an answer. Councillor Oliver requested that Ms. Sloan provide the Committee with information regarding who is responsible for releasing funds to the Board of Health and whether the Board has received any funding from the City's opioid settlement funds.

Councillor Baptiste asked whether retailers use a code word or other means of notifying one another when the Board of Health is conducting store visits. Ms. Sloan indicated that she was aware of something similar being used among retailers. She explained that the youth participating in the compliance checks are transparent about their age and do not attempt to mislead the establishments during the visits.

On motion by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Pereira, the Committee VOTED: To table the matters at this time.

WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Pereira, 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. (Matter ID #0646) (Referred – May 12, 2026.) (May 19, 2026 – tabled)

RELATED MOTION, Councillor Pereira, requesting that the Board of Health and Health Department appear before the Committee on Appointments & 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. (Referred from Committee – May 19, 2026.)

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: To remove from the table.

The Chair recognized Michele Paul, Director of Resilience & Environmental Stewardship.

Councillor Pereira asked whether Ms. Paul had been able to review the raw data collected by the odor sensors installed in the South End through City funding. Ms. Paul stated that she had not yet reviewed the information. Councillor Pereira then asked whether, once the data had been reviewed, her department would be able to post the results on the City's website. He was advised that this would be possible.

Councillor Pereira expressed concern regarding two issues affecting the South End, the ongoing odor concerns and the possibility of a health or illness cluster in the area surrounding the wastewater treatment plant.

Ms. Sloan stated that, based on her research, there had been concerns about a potential cancer cluster in the early 2000s near the Rodney Metals area. The State had been involved in reviewing the matter; however, there was insufficient evidence to determine whether the reported cancer cases were connected to the area. She explained that the cancers appeared to have had different underlying causes for each individual affected.

Ms. Sloan further stated that her next step in initiating an investigation into potential health concerns related to the wastewater treatment plant would be to contact the Massachusetts Cancer Registry, which she identified as the appropriate starting point.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Gomes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend that the City Council take **"NO FURTHER ACTION"** on the WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Pereira, 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; and the RELATED MOTION, Councillor Pereira, requesting that the Board of Health and Health Department appear before the Committee on Appointments & 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.

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Gomes, Pereira, Abreu, Carney and Oliver, requesting, on behalf of the Clarks Point Neighborhood Association, that the City and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches look to install a solar beacon light on the lighthouse located on top of Fort Taber; and further, that Parks, Recreation and Beaches Director Mary Rapoza obtain an estimate for the cost of the solar beacon, including installation. (Matter ID #0532) (Referred – April 10, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Jennifer Vieira, Director, Department of Facilities and Fleet Management.

Ms. Vieira informed the Committee that she had been advised that, should the City move forward with relighting the Fort Taber Lighthouse, the appropriate brightness level would need to be determined to ensure that it does not interfere with marine vessels and boats offshore. She noted that the City would need to consult with the Coast Guard to determine an acceptable wattage.

Councillor Gomes provided a brief history of when the Butlers Flat and Fort Taber Lighthouses were last illuminated.

Councillor Pereira expressed his support for the request.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Pereira, the Committee VOTED: To table the matter at this time.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Denis Lawrence Jr.
Clerk of Committees