

NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & NEIGHBORHOODS
DATE: FEBRUARY 15, 2018
TIME: 7:04 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS BRIAN GOMES, CHAIRMAN; DEBORA COELHO, VICE CHAIRPERSON; HUGH DUNN; MARIA GIESTA; SCOTT LIMA; WILLIAM BRAD MARKEY; LINDA MORAD; DANA REBEIRO

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS IAN ABREU; NAOMI CARNEY; JOSEPH LOPES

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Councillor Gomes called the Public Safety Committee Meeting to order and took attendance. Communications were read into the record explaining the absences of Councillors Abreu, Carney and Lopes. These Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Dunn.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Dunn, Abreu, Winterson, Coelho and Council President Lopes, requesting, that the Health Department, the Department of Public Infrastructure, the Traffic Commission and the Mayor's office explore the implementation of a program that places, at popular panhandling locations, signage designed to encourage and facilitate responsible giving by providing a telephone number to both donate to local charities that provide food, shelter and mental health services and enable this at risk population to access these services (Ref'd 8/17/17) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Dunn. (1)

Police Chief Cordeiro said signs placed where panhandlers that are currently working informing motorists of other organizations to make donations to would probably not stop the panhandling, but may help to decrease the money given to those panhandling. He feels that if the revenue ceases the panhandlers would cease as well. He identified Route 140 and Route 6, the intersection at Market Basket, the Octopus and Cove Road and Route 18 as problem areas. The panhandlers now are a safety issue and place a strain on the Police department having to respond to their actions.

Councillor Giesta said she understood the concept of the signage, but if it is legal for panhandling activities to take place she did not want to open the city up to a law suit.

Councillor Markey asked if the signage would direct drivers to where to donate. He was told they would.

Councillor Rebeiro questioned whether they would be effective, and was told it could not hurt.

Reverend David Lima was present and told the Committee stories of how the money given to panhandlers though meant well by those giving was not being used in the faith it was given. He introduced the Committee to the formed Homeless Servers Providers Network that established an organization called RISE UP, which collects funds to provide homeless people with shelter during cold nights. He suggested the signage would direct a person to the website to make a donation or a text application to send a donation.

Peter Muse of the Homeless Servers Provider Network explained that the RISE UP initiative is working in the city and that the people of New Bedford are quite generous. He said the ability to donate to an organization would take away from the pressure of having to give money out to panhandlers.

Mr. Muse provided the Committee with a handout on the RISE UP Organization, which was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro.

Jamie Ponte, DPI Commissioner agreed with the project and would have his department install the signs.

Scott Downing, Executive Director of the Traffic Commission, said that his department could make the signs.

Damon Chaplin, Director of the Health Department spoke in favor of this signage, but suggested it also included outreach information for those panhandlers that were reading the signs as well.

On motion by Councillor Dunn and seconded by Councillor Morad, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Dunn, Abreu, Winterson, Coelho and Council President Lopes, requesting, that the Health Department, the Department of Public Infrastructure, the Traffic Commission and the Mayor 's office explore the implementation of a program that places at popular panhandling locations, signage designed to encourage and facilitate responsible giving by providing a telephone number to both donate to local charities that provide food, shelter and mental health services and enable this at risk population to access these services; and further, that the Traffic Commission create the signage and steps be taken to erect the signs in panhandling locations. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods, meet with Animal Control Director Maciel, for the purpose of discussing, once more, the coverage of animal control in the city; and further, that Animal Control consider an on-call Animal Control Officer for nights and weekends due to the increasing amount of calls pertaining to dog issues and other animal related issues in the City. (Ref'd 7/21/16) (8/29/16-returned unsigned by the Mayor) (2)

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lima, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with the EMS Director Mark McGraw, to discuss EMS response time, equipment needs, and the number of requests for backup ambulance service in the City and what is the protocol when communication is requesting extreme emergency ambulance response; and further, that EMS Director McGraw provide the Committee with a breakdown of calls in a 24-hour period and a list of positions and duties within the EMS system (Ref'd 8/18/16) was removed from the table by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lima. (3)

Steve Arruda, Deputy Director of EMS was present and gave an overview of the number of ambulances on the road, the number of staff and the hours the ambulances run. Ambulances run seven (7) days a week, four (4) trucks until mid-night, three (3) are on twenty-four (24) hours, and four (4) are on until 7 p.m. They place a fifth ambulance in service as well. Mutual Aid is shared with SouthCoast Response, STAT New England, Alert and EaseCare. After that they have mutual service agreements with the surrounding towns. They have been receiving two new ambulances every two (2) years, and all of the current ambulances are 2013 models and newer. They will have two (2) new ambulances go on line this year.

Councillor Gomes asked when busiest times were, he was told between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m., Tuesdays being the busiest day. He asked how long an ambulance can be held up at the hospital. He was told the average is thirty (30) minutes, but it depends on the circumstances and wait times at the hospital.

On motion by Councillor Markey and seconded by Councillor Lima, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council to take "No Further Action" on a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with the EMS Director Mark McGraw, to discuss EMS response time, equipment needs, and the number of requests for backup ambulance service in the City and what is the protocol when communication is requesting extreme emergency ambulance response; and further, that EMS Director McGraw provide the Committee with a breakdown of calls in a 24-hour period and a list of positions and duties within the EMS system. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro, the Committee VOTED: To take items 6, 6a out of order, there was no objections. This motion passed on a voice vote.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Gomes and Carney, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with officials from St. Luke's Hospital, Massachusetts Med Flight, Airport Manager Servis, Police Chief Cordeiro and a representative from State Representative Cabral's Office, to discuss the fact that drones are being flown less than 150 yards away from the

Hospital's helicopter pad from a 2.89 acre parcel of land known as the 'Reed Estate', which is owned by the State of Massachusetts; and further that the State install 'NO TRESPASSING' signs with rules and regulations for said property; and furthermore, that Mr. William P. Walsh, concerned citizen, be invited to said meeting, bringing all parties together for a plan of action (Ref'd 10/26/17); and a COMMUNICATION, Councillor Gomes, submitting a letter from William P. Walsh regarding the drone activity at the Reed Estate (Ref'd 10/26/17) were received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro. (6, 6a)

Bill Walsh, 78 Atlantic Street, New Bedford, MA was present and gave an overview of his concerns that drone flying has been taking place at State owned land, on Hawthorn Street, formerly known as the Reed Estate and that the drones could get in the way of the flight path of the med flight pad at St. Luke's Hospital. He wanted the issue addressed.

Mr. Richard Kenin, General Manager of Boston Med-Flight was present and explained the rules for drone flight is overseen by the FAA, and that once a drone is airborne it is federal jurisdiction. However, the city could take steps in placing signage that states no drone flying should be done in the area. Drone flights within a five (5) mile area of the airport should be reported to the airport by law. Boston Med Flight has not had any issues with the hospital flights to date. He explained commercial drone companies have more restrictions hobbyists. If flying in the area of the hospital the hospital should be notified of the drone flights by those conducting them as well.

Councillor Markey stated that it is probably a hobbyist issue that they do not know the guidelines.

Councillor Lima asked if there were any other communities that had such signage; he was told they were not aware of such signage.

Scot Servis, Airport Manager, explained that they are contacted by commercial drone users, but not from hobbyists, and if you use the five mile radius from the airport in any direction that encompasses a large section of the city.

Councillor Morad expressed her concern that she has seen drones being flown in the Pine Grove cemetery, which is in the flight path of the airport; she has called the police on several occasions.

David Camara the Safety Officer at SouthCoast Hospitals was unaware of this issue and had confirmed they have never received a call from a drone operator that there were drones being flown in the area of the flight pad. He said this is important information that needs to be addressed for all three of SouthCoast hospitals that have flight pads. He was to take this information back to the hospital for further discussion.

Councillor Gomes asked that he let the Committee know what comes out of those discussions and he said he would.

Police Chief Cordeiro said he has spoken with the FAA and will enact the information he has received from them. He said the issue is a hobbyist not the commercial users. He was in favor of the signage.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lima, the Committee VOTED: To recommend that the City Council send a letter to the owners of the Reed Estate asking that signage be posed that no Drone flying take place on the property; and further that Representative Antonio Cabral be sent a copy of the letter asking for his assistance in getting the State involved with this matter. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting, once more, that any new construction and/or reconstruction of traffic lights installed at main intersections throughout the City be equipped with surveillance and traffic control cameras, this is to include any major road work presently getting started or being worked on throughout the City, projects like Phase II of Route 18 and the Coggeshall Street reconstruction; and further, this should be added to the cost of completing the project (To be Referred to the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods.) (Ref'd 2/23/17) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro. (4)

Jamie Ponte, DPI Commissioner explained that the projects at Coggeshall Street, and the Route 18 project did not include surveillance and traffic control cameras as they were not part of the original plans.

Councillor Gomes expressed his frustration for he was told that they would be added. Commissioner Ponte said he is pricing them out and it will cost approximately \$200,000 to outfit both completed projects. He explained that there is more to just putting up cameras they would need to tie the cameras into the infrastructure to record, etc. He said that in moving forward all project all would include cameras in the estimates like other town and cities do.

On motion by Councillor Dunn and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with a Representative of the Mayor's Office, Police Chief Cordeiro, Fire Chief Gomes and Inspectional Services Director Romanowicz for the purpose of discussing an evacuation plan for City Hall employees and every City owned building; and further that this evacuation plan should be structured and practiced through a drill once a year (Ref'd 9/14/17) was received and placed on file by Councillor Markey and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro. (5)

Fire Chief Michael Gomes was present and told the Committee that currently the city does not have an evacuation plan in place at all its buildings or the proper communication apparatus in place. City Hall does not have a fire alarm system in place. They are looking to have a system that will work with the VOIP system currently installed in "City Hall, which will equip each phone with an emergency message. They are also looking at a program that will text or call employee cell phones. He agreed there

should be fire drills conducted in City Hall and other city buildings like they do in the schools.

Councillor Morad asked about the Hillman Street facility and he stated there was a fire plan in place for the school, but he was not sure about the city offices in the buildings.

Councillor Gomes stated the Fire Department and Police Department should have floor plans for each city building. He was told they do on computers in vehicles and they are in use.

Police Chief Cordeiro stated that City Hall has gone through ALICE training which addresses an active shooter situation. He would be happy to set up a class for the Councillors. The ALICE training is being held in all city buildings and the city offers it to private companies, schools, etc. as well, the Chief indicated that they are looking to establish a police kiosk as you enter City Hall. This takes the officer out of his corner office and would give him the opportunity to size up people entering the building; it would also have CCTV screens which would allow him to monitor the other entrances into City Hall.

On motion by Councillor Rebeiro and seconded by Councillor Dunn, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter for forty-five (45) days asking the Chief to come back with the plan being drafted as it relates to emergency evacuation from City Hall. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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On motion by Councillor Rebeiro and seconded by Councillor Markey, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council to follow the recommended action on items seven (7) through twelve (12). This motion passed on a voice vote. They are as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Oliveira, Lopes, Gomes, Martins, Winterson, Alves, Bousquet, Carney, Rebeiro, requesting, that the city Administration conduct a feasibility study to develop a second entrance and exit to the Pulaski School, this is the only elementary school in New Bedford hosting over 700 students from across the City and the immediate area lacks a second means of access/egress and in the case of an emergency, having only one means of entrance and exiting the property could prove disastrous. (Ref'd 2/12/15) (3/9/15-returned unsigned by the Mayor) (7)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Gomes, requesting, that the New Bedford Police Department, the Fire Department and EMS look into implementing the I Teeth Clamp, which is a device used to close an open wound on a victim suffering from a gunshot wound, stabbing or any accidental superficial open wound, it has been credited in slowing blood loss and preventing loss of life in emergency situations; and further, for very little cost we can equip every Police Officer and train every emergency responder to administer the I Teeth Clamp in a crisis or emergency situation. (Ref'd 6/25/15) (8)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Gomes, requesting, that Mayor Mitchell, Police Chief Provencher and City Solicitor McDermott, authorize the Police Department to enforce NO TRESPASSING Notices across the City, this action will help to assist property/homeowners that have followed the legal process through eviction to stop all criminal activity that has taken place at said residence or property, and further, that this is a Massachusetts State Law and should be strictly enforced. (Ref'd 10/8/15) (10/26/15-returned unsigned by the Mayor) (9)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Coelho, requesting, that the Police Department provide the City Council with the number of repeat overdoses in a twenty-four hour period in New Bedford, and that we look into possibly drafting an Ordinance addressing the matter; and further, that we ask our State Legislative Delegation to assist us in drafting a policy that would make it mandatory that anyone who overdoses, especially those who overdose repeatedly, not be treated and released, but held in the hospital for twenty-four hour surveillance, they are a harm to themselves and to society and are using up our resources. (Ref'd 1/28/16) (2/16/16-tabled) (10)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Bousquet, Lopes, Abreu, Council President Morad, Councillors Oliveira and Winterson, requesting, that the Administration work with the Health Department to develop a hoarding task force, an interagency response team to identify, recover, and get help for people who suffer from this condition, it shall include Health, Police, Fire, Minimum Housing and the Solicitors Office representative working together on this Citywide epidemic. (Ref'd 2/25/16) (3/15/16- tabled; letter sent to the Mayor's Office) (11)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a RELATED MOTION, Councillor Coelho, requesting, that Police Chief Cordeiro institute foot patrols during the next several months in those neighborhoods known for higher crime. (Ref'd 6/8/17) (6/26/17-returned unsigned by the Mayor) (12)

On motion by Councillor Rebeiro and seconded by Councillor Markey, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council to take "No Further Action" on items thirteen (13) through twenty (20). This motion passed on a voice vote. They are as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods hold a meeting with Fire Chief Michael Gomes, Special Council Arthur J. Caron, Jr., and a Representative from the Administration, for an explanation as to why the Chief is presently looking for another job; further, is there a problem which has not been dealt with previously in the past fourteen months which could lead to the loss of Fire Chief Gomes. (Ref'd 6/11/15) (9/17/15-tabled) (13)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Gomes, requesting, that Superintendent Durkin and the School's Transportation Director take another look at bus transportation for our City's schools; the elimination of bus transportation has caused traffic gridlock at some of area schools in the City and has increased the amount of vehicular traffic at the opening and closing of the school day, which is now causing an unsafe situation that needs to be addressed. (To be Referred to

School Committee, Superintendent Durkin, the School's Transportation Director and the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods.) (Ref'd 9/10/15) (14)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Gomes and Carney, requesting immediate action be taken at the Keith Middle School, due to the dozens of complaints from parents and teachers about the on-going problems with students, calling the school out-of-control, disrespecting faculty and fellow students, not following directions and even unbecoming actions; and further, requesting a second Resource Officer be placed at the school until the school is brought under control, along with periodic walking patrols by New Bedford Police Department Gang Squad or any other public safety resource that is available throughout the day; further, that any Member of the City Council's Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods be allowed at a moment's notice to enter the school for a valuation of their own; furthermore, that the Superintendent Pia Durkin meet with the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods to discuss these on-going issues of public safety in our public school system. (Ref'd 3/10/16) (5/19/16-tabled) (15)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Coelho, Winterson, Council President Lopes and Councillor Martins, requesting, that Police Chief Cordeiro be invited to a meeting of the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods to discuss current policy on community policing and foot patrols. (To be Referred to the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods and Police Chief Cordeiro.) (Ref'd 1/12/17) (2/16/17-returned unsigned by the Mayor) (16)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Coelho, requesting, that the Police Department enforce Ordinance, Chapter 17, Section 17-25 Relative to Recreational Vehicles, due to the havoc that certain individuals are causing in neighborhoods by the illegal use of recreational vehicles i.e. mini motorcycles, ATVs, dirt bikes, etc; and further, for any individual violating this Section of the City Code that the penalty be strictly enforced. (To be Referred to Mayor Mitchell, Police Chief Cordeiro and the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods.) (Ref'd 9/28/17) (10/26/17-returned unsigned by the Mayor) (17)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting that Mayor Mitchell and Fire Chief Gomes take immediate action to address and explain why the Downtown New Bedford Firehouse – Station One has no reserve ladder truck in place; and once more explain why preventative maintenance is not being taken with fire apparatus across the City, black outs are leaving the Downtown area and neighborhoods without a functioning ladder truck especially the high-rise buildings in the Downtown area; and further, that immediate action be taken to borrow a ladder truck from another company in the surrounding area while this matter is being addressed; furthermore, that the Committee of Public Safety and Neighborhoods once more meet with the Administration, the Fire Chief and the Department of Facilities and Fleet Management to discuss the problems, to make sure that the Fire Department has the best working fire apparatus to protect and serve the City in New Bedford. (Ref'd 9/28/17) (18)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Coelho, requesting, that immediate action be taken to remove the well known vagrant from his current position on the sidewalk by the Post Office at 282 Coffin Avenue, he sleeps, loiters, litters and harasses people who attempt to use this Federal building or the sidewalk, he has become a public nuisance. (To be Referred to the Mayor's Office, the

Chief of Police and the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods.) (Ref'd 10/12/17) (11/13/17-Returned unsigned by the Mayor) (19)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Coelho, congratulating and inviting Captain Amos Melo, the new Commander of Station 3 to a Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meeting to discuss Chief Cordeiro's Community Policing strategy. (To Be Referred to the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods.) (Ref'd 10/12/17) (20)

Councillor Markey made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Rebeiro.

This meeting adjourned @ 9:30 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence, Jr.,
Clerk of Committees