

**NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS**

**MEETING: SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING & HOMELESS AFFAIRS**

**DATE: DECEMBER 12, 2022**

**TIME: 7:00 P.M.**

**PLACE: HELD REMOTELY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS' MARCH 12, 2020, ORDER SUSPENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE OPEN MEETING LAW G. L. C. 30A, SECTION 20, WITH AN EXTENSION SIGNED ON JUNE 16, 2021, AND THE CITY COUNCIL'S VOTE TO WAIVE RULE 21A ON JANUARY 13, 2022 AND AMENDED ON AUGUST 18, 2022.**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLORS SHANE BURGO, CHAIRMAN (REMOTELY); DEREK BAPTISTE, VICE CHAIRMAN (7:18) (REMOTELY); MARIA GIESTA, (REMOTELY); SCOTT LIMA (REMOTELY); RYAN PEREIRA (REMOTELY)**

**ABSENT: NO ONE**

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Councillor Burgo called the Special Committee on Affordable Housing & Homeless Issues meeting to order and took attendance; everyone was present. Councillor Burgo announced that Councillor Markey was in attendance though he is not a member of this Committee.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Burgo, requesting that Dr. Erica Barratt and her team from SSTAR come before the Special Committee on Affordable Housing and Homeless Affairs to discuss health related issues with the City's homeless population. (Ref'd 08/18/2022) (1)

Councillor Burgo told the Committee that Dr. Erica Barratt from SSTAR was unable to attend this meeting due to a prior commitment; so, he was looking to table this matter at this time.

On motion by Councillor Giesta and seconded by Councillor Pereira, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter at this time. This motion passed on a Roll Call vote of Yeas 4, Nays 0, with Councillors Burgo, yes; Giesta, yes; Lima, yes; Pereira, yes and Councillor Baptiste not present for the vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a RELATED MOTION, Councillor Pereira, requesting that Director of Health Damon Chaplin and Human Services Coordinator Marcelina Pina-Christian appear before the Committee on Affordable Housing and Homeless Affairs to discuss the homeless and mental health crisis in the City of New Bedford (Ref'd 10/11/2022) was received and placed on file by Councillor Giesta and seconded by Councillor Pereira and passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yes 4, Nays 0, with Councillors Burgo, yes; Giesta, yes; Lima, yes; Pereira, yes; and Baptiste not present for the vote. (2)

Councillor Pereira explained the reason for this motion was so that the city could discuss addressing the need for more affordable housing and how it would in turn help to assist the homelessness and mental illness which contributes to homelessness in the city.

Damon Chaplin, Health Director, was present and explained that there are several issues that contribute to homelessness, mental health, and addiction. He believes that with the increase of housing a lot of these issues could be addressed. That the best way to deal with such issues is to have a residence a permanent place to live. If you can provide housing, you can provide services. He went on to explain that as of January 2023 Child and Family Services will become the recognized provider for behavioral and mental health issues in the state. They will provide crisis intervention and emergency services in the city. He suggested it may be beneficial to have a representative attend a future meeting to explain how their operation will work.

Mr. Chaplin stated he understood Councillor Pereira's suggestion of a building, perhaps an old mill that would provide housing and wrap around services that maybe needed to help those that need it. He stated there are models to look at but logistically it would attract those from outside of the area as well. If such an establishment was to be implemented, it would truly need to include regional involvement.

Councillor Giesta asked Mr. Chaplin about the Heart Team Program in the city. He explained this program has been in place in the city for some time now. It is an outreach program that includes the Health Department, Police Department, DPI, Health and Human Services charged with engaging the homeless population.

Joshua Amaral, the newly appointed Director of Housing and Community Development was present and stated he recognizes the homelessness issue in the city and the need for more housing. It is understanding that there is a current RFP issue looking for a Director of Homeless Services Coordinator to take an outside look at what the issues are in the city and how to close the gaps making suggestions on what the city can do better to address these issues.

Marci Pina-Christian, Human Resource Coordinator for the city gave an overview of the programs handled with their office and the outreach that is offered. They do aid the homeless doing intakes and any array of services. They attempt to assist those in need at whatever level of assistance they require. She went on to say that other communities recognize they need to pull their own weight and get involved. The Town of Dartmouth has come to recognize a growing homeless population and are looking to see how New Bedford handles the issue and the networks they provide to incorporate into their own concerns.

Mr. Amaral stated that is a positive step when other communities recognize they too have issues and not force them upon local municipalities.

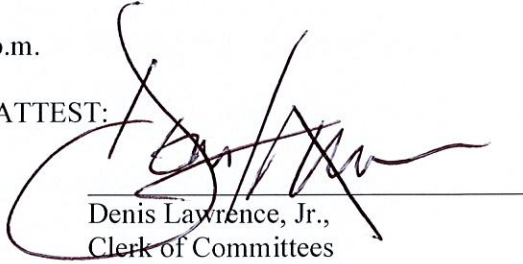
A discussion continued to include a possible need for public bathrooms in the city. It was noted that the YMCA does provide early morning shower facilities to the homeless.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Giesta, the Committee VOTED: To take "No Further Action" on this matter at this time. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 4, Nays 0, with Councillors Baptiste, yes; Burgo, yes; Giesta, yes; Pereira, yes; and Councillor Lima not present for the vote.

Councillor Pereira made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Baptiste. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 4, Nays 0, with Councillors Baptiste, yes; Burgo, yes; Giesta, yes; Pereira, yes; with Councillor Lima not present for the vote.

This meeting adjourned @ 7:54 p.m.

ATTEST:



Denis Lawrence, Jr.,  
Clerk of Committees