



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON MEMORIALS & DEDICATIONS

DATE: OCTOBER 28, 2024

TIME: 6:01 P.M.

PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS SHANE BURGO, CHAIR; IAN ABREU; NAOMI CARNEY (6:02); BRIAN GOMES (6:02); JOSEPH LOPES

ABSENT: NO ONE

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Councillor Burgo called the Memorials & Dedications Committee meeting to order, took attendance, and explained that the meeting was being recorded and live-streamed.

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COMMUNICATION, Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, submitting a Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Park Bench and Plaque to be located at Ashley Park (400 Rivet Street or Swift Street) in honor of RODOLFO & MARIA AMELIA ALMEIDA. (Referred – August 13, 2024.) (Matter ID #1363)

The Chair recognized Mary Rapoza, Director of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, who gave an overview of the request and introduced Joshua Almeida, a family member requesting the bench. Mr. Amaral explained this was for his grandparents, who were very involved in the Ashley Park/Goulart Square neighborhood. The family felt this would be a suitable way to honor their memory. Councillor Lopes spoke in support of the petition, stating he has known the family for many years.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Park Bench and Plaque to be located at Ashley Park (400 Rivet Street or Swift Street) in honor of RODOLFO & MARIA AMELIA ALMEIDA.

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COMMUNICATION, Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, submitting a Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Park Bench to be located at Fort Taber, near the military museum, or Buttonwood Park (not in the Buttonwood Park Zoo), in memory of NANCY and EDWIN MELLO. (Referred – September 12, 2024.) (Matter ID #1447)

The Chair recognized Ms. Rapoza, who gave an overview of the request.

The Clerk read a Communication from the applicants into the record which stated that although they are unable to attend the meeting, they are still very much interested in moving forward with the memorial. They also wanted to share that Edwin Mello was a WW2 Veteran, and the military was a very important part of his life, for himself as well as his wife Nancy.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To receive and place on file the Communication submitted by the applicants.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Park Bench to be located at Fort Taber, near the military museum, or Buttonwood Park (not in the Buttonwood Park Zoo), in memory of NANCY and EDWIN MELLO.

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COMMUNICATION, Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, submitting a Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Park Bench and Plaque, in memory of NYELL RICHARD NASCIMENTO, “NAZ”. (Referred – September 12, 2024.) (Matter ID #1448)

The Chair recognized Ms. Rapoza, who shared that the family has asked that the bench be placed in a private area near the water, possibly the west side of Fort Taber. The applicants were present but did not wish to speak. Councillor Lopes asked if the area proposed was agreeable to the family; they acknowledged that it was.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Gomes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Park Bench and Plaque, in memory of NYELL RICHARD NASCIMENTO, “NAZ”.

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COMMUNICATION, Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, submitting a Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Park Bench and Plaque to be located at any City beach, biking and/or walking path, in memory of FATIMA MONIZ CASTELO. (Referred – September 12, 2024.) (Matter ID #1449)

The Chair recognized Ms. Rapoza, who gave an overview of the request, and then recognized Jennifer Musto, the applicant. Ms. Musto explained that Ms. Castelo was her great aunt, and a mentor in her life. She had a unique ability of caring for others, making sure they were truly heard. She was a radio personality for a local Portuguese radio station for over 30 years. Her dedication and hard work were evident in every aspect of her life. Councillor Gomes spoke in favor of the petition and shared that he was moved by Ms. Musto’s statements.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Gomes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Park Bench and Plaque to be located at any City beach, biking and/or walking path, in memory of FATIMA MONIZ CASTELO.

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COMMUNICATION, Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, submitting a Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Park Bench to be located at Hazelwood Park the northeast green at Hazelwood Park (west facing bench), in memory of DONALD POITRAS. (Referred – September 12, 2024.) (Matter ID #1450)

The Chair recognized Ms. Rapoza, who stated that the family had requested that the bench be placed at the bowling green at Hazelwood Park. Although there is a bench there already, there is room for others.

The Chair recognized the applicant, Lynn Coish. She explained that Mr. Poitras was her father, who was a lifelong resident of the City, as were his parents. Mr. Poitras enjoyed bowling on the green every Saturday with his friends. When Ms. Coish learned about the greens being reopened, she was so excited that she became a member of the Bowling Green Club. When she saw the benches go in, she knew that this would be a fitting tribute to her father's memory.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Park Bench to be located at Hazelwood Park the northeast green at Hazelwood Park (west facing bench), in memory of DONALD POITRAS.

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COMMUNICATION, Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, submitting a Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Park Bench and Plaque, in memory of HADLEY ANN PETERNEL, to be located on Brownell Street, in front of the Zoo. (Referred – October 10, 2024.)

The Chair recognized Ms. Rapoza, who stated that the request had been made to place a memorial bench on the Brownell Street side of the Zoo, close to the Zoo enclosure, which would allow a person to sit and watch the animals.

The Chair recognized Mr. & Mrs. Peternel. Mr. Peternel shared that Hadley was born February 24, 2023 and passed away at 17 months old due to cardiac issues. When they were able to, they would walk around the park because Hadley loved being outside and loved looking at the animals. They still do this activity with Hadley's twin and think of Hadley. They believe the bench would be a physical spot they could go to and remember her great spirit and her smile.

Mrs. Peternel shared that during her pregnancy, she found out that Hadley would be born with a heart condition. They lived right across the street from the Zoo, and the park became a safe haven and a way that they could keep some hope and faith. Walking the park is very special to them.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Park Bench and Plaque, in memory of HADLEY ANN PETERNEL, to be located on Brownell Street, in front of the Zoo.

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WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting that the Special Committee on Memorials and Dedications discuss making New Bedford a Purple Heart City with signage that would recognize the City residents who have received the Purple Heart, and further that the signage would be located at the borders of the City and including any highway entrances. (Referred – January 25, 2024.) (Matter ID #0114) (May 08, 2024 – Forward Purple Heart City guidelines information to Christopher Gomes; tabled) (May 09, 2024 – Purple Heart City guidelines information forwarded to Christopher Gomes by Denis Lawrence.)

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

The Chair recognized Russell Leite, who shared that he has been assisting with the Purple Heart project. He stated that it was a fairly simple request to have New Bedford recognized as a Purple Heart Community, once the City Council signed the Resolution. Once the Resolution was signed, he emailed Staff Sergeant Brian Willis, who is in charge of the National Purple Heart program, and the request was approved. Since that time, the State website has been updated to include New Bedford as a Purple Heart (Trail) Community. The State will supply 20 Purple Heart Community signs to be erected throughout the City. The Director of Veteran's Services, Christopher Gomes, will need to identify those in the community who are Purple Heart recipients and place their names on record.

Councillors Gomes and Abreu thanked Mr. Leite for his involvement in moving the process forward. They shared that it started as just an idea in Council, but now with Mr. Leite's contribution, they see the program coming to fruition. It was determined that once the signs were received, some type of dedication ceremony should be held.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To recommend that the City Council take **"NO FURTHER ACTION"** on the WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting that the Special Committee on Memorials and Dedications discuss making New Bedford a Purple Heart City with signage that would recognize the City residents who have received the Purple Heart, and further that the signage would be located at the borders of the City and including any highway entrances.

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WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting that the Special Committee on Memorials and Dedications meet to discuss a location to honor the late Mr. Peter Britto, the Champion of youth basketball; Mr. Britto was a committed and dedicated beacon in serving the youth in the community; and that the Committee consider the basketball court at Monte Park as a suitable location. (Referred – February 22, 2024.) (Matter ID #0259)

This item was not read and was left on the table.

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WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, Council President Carney, Councillors Giesta, Lopes, Pereira, Oliver and Burgo, requesting, that the City take immediate action with ARPA money to revitalize the Mother Teresa Park, located at North and Chestnut Streets, this park was dedicated to Mother Teresa and has become a beacon within the community not only for the neighborhood kids, but also for the kids of the Mother Teresa House located on County Street. (Referred – June 27, 2024.) (Matter ID #1158)

Councillor Gomes was recognized. He gave the history of how the park came to be and stated that it has deteriorated over the years.

The Chair recognized Ms. Rapoza, who shared that there were plans to refurbish the park. She added that originally, it was a locked park and it was only used by students of the Holy Name - Holy Family School and by the Sisters and children of the Mother Theresa House. They have reviewed the existing space and have determined that it is too small of an area to replace the playground, given the new playground guidelines in place today. They are proposing that through a CPA grant request, they would like to install a garden, along with benches and a picnic area.

Councillor Gomes asked when this decision was made. He was told the playground was removed because it was in such a state of disrepair, and it did not meet State Code requirements. He asked what the cost would be to restore the park; he was told approximately \$15,000. He asked if the restoration included a plaque; he was told that all City parks would be getting new signage, and that this park would also have an appropriate sign installed. Ms. Rapoza shared that the Parks Department would have a discussion with the Nuns living in the Mother Theresa House to see if they prefer that the park area be fenced in.

Councillor Carney suggested that perhaps a small play unit be installed, something for the toddlers visiting the park, as it was originally a playground. Ms. Rapoza stated they could look into a small piece but reiterated that the area is rather small.

The Chair recognized Jessica Bailey, who oversees a portion of the ARPA funding requests. Councillor Burgo was also recognized and he stated that in his opinion, the ARPA situation has been so dysfunctional. As an example of why he is concerned about how ARPA funds are being allocated, he pointed out that the Herman Melville statue was originally \$7,500, and then increased by \$2,500. He wanted to know why Ms. Rapoza was seeking CPA funds when the Council had requested that ARPA funds be used.

Ms. Bailey explained that she began working with ARPA funding in 2022, shortly after the Council approved the Mayor's proposal. She stated that she was offended by the comment that the ARPA process is dysfunctional and shared that all of the ARPA funds, both City and County, have been allocated. The first time she heard about this particular project was just before the CPA process began in September when she was approached by Ms. Rapoza. To her recollection, it was never brought up by any City Councillor, nor was it discussed at any ARPA meeting. She explained that she meets with the Mayor weekly to discuss APRA funds and has done so for the past two and a half years. She added that CPA funds would be a very good use for a project like this, specifically where there is a recreation category within it.

Councillor Burgo apologized that Ms. Bailey felt offended but stated that he feels there is no other way to describe it, specifically where the Council has continuous ARPA questions. He gave an example that when he called Ms. Bailey directly and asked an ARPA-related question, he was told that she handles one part of it and it would be best for him to reach out to the person who handles the other part. He asked who makes the decisions on how the funding is allocated; he was told those decisions were made by the Mayor.

Councillor Burgo expressed concern regarding the claim that all ARPA funds have been committed. He went on to say that this does not appear to be true, especially considering the recent additional cost of \$2,500 for the Herman Melville statue project. He stated that claimed committed funds are not actual committed funds because clearly the Administration has continued to pull funds from one source to fund another source. He opined that the Council is being told that the money is completely committed, and he believes this is a fabrication put forth by the Administration. He reiterated that this playground is an appropriate project for ARPA funding.

Councillor Gomes echoed Councillor Burgo's sentiments. He went on to say that as far as ARPA funds are concerned, this would be an ideal project.

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

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RELATED MOTION, Councillor Baptiste, requesting that the Special Committee on Memorials and Dedications and the Administration plan a dedication ceremony for the newly named TAVARES BROTHER’S WAY. (Referred – January 11, 2024.) (Matter ID #0008) (April 08, 2024 – tabled w/ condition that Chair work w/ Janet Barbosa, Mayor’s Office, in planning a ceremony.)

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To recommend that the City Council take “**NO FURTHER ACTION**” on the RELATED MOTION, Councillor Baptiste, requesting that the Special Committee on Memorials and Dedications and the Administration plan a dedication ceremony for the newly named TAVARES BROTHER’S WAY.

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Councillor Abreu made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Gomes.

The meeting adjourned @ 6:56 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence Jr.
Clerk of Committees