



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS & BRIEFINGS
DATE: APRIL 15, 2025
TIME: 7:02 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS NAOMI CARNEY, CHAIR; IAN ABREU;
DEREK BAPTISTE (7:04); LEO CHOQUETTE; BRIAN
GOMES; JOSEPH LOPES; SHAWN OLIVER

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS SHANE BURGO; MARIA GIESTA;
LINDA MORAD; RYAN PEREIRA

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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 three Communications into the record from Councillors Burgo, Giesta and Morad explaining their absences. The Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Gomes.

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COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the REAPPOINTMENT of ALEX J. WEINER, New Bedford, MA to the BOARD OF HEALTH, this term will expire February 2028. (Matter ID #0146) (Referred – February 13, 2025.) (March 18, 2025 – tabled)

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

The Chair recognized Alex Weiner, who provided a summary of his qualifications to demonstrate his suitability to serve on the Board of Health. Mr. Weiner acknowledged that while he agreed with the Minimum Cigar Program adopted by the Board of Health, he sees the importance of greater openness and transparency regarding the matter, as well as the need for better communication with the City Council. He feels that the issue fell short of public expectations.

Councillor Lopes thanked him for his comments and asked his perspective on the Tobacco-Free 2025 Initiative, especially considering the current sale of cannabis across the State and the recent push to introduce cannabis cafes. Mr. Weiner stated that, while he supports the idea of a tobacco-free community, he believes its realization is unlikely in the near future due to insufficient political support. He added that if New Bedford is not interested, it is unlikely that the initiative will proceed.

Councillor Abreu inquired whether Mr. Weiner would be open to meeting regularly with the Council before Board votes, to which Mr. Weiner affirmed his willingness. The Councillor also requested a commitment from him to enhance community outreach on relevant issues, potentially at a local library, and Mr. Weiner agreed to this as well.

Councillor Choquette emphasized the importance of personal choice, stating that individuals should have the right to decide whether to use tobacco products like cigarettes or cigars.

Councillor Oliver expressed his gratitude to Mr. Weiner for recognizing that the implementation of the Cigar Minimum Program could have been more effective. He emphasized the need for the Board of Health to enhance their monitoring of underage sales, especially since the Cigar Minimum decision was based on only three violations.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Gomes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the REAPPOINTMENT of ALEX J. WEINER, New Bedford, MA to the BOARD OF HEALTH.

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COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the REAPPOINTMENT of LEE BLAKE, New Bedford, to the BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES; this term will expire April 2028. (Matter ID #0457) (Referred March 27, 2025.)

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

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COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of FLORENTINO CORREA, Fall River, as a CONSTABLE (Matter ID #0458) and an APPLICATION (Matter ID #0459). (Referred – March 27, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Florentino Correa, who provided a summary of his qualifications to demonstrate his suitability to serve as a Constable in the City. Mr. Correa has served as a Constable in Fall River for the past four years and is seeking to expand his area of business into New Bedford.

Councillor Oliver inquired how long Mr. Correa has served as a Constable in Fall River, to which he confirmed four years. The Councillor also asked whether Mr. Correa operates an independent company or is employed by someone else. Mr. Correa clarified that he runs his own business.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Choquette, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPOINTMENT of FLORENTINO CORREA, Fall River, as a CONSTABLE.

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COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of MICHAEL GONZALEZ, New Bedford, as a CONSTABLE. (Matter ID #0460) and an APPLICATION (Matter ID #0461). (Referred – March 27, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Michael Gonzalez who stated that he is a 24 year old New Bedford resident. Mr. Gonzalez is currently employed in the mental health field and aspires to pursue a career in law enforcement. He is seeking approval for his application to become a Constable.

Councillor Oliver inquired whether he serves as a Constable in another community, to which Mr. Gonzalez responded that he does not.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Choquette, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPOINTMENT of MICHAEL GONZALEZ, New Bedford, as a CONSTABLE.

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COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of ALEX RODRIGUEZ, SR., Dartmouth, as a CONSTABLE. (Matter ID #0462) and an APPLICATION (Matter ID #0463). (Referred – March 27, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Alex Rodriguez who stated that he is a resident of New Bedford with a background in the military and corrections, and is currently employed by SRTA.

Councillor Oliver inquired whether Mr. Rodriguez serves as a Constable in another community, to which he responded that he holds this position in the Town of Dartmouth. He expressed his goal to collaborate with his brother, a retired state trooper.

Councillor Baptiste voiced his support for the applicant.

On motion by Councillor Baptiste and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPOINTMENT of ALEX RODRIGUEZ, SR., Dartmouth, as a CONSTABLE.

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The following matters were taken up together without objection:

COMMUNICATION, City Clerk/Clerk of the City Council, submitting an Application for a **NEW PRIVATE LIVERY LICENSE** on behalf of Yvain Junior Normil, 219 Acushnet Avenue, #3, New Bedford, MA, d/b/a **RELIABLE TRANSIT EXPRESS**, 219 Acushnet Avenue, #3, New Bedford, MA. **(License will expire June 30, 2025.)** (Matter ID #0233) (Referred – February 27, 2025.) (March 18, 2025 – tabled)

COMMUNICATION, City Clerk/Clerk of the City Council, submitting an Application for **RENEWAL of a PRIVATE LIVERY LICENSE** on behalf of Yvain Junior Normil, 219 Acushnet Avenue, #3, New Bedford, MA, d/b/a **RELIABLE TRANSIT EXPRESS**, 219 Acushnet Avenue, #3, New Bedford, MA. **(Term of License July 01, 2025 – June 30, 2026.)** (Matter ID #0234) (Referred – February 27, 2025.) (March 18, 2025 – tabled)

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

The Chair recognized Yvain Junior Normil, who stated that he is a nurse with five years of experience in the medical field. He noted a growing need for patient transportation and has resolved to establish a medical transportation service in the City.

Councillor Lopes asked about the number of vehicles the applicant intends to use for the business and the parking arrangements for the vehicles. Mr. Normil informed the Committee that there would be two vehicles: one parked in his driveway and the other on the street. He respectfully requested that the applicant be mindful of other residents in the neighborhood.

Councillor Abreu asked about the applicant's plans regarding service to Logan Airport. Mr. Normil suggested that it could be a possibility. The Councillor advised him that a special permit would be required for such operations and recommended that he contact Massport for further guidance.

Councillor Baptiste asked if the additional vehicle would be parked on Acushnet Avenue, to which he received confirmation. The Councillor suggested that the applicant notify his neighbors about the presence of an additional business vehicle on the street, and the applicant assured him that he would do so.

On motion by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Baptiste, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPLICATION for a **NEW PRIVATE LIVERY LICENSE** on behalf of Yvain Junior Normil, 219 Acushnet Avenue, #3, New Bedford, MA, d/b/a **RELIABLE TRANSIT EXPRESS**, 219 Acushnet Avenue, #3, New Bedford, MA. **(License will expire June 30, 2025.)**

On motion by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Baptiste, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPLICATION for the **RENEWAL of a PRIVATE LIVERY LICENSE** on behalf of Yvain Junior Normil, 219 Acushnet Avenue, #3, New Bedford, MA, d/b/a **RELIABLE TRANSIT EXPRESS**, 219 Acushnet Avenue, #3, New Bedford, MA. **(Term of License July 01, 2025 – June 30, 2026.)**

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The following matters were taken up together without objection:

COMMUNICATION, City Clerk/Clerk of the City Council, submitting an Application for a **NEW PRIVATE LIVERY LICENSE** on behalf of Christian Cornejo Cabrera, 87 Rivet Street, #2, New Bedford, MA, d/b/a **CABRERA TRANSPORTATION, LLC**, 162 Division Street, #2, New Bedford, MA. **(License will expire June 30, 2025.)** (Matter ID #0324) (Referred – March 13, 2025.)

COMMUNICATION, City Clerk/Clerk of the City Council, submitting an Application for a **RENEWAL of a PRIVATE LIVERY LICENSE** on behalf of Christian Cornejo Cabrera, 87 Rivet Street, #2, New Bedford, MA, d/b/a **CABRERA TRANSPORTATION, LLC**, 162 Division Street, #2, New Bedford, MA. **(Term of License July 01, 2025 – June 30, 2026.)** (Matter ID #0325) (Referred – March 13, 2025.)

The Chair recognized Christian Cornejo Cabrera, who informed the Committee that he relocated to the City of New Bedford from El Salvador twelve years ago. He is seeking approval to establish a school transportation company.

Councillor Lopes inquired about the number of vehicles the applicant intends to use, and the initial number of employees he plans to hire. The applicant replied that he would begin with one vehicle and himself, along with one additional driver.

Councillor Abreu asked whether the applicant would conduct CORI checks for his employees upon hiring. The applicant confirmed that they would complete the CORI process.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Choquette, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPLICATION for a **NEW PRIVATE LIVERY LICENSE** on behalf of Christian Cornejo Cabrera, 87 Rivet Street, #2, New Bedford, MA, d/b/a **CABRERA TRANSPORTATION, LLC**, 162 Division Street, #2, New Bedford, MA. **(License will expire June 30, 2025.)**

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Choquette, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPLICATION for the **RENEWAL of a PRIVATE LIVERY LICENSE** on behalf of Christian Cornejo Cabrera, 87 Rivet Street, #2, New Bedford, MA, d/b/a **CABRERA TRANSPORTATION, LLC**, 162 Division Street, #2, New Bedford, MA. **(Term of License July 01, 2025 – June 30, 2026.)**

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The following two matters were withdrawn at the applicant's request:

COMMUNICATION, City Clerk/Clerk of the City Council, submitting an Application for a **NEW PRIVATE LIVERY LICENSE** on behalf of Christian Cornejo Cabrera, 87 Rivet Street, #2, New Bedford, MA, d/b/a **LIGHTHOUSE MEDICAL TRANSPORT**, 162 Division Street, #2, New Bedford, MA. **(License will expire June 30, 2025.)** (Matter ID #0326) (Referred – March 13, 2025.)

COMMUNICATION, City Clerk/Clerk of the City Council, submitting an Application for a **RENEWAL of a PRIVATE LIVERY LICENSE** on behalf of Christian Cornejo Cabrera, 87 Rivet Street, #2, New Bedford, MA, d/b/a **LIGHTHOUSE MEDICAL TRANSPORT**, 162 Division Street, #2, New Bedford, MA. **(Term of License July 01, 2025 – June 30, 2026.)** (Matter ID #0327) (Referred – March 13, 2025.)

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The following matters were taken up together without objection:

COMMUNICATION, City Clerk/Clerk of the City Council, to City Council, submitting an Application for a **NEW PRIVATE LIVERY LICENSE**, on behalf of Stephania Zenon Pierre and Jean Fleurant Pierre, 50 New Plainville Road, New Bedford, MA d/b/a **PATHWAY PARTNERS TRANSPORTATION & PLUS**, 127 West Rodney French Boulevard, New Bedford, MA. **(License to expire – June 30, 2025.)** (Matter ID #0488) (Referred – March 27, 2025.)

COMMUNICATION, City Clerk/Clerk of the City Council, to City Council, submitting an Application for a **RENEWAL of a PRIVATE LIVERY LICENSE**, on behalf of Stephania Zenon Pierre and Jean Fleurant Pierre, 50 New Plainville Road, New Bedford, MA d/b/a **PATHWAY PARTNERS TRANSPORTATION & PLUS**, 127 West Rodney French Boulevard, New Bedford, MA. **(Term of License – July 01, 2025 – June 30, 2026.)** (Matter ID #0489) (Referred – March 27, 2025.)

It was confirmed that the applicants were not present at this time.

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

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WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Appointments and Briefings meet with a representative of Eversource Electric and Vineyard Wind to discuss the possibility of working with the City to get the Butler Flats lighthouse, a beacon of light, lit again. (Matter ID #1157) (Referred – June 27, 2024.)

Councillor Gomes expressed his intention to promote a collaboration between Vineyard Wind and Eversource in order to explore the possibility of restoring lighting to the Butler Flat Lighthouse, which is owned by the City.

Steve Santos, Managing Director of Public Affairs for Vineyard Wind, acknowledged the Councillors' request. He indicated that he could not provide a definitive answer this evening but would review the request with the Vineyard Wind team for further consideration. Mr. Santos requested that the Councillor share any details regarding the type of funding needed and the specifics of the project.

Anthony Veilleux, Community Relations Specialist for Eversource Energy, was recognized. He inquired about the specifics of the project and expressed his willingness to arrange a meeting with the appropriate people to discuss the request alongside Councillor Gomes. Mr. Veilleux also asked Councillor Gomes about the condition of the building, to which the Councillor responded that he was unsure.

Councillor Gomes noted that both parties had agreed to review the matter with their senior management. He proposed tabling the item for further discussion at a future meeting.

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

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WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, Council President Burgo, Councillors Abreu, Choquette, Oliver, Lopes and Carney, requesting, on behalf of the City Residents and Businesses, that the Committee on Appointments and Briefings Committee meet with a representative of Eversource to discuss the increasing energy cost; and further, that the Representative give an explanation and breakdown of the energy bill, but more importantly the delivery charge that customers are paying. (Matter ID #0154) (Referred – February 13, 2025.) (March 18, 2025 – tabled)

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

The Chair recognized Michael Vedovelli, Eversource, Director of Community Relations & Economic Development for Massachusetts. Mr. Vedovelli reviewed several slides discussing the effects of the energy charge increase and outlined the measures Eversource is implementing to alleviate some of the financial impact.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Committee VOTED: To receive and place on file a hard copy of the “Understanding Winter Energy Bills” presentation packet provided by Eversource.

Mr. Vedovelli explained the various components of the gas bill, noting that customer charges are divided into two primary categories, regardless of the service area. The first category is “Supply”, which represents the cost of gas sourced from Eversource or a third-party supplier. Eversource does not profit from this supply cost; customers pay the same price that Eversource pays for the gas. The second category is “Delivery”, which encompasses the expenses related to safely providing gas for heating in compliance with State regulations. This includes costs for energy efficiency programs and rate assistance for eligible consumers. Charges for both “Supply” and “Delivery” are based on usage, measured in therms, meaning that the therms consumed during the billing cycle affect both charges.

Mr. Vedovelli further explained that a bill includes four delivery charges: the customer charge, which is a fixed monthly fee covering account administration, such as billing preparation and meter reading; the distribution charge, which reflects investments in infrastructure and labor necessary for safe and reliable gas service; the revenue decoupling charge, designed to separate utility revenues from customer usage, promoting energy efficiency programs; and the Distribution Adjustment, which includes gas safety improvements and emissions reduction efforts and residential energy assistance and public policy programs.

Mr. Vedovelli detailed the efforts Eversource is making to enhance the transparency of their billing process including:

- The introduction of customer bill assistance programs.
- A 10% reduction in delivery rates for March and April bills, providing immediate short-term relief. These costs will be distributed and collected during the non-heating season when gas usage is significantly lower.
- The Department of Public Utilities has mandated a \$500 million reduction in the proposed increase for the 2025-2027 Mass Save budget. Despite this reduction, the budget will still be \$500 million higher than the previous three-year plan.
- A \$50 bill credit will be issued to all electric residential customers in April, courtesy of the Department of Energy Resources.
- The Healy-Driscoll Administration's Energy Affordable Agenda is also in effect.
- The Department of Public Utilities is prioritizing affordability and transparency in its initiatives.

The Director elaborated on the importance of collaborating with regulators, elected officials, and customers to develop solutions that ensure affordable energy as the Commonwealth navigates its significant energy transition.

Councillor Lopes inquired about the mandatory rate adjustment implemented by Eversource in February, which resulted in increased billing, and asked who was responsible for establishing that adjustment.

Ashley Botelho, the Director of Revenue Requirement at Eversource, who oversees the revenue and rate filings submitted to the Department of Utilities for approval was recognized. Ms. Botelho replied that the recent change in February pertained to the supply side of the bill, which is influenced by market conditions. Ms. Botelho noted that the supply cost is passed directly to customers without any markup from Eversource. The Massachusetts Department of Public Facilities requires communication regarding any requests for rate changes.

Councillor Lopes requested that the Committee be provided with information on the differences between fixed and non-fixed percentages, including details on their allocation; and he additionally asked that the Committee be provided with a detailed breakdown to clarify which components are fixed, which are non-fixed, and which may be subject to adjustment.

Councillor Gomes inquired about the timing of the recent increase, emphasizing the need for transparency in the billing process. He also requested clarification on the factors that contributed to the rise in delivery charges and requested that the Committee be provided with Eversource's profit figures for the previous twelve months. Ms. Botelho acknowledged that there is potential for greater transparency in how gas bills are presented, noting that Eversource is currently working on revising their billing format.

Ms. Botelho clarified that the State's energy efficiency initiatives operate on a three-year plan, which includes programs established under the Green Communities Act. These plans are subject to review by the Department of Public Utilities, and their budgets have been increasing, contributing to the rise in gas bills. The current three-year plan reflects a notable increase compared to the previous one, and other factors, such as costs associated with securing gas delivery to customers, also play a role.

Councillor Oliver recognized that Eversource functions as an energy delivery service. He inquired about the Windpower Initiative's involvement with Eversource and whether it has impacted consumer charges. He was informed that, currently, there has been no impact, as the wind power companies are not yet operational and Eversource does not have any interconnections with the wind power system.

Additionally, Councillor Oliver asked whether the State Administration's decision to suspend the pipeline initiative was directly related to the increasing delivery costs of the product; he also asked about the potential average savings for ratepayers if utilities covered the costs of these green initiatives. Ms. Botelho confirmed that the State Administration's decision to suspend the pipeline was indeed related and it was suggested that potential savings could reach as high as 30%, meaning that one-third of each bill is the result of the green initiative or assistance. She shared that the green initiative costs are higher than the assistance costs.

Councillor Oliver requested that the Committee be provided with a report detailing the breakdown of the higher cost of green initiatives versus the lower cost of assistance costs.

Councillor Abreu inquired whether Eversource has estimated the costs associated with future repairs in light of the State's goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Eversource responded that while they are currently evaluating costs in relation to the ongoing energy transition, they do not yet have a comprehensive plan. He emphasized that he represents a working-class community facing challenges such as inflation, tariffs, and rising living costs, which has left many residents struggling financially.

Councillor Choquette expressed concern about the Company's monopoly and asked whether consumers had the option to enter into agreements with alternative providers. He was assured that Eversource does not hold a monopoly; and Eversource is licensed to operate in the area and its service area is approved by the State, similar to that of other providers like National Grid. Eversource serves 159 electrical communities and 122 gas communities, including 60 that are serviced by both, with New Bedford being one of them. The Councillor then asked if other communities serviced by different providers had also experienced rate increases. He was told that while other providers must adhere to the same billing procedures, the representative could not confirm whether their rates had also risen.

Councillor Carney inquired about the 10% deduction for March and April, which is set to be carried over into May and applied for the remainder of the year. She sought clarification on whether individuals who prefer not to pay the spread-out amount would have the option to settle the costs upfront. It was explained that the 10% deduction has already been applied, meaning it will be distributed throughout the rest of the billing cycle, and customers cannot opt out of this reduction since it has already been implemented. The reduction will not appear as a separate line item on the bill; rather, the overall rate has been adjusted. The Councillor expressed concern about the transparency of the billing process. Ms. Botelho noted that customers have been informed via email and that this information has also been included in mailings for those who receive paper bills.

Councillor Lopes inquired whether the 10% allocated to the remaining months of the year involved Eversource charging interest on consumer bills. Eversource responded that they have chosen not to charge interest to assist consumers more effectively.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend that the City Council take **“NO FURTHER ACTION”** at this time.

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WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting that the Committee on Appointments and Briefings meet with State officials, the Administration and New Bedford Port Authority to discuss the present condition of the boat slips at Pope’s Island Marina Facility; further, discuss the 2014 report provided to the New Bedford Port Authority and the City of New Bedford that includes a reported inspection and assessment of the marina and improvements needed due to deterioration, the report also indicated that replacement of the floating docks would cost on their recommendations close to \$5,500,000; furthermore, that the Committee request year end audits of New Bedford Port Authority for years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 and that the City explain as to why we don’t have a lease contract with the State since 2019 and where has the revenue from the 195 slips or more gone to since 2019 through 2021. (Matter ID #0804) (Referred – May 12, 2022.) (March 18, 2025 – tabled)

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

The Chair recognized Gordon Carr, Executive Director for the New Bedford Port Authority. Mr. Carr indicated that, given the late hour, he could attempt to address all the questions raised in the motion, but it would likely take some time, particularly as it involves reviewing the original legislation from 1993. He prepared hard copies of the requested documents for the Committee members to review, allowing them to formulate any questions for a future meeting.

Councillor Gomes agreed that the documents could be received and placed on file, allowing the Committee time for review and enabling the Port Authority to return at a later date. Mr. Carr expressed his agreement.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To receive and place on file copies of the NBPA Annual Financial Statements for 2018 – 2021, a Routine Inspection Report and a Dock Assessment Report for Pope’s Island Marina.

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

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Councillor Oliver made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councillor Baptiste.

This meeting adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence Jr.
Clerk of Committees