



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON MEMORIALS AND DEDICATIONS

DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2025

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS DEREK BAPTISTE, CHAIR; SHANE BURGO; NAOMI CARNEY; MARIA GIESTA; BRIAN GOMES; LINDA MORAD; SHAWN OLIVER (7:05)

ABSENT: COUNCILLOR LEO CHOQUETTE

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Councillor Baptiste called the Special Committee on Memorials and Dedications 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 Banner to be located at Monte's Park, in the northeast corner, in honor of ANTONE T. FORTES. Motion to RPF by Councillor Carney, 2nd by Councillor Morad. Passed by voice vote.

The Chair recognized the applicant, Jaqueline Fortes-Pina, 123 Bedford Street, New Bedford, MA. Ms. Fortes-Pina stated that she was requesting a memorial to be placed at Monte's Park in honor of her deceased brother, Antone T. (Toi) Fortes. He was the founder of Tonka's Tumblers and provided activities to children in need for over fifty years. She initially thought a banner would be appropriate but now has decided that a plaque would be better.

The Chair recognized Mary S. Rapoza, Director, Parks, Recreation and Beaches, who stated she believed the Park Board would accept such a proposal. She believed a plaque or some signage would be better than a banner and that the west/south area of the wall in the park would be better suited for such a dedication.

Councillor Carney asked what was the size plaque that would be erected. Ms. Rapoza replied that the size of the plaque would be determined at a later time.

Councillor Baptiste asked Ms. Fortes-Pina if she thought it would be acceptable to place an additional memorial at Washington Square Park. Ms. Fortes-Pina explained that the reason she chose Monte's Park was because this is where Mr. Fortes started the program. It eventually moved to Washington Square Park. She went on to say that it was her understanding that the park was already dedicated to Cape Verdean-American Veterans.

On a motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: to recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Plaque to be located at Monte's Park in the northeast corner in honor of ANTONE T. (TOI) FORTES with a referral to the Park Board.

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COMMUNICATION, Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, submitting a Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Bench and Plaque to be located on the corner of Ash Street and Morgan Street, inside the baseball diamond fence where the memorial is located, in honor of ROCHELLI LYNN PARIS, aka “COCO”. Move to RPF by Councillor Carney, 2nd by Councillor Morad.

The Chair recognized the applicant, Shawnte Paris, 257B Ash Street, New Bedford, MA. Ms. Paris explained her request was to place a plaque on a bench to honor her sister Rochelli Lynn Paris (Coco). Ms. Rochelli Lynn Paris (Coco) passed away ten years ago from breast cancer. Since that time Shawnte has placed plastic solo cups in the fence reading “miss you Coco”. She had a tree planted in her sister’s honor and would now like to add a bench with a plaque on it.

Councillor Baptiste spoke in favor of this request.

On a motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: to recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a Memorial Bench and Plaque to be located on the corner of Ash Street and Morgan Street, inside the baseball diamond fence in honor of ROCHELLI LYNN PARIS, aka “COCO” with a referral to the Park Board.

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COMMUNICATION, Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, submitting a Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for the Dedication of Diamond #3 at Brooklawn Park in honor of the Founders of the Whaling City Youth Baseball League, MILTON WEAVER, LUCIAN BEAUREGARD, and LEO PARADIS.

The Chair recognized Mr. Steven Carreiro of the Whaling City Youth Baseball League.

Mr. Carreiro explained that the Whaling City Youth Baseball League was celebrating their seventy-fifth year. The League was looking for a way to honor the three gentlemen who founded the organization in 1951. Since its inception in 1951, the Whaling City Youth Baseball League has seen over ten thousand children pass through their organization.

Councillor Morad asked what the name of the field would be. She was told it would be named Founders Field. Councillor Morad asked Ms. Rapoza if the Park Board was in favor of this. Ms. Rapoza stated the Park Board was aware of this request and referred it to the Committee for consideration. They would not take a final vote on the item until it is approved formally by the City Council. Councillor Morad asked if the City has dedicated any other baseball diamonds before. Ms. Rapoza stated that there were some throughout the City that have been dedicated. Councillor Morad asked if she saw an issue with the Park Board passing this request. Ms. Rapoza said she believed it would be approved by the Park Board.

On a motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: to recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the Memorial Park Bench and Tree Dedication Program Application for a dedication of Diamond #3 at Brooklawn Park in honor of the Founders of the Whaling City Youth Baseball League, MILTON WEAVER, LUCIAN BEAUREGARD and LEO PARADIS, with a referral to the Park Board.

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WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Giesta, requesting, on behalf of Anna Nunes, that the Special Committee on Memorials & Dedications meet with a representative from the Department of Public Infrastructure to discuss the placement of a memorial plaque on the bench in front of the Lincoln Elementary School, located on the corner of Query Street and Ashley Boulevard, in memory of LEONTINA DACOSTA. (To be Referred to the Special Committee on Memorials & Dedications and the Department of Public Infrastructure.

The Chair recognized the applicant, Ms. Anna Nunes, 57 Coggeshall Street, Dartmouth, MA, and Ms. Luisa Meroni, daughters of Leontina DaCosta, who explained their request was to place a plaque honoring their mother on the bench in front of the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School. Ms. Nunes explained her mother lived in the neighborhood all her life and would walk the school area and rest on the bench in front of the school. In April of 2021, as a result of the Covid-19 vaccine, she went blind. However, she continued to do her walks with the support of family and rest on the bench and would be visited by the children who attended the school. They feel the request is an appropriate gesture in recognition of her love for the neighborhood and the children who attended the school and had befriended her.

Councillor Morad asked who owned the bench that is currently there. Does it belong to the City or to the School Department. DPI Commissioner Jamie Ponte was recognized and he stated he did not know. He went on to say if it was the City's property, his department would not have an issue with the plaque. He went on to say if the bench belonged to the School Department, then the School Department would have to approve it. It was also understood that if the plaque was placed on the bench, it would be similar to those erected by the Park Department.

Councillor Giesta was present and voiced her support for this proposal.

On a motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: to recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of a memorial plaque on the bench in front of the Lincoln Elementary School, located on the corner of Query Street and Ashley Boulevard in memory of LEONTINA DACOSTA, and that DPI Commissioner Jaime Ponte meet with Superintendent of Schools Andrew O'Leary to determine if the bench is on City or School Property.

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RELATED MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting that the Special Committee on Memorials and Dedications meet to discuss the establishment of a monument to memorialize Carl Pimentel on a parcel of land donated by the Pimentel Family, identified as Map 10 Lot 108.

The Chair recognized Councillor Gomes who said this item was referred to the City Solicitor's office where it has been stalled and the request to have the City take the property has not happened yet. He would like to see this issue move forward.

The Chair recognized Mr. Kurt D. Pimental, 33 Cornell Road, Westport, MA, who is offering the property to the City. The Pimentel family is asking to be allowed to erect a memorial honoring their father Carl Pimental, a businessman with a long history of being involved with the City of New Bedford. Mr. Pimentel said that as of now, he has not heard from the Solicitor's office regarding the status of the land transfer request.

A discussion ensued as to whether or not Mr. Pimental should simply erect the memorial and then once the City had taken over the property, the City would oversee its upkeep in perpetuity. Mr. Pimental explained he would like to have the property transferred as soon as possible as the taxes have increased on the parcel from \$800 annually to nearly \$2,000 annually.

Councillor Morad cautioned about putting the stone on the property and the possibility that the City would decide not to take the land.

Janet Barboza was present representing the Mayor's Office. She stated that she was not familiar with the issue, however, she would reach out to the Solicitor's office and inform the Committee what the status was with the land transfer request.

On a motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: to TABLE the item for 30 days.

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The following items were not read.

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that the Special Committee on Memorials & Dedications meet with Rosemary Gill, President & CEO of the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center, to discuss a portrait tribute of Armand Marchand and *George Charbonneau*, founders of the New Bedford Festival Theatre and former New Bedford High School Drama Club teacher; this portrait would hang in the entrance lobby of the Zeiterion Theater as a tribute to a man who gave it all to the art of the theater through his productions and to his legacy in the City of New Bedford. (Matter ID #1256) (Referred – July 17, 2025.)

The Chair announced that Ms. Rosemary Gill of the Zeiterion Theatre would not be present at the meeting tonight to discuss the proposals before the Committee.

On a motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Committee VOTED: to TABLE the item.

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WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Abreu, Lopes, Choquette and Carney, requesting, that the portion of Purchase Street in front of the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center, from School Street to Spring Street, be renamed from "Yellow Brick Road" to the "Armand R. Marchand Way," honoring his over 50 years of contributions to the arts and overall creative economy of New Bedford and our region as a whole. (Matter ID #1257) (Referred – July 17, 2025.)

On a motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Committee VOTED: to TABLE the item.

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These following items were taken up together without objection.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Committee VOTED: to remove the items from the Table.

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Coelho, Lopes, Lima, Abreu, Carney, Giesta and Gomes, requesting that the Special Committee on Memorials and Dedications look into finding an appropriate location in the downtown area honoring Joe Jesus for the love and dedication he had for the City of New Bedford.

On a motion by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: to TABLE the item for 30 days.

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WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Abreu and Oliver, requesting that the Special Committee on Memorials and Dedications, the Department of Public Infrastructure and the Administration discuss the feasibility of erecting a dedication plaque honoring Philip C. Paleologos *Philip C. and Celeste Paleologos* at the corner of Shawmut Avenue and Hathaway Road (or another suitable location) honoring his *their* over five decades of philanthropy and community service to the City of New Bedford. (To be Referred to the Special Committee on Memorials and Dedications, the Department of Public Infrastructure and the Administration.)

The Chair recognized Ms. Janet Barboza from the Mayor's Office and asked her if the Administration was in favor of the dedication requests. She informed the Committee that the Mayor was.

The Chair recognized Jamie Ponte, Commissioner, Department of Public Infrastructure.

Councillor Oliver asked if there had been any more thought given to the idea of erecting signage honoring the Paleologos's since the last time this item was discussed. Commissioner Ponte said there is what he believes a small portion of land belonging to the City at the corner of Hathaway Road and Shawmut Avenue. He believes the discussion of erecting street signage like the one honoring former Mayor John Markey on Route 18 would probably be the best way to go. Councillor Oliver asked if permission was needed by the Traffic Commission to place such signage. Commissioner Ponte said the Traffic Commission's permission was not needed. He stated that the lights are maintained and operated by the Department of Public Infrastructure, and if approved, DPI would attach the sign.

Councillor Morad expressed concern that such signage was being erected for everything and that while she understands the contributions those being considered, approving signs for business operators would set a precedent that concerns her. She asked Commissioner Ponte about the cost of creating a sign to hang off a traffic light. The Commissioner stated it would be less than a few hundred dollars.

Councillor Gomes was recognized and spoke in favor of dedicating signage on behalf of Joe Jesus who was responsible for the creation of 50's Night Downtown, which annually attracts a lot of people to the Downtown area. He would like to see something happen on behalf of Mr. Jesus as well.

On a motion by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: to Table the item for 30 days and obtain an estimate of the cost and size of a street sign to be placed on the traffic signal from the Department of Public Infrastructure.

Councillor Oliver made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Morad.

This meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence, Jr.
Clerk of Committees