



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DATE: NOVEMBER 25, 2025

TIME: 6:04 P.M.

PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS SHANE BURGO, CHAIR; NAOMI CARNEY (6:19); BRIAN GOMES; JOSEPH LOPES; LINDA MORAD; SHAWN OLIVER; RYAN PEREIRA

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS IAN ABREU; DEREK BAPTISTE; LEO CHOQUETTE; MARIA GUESTA

* * *

Councillor Burgo called the Special Committee on Environmental Affairs meeting to order, took attendance, and explained that the meeting was being recorded and live-streamed. The Clerk read three Communications into the record: one from Councillor Choquette and one from Councillor Giesta explaining their absences; and one from Councillor Carney explaining her possible tardiness. The Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Oliver.

* * *

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a RESOLUTION, adopting the 2025, City of New Bedford Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Adoption Discussion presentation was received and placed on file.

Brian Nobrega, Director, Emergency Management was recognized and began the presentation stating that what was before the Committee is the culmination of a four-year process which resulted in the drafting of the City's Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. The process started in 2016 and was to become a five-year plan, however, COVID-19 occurred and delayed the process. What is before the Committee tonight is the final draft post COVID-19. This is a plan that the City will submit as required to both Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Once accepted by both agencies it will open the door for a number of funding mechanisms that the City may be eligible for. Mr. Nobrega went on to say that the report was a team effort by multiple City departments, DPI, Environmental Stewardship, Emergency Management, Police, Fire, Emergency Medical Services and Community Outreach.

Craig Pereira, the consultant retained by the City to assist in the development of the plan spoke next. He explained that the presentation would say what went into preparing the plan, what is in the plan and why the City should adopt the plan. The need for such plan is required under the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, requiring all communities to have an approved Multiple Hazards Mitigation Plan in order to qualify for future Federal disaster mitigation grants. Mr. Pereira said that this plan now includes not only natural hazard mitigation, but also human caused and technological hazards. It was also constructed in tandem with the City's comprehensive emergency management plan.

Mr. Pereira explained that once this draft is adopted by the City Council and the Administration, it will be sent to FEMA and MEMA for acceptance. This would allow the City to be eligible for:

- Building Resilient Infrastructure and Community Program funding
- General Appropriations Budget planning
- MA DOT/TIP funding
- Port Authority funding
- Federal Boating Infrastructure Grant Program
- State Dam Removal and Repair Grant Program
- EPA Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act
- MA State Revolving Loan Fund
- MA Dam and Seawall State Funding
- Tree City USA program
- Greening Gateway Cities
- Rebuilding America Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Program
- MA Wildlife Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program
- EPA Wetlands Development Program
- MA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program

The process included a core team that included the Department of Public Infrastructure, Emergency Management and Environmental Stewardship. The team held several meetings with agencies and community members to gather information that was used in drafting this plan that is now before you in Committee.

Councillor Lopes asked if the five-year window would begin at the date of submittal of the plan, or the date of adoption of the plan. He was told the five-year window will formally start once the City adopts the plan and signs the Resolution. It would then be inserted into the draft plan and sent to MEMA and they in turn would forward it to FEMA. FEMA would then send a letter to the City indicating that the plan is now adopted, and in place for the next five years. Councillor Lopes asked if the new plan has cyber-attack strategies within it. He was told yes.

Councillor Pereira asked if this plan would begin the process of allowing the City to join FEMA's community rating system. He was told that it would and that there would be a number of benefits that the City could reap from this process. Mr. Pereira said that there is a process which if approved would result in lower flood insurance rates for residents who live within the City's flood zone. It was explained that new enrollees are classified at number 9, which allows for a 5% discount on flood insurance rates. A lower classification number would result in a larger discount.

Councillor Morad asked whether any suggestions received from the public had been included in the final draft. Director Nobrega stated a lot of public input was centered around street flooding as a major issue which was addressed with DPI. Another item was power outages in which a plan was reviewed with Eversource. Councillor Morad asked once the plan is accepted by MEMA and FEMA, how would it be executed locally. Mr. Nobrega said Shawn Syde, DPI Engineer, Michele Paul, Director, Environmental Stewardship and himself as Director of Emergency Management would be in charge of executing the plan.

Councillor Gomes asked how the City would access the funding that is referenced in the plan. Mr. Pereria explained that City would receive notification of funding from various programs that become available and would then have to apply for it.

Councillor Oliver asked if there was an immediate plan to address lowering flood insurance costs. Mr. Pereria stated that typically most communities are categorized at a 9 on the rating scale established by FEMA. There would be a community assessment where FEMA would come to the City and review its emergency management plans then decide if the scale number should be lowered. The City has the ability to have them return annually to review its progress, which could lead to a lower assessment number.

Director Nobrega cautioned that while they will apply for the grants that are made available, they are not as readily available as they were during the Biden Administration.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Gomes, the Committee VOTED: to recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the RESOLUTION, approving the 2025, City of New Bedford Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan.

* * *

The Committee followed the Chair's recommendation to Waive the Reading and take NO FURTHER ACTION on the following items:

LOAN ORDER, in the amount of \$6,800,000.00 to pay the costs of Buttonwood Park Pond and Dam Rehabilitation and Dredging Project. (Matter ID #1952) (Referred to the Committee on Finance – December 13, 2018.) (Referred – March 14, 2019.)

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Gomes, the Committee VOTED: to follow the Chair's recommendation to waive the reading and take **"NO FURTHER ACTION"** on the matter at this time.

* * *

WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Morad, requesting that the Department of Public Infrastructure Commissioner Jamie Ponte, Department of Resilience and Environmental Stewardship Director Michele Paul and the Health Department Director Damon Chaplin appear before the Committee on Environmental Affairs to provide the City Council a detailed briefing on the proposed Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection mandated Title 5 regulations as related to property owners with septic systems in the City of New Bedford; and further, that the New Bedford City Council immediately send correspondence to the members of our State Legislative Delegation and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection indicating our opposition to the mandated Title 5 regulations and affirming our support of their request for a delay in the regulations until funding can be appropriated for the property owners and the City of New Bedford in implementing these changes. (To be Referred to the Committee on Environmental Affairs, Department of Resilience and Environmental Stewardship Director Michele Paul, Department of Public Infrastructure Commissioner Jamie Ponte, Health Department Director Damon Chaplin, Senator Mark Montigny, Representatives Antonio Cabral, Christopher Hendricks, Christopher Markey, Paul Schmid and Massachusetts' Department of Environmental Protection Acting Commissioner Gary Moran.) (Matter ID #0238) (Referred – January 26, 2023.)

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Gomes, the Committee VOTED: to follow the Chair's recommendation to waive the reading and take **"NO FURTHER ACTION"** on the matter at this time.

* * *

Councillor Pereira made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councillor Carney.

The meeting adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence Jr.
Clerk of Committees