



City of New Bedford
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Date: November 21, 2016
For Immediate Release

City of New Bedford
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Mayor Mitchell, Members of the City Council and Police Chief Announce New Ordinance to Address Dangerous Use of Recreational Vehicles on City Streets

New Law to Allow Police to Impose Fines, Confiscate Vehicles

New Bedford, Massachusetts- In an effort to create safer streets for the people of New Bedford, Mayor Jon Mitchell, members of the New Bedford City Council and New Bedford Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro announced they are working together to put in place a new City ordinance that will address the dangerous use of recreational vehicles on public and private property.

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 90B prohibits “recreational vehicles” including dirt bikes, all terrain vehicles (ATVs) and other off-highway motorcycles from operating on public ways in Massachusetts. The proposed New Bedford ordinance will further prohibit hazardous operation of these vehicles and will empower the New Bedford Police Department to fine operators and confiscate recreational vehicles used on either public or private property.

The details of the proposed ordinance were announced at a press conference held in New Bedford City Hall earlier today. Violators of the proposed ordinance would be subject to a \$300.00 penalty and impoundment of the vehicle.

“We are not going to allow the reckless use of off-road vehicles endanger our residents or erode the quality of life of our neighborhoods. I am pleased that we have developed an ordinance that will empower New Bedford Police to fine anyone riding off-road vehicles in New Bedford and confiscate the vehicle on the spot,” said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

Ward Six City Councillor Joseph P. Lopes said, “This is an issue that affects the residents from across the city. The full city council has been working to resolve this matter and collectively working as a team we have an ordinance that will help the NBPD improve the quality of life for everyone.”

In response to an increase of inappropriate and dangerous use of recreational vehicles in city neighborhoods New Bedford Police upped enforcement efforts earlier this year. Since June of 2016, New Bedford Police have cited 69 operators, towed 69 recreational vehicles and arrested 23 persons for violating existing laws.

Despite these efforts, enforcement of regulations around improper use of recreational vehicles has been a challenging and often dangerous task for local state and federal law enforcement. Just three weeks ago, New Bedford Police learned of a planned group ride and conducted a joint operation to intercept the reckless operators. Multiple law enforcement agencies including the New Bedford Police Department's Gang Unit, Port Security Unit, Organized Crime Intelligence Bureau, and the Massachusetts Environmental Police as well as the Department of Homeland Security participated in the joint operation. A New Bedford Police officer was hospitalized for injuries sustained when he was run over by a dirt bike rider attempting to avoid arrest. A total of 15 persons were charged in connection with the October 31st incident.

New Bedford Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro said he believes the regulations presented today will give his officers more authority and resources to address reckless riders. "It's essential that the public continue report these off-road vehicles on city street to the police department so that we may respond accordingly. I urge the family and friends of persons engaging this reckless behavior to encourage them to stop before anyone else is seriously injured," said Chief Cordeiro.

The City Council will consider the ordinance at its meeting in early December of 2016. Several councilors in attendance at the press conference today expressed their support for the new regulation.

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