



City of New Bedford
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

City of New Bedford
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P R E S S R E L E A S E

New Bedford Lands \$4.6 Million Federal SAFER Grant

Grant Maintains Current Staffing Levels, Funds 21 City Firefighter Positions

New Bedford, Massachusetts- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced today that the City of New Bedford has been awarded a \$4,620,000.00 federal grant. The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant will fund twenty-one New Bedford firefighter positions for a two year period and will allow the New Bedford Fire Department to maintain its current staffing levels. The New Bedford Fire Department currently employs 216 firefighters.

SAFER is a competitive grant program that is administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in cooperation with the U.S. Fire Administration. The City of New Bedford prepared and submitted an application for this funding and received the full amount of the funding it sought.

Mayor Jon Mitchell welcomed news of the grant award, “I want to thank Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Ed Markey and Congressman Bill Keating for their strong support of New Bedford’s grant application. I also want to thank Brian Kamoie, Assistant Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for Grant Programs who oversees the administration of the SAFER grant for carefully considering the arguments made on behalf of New Bedford’s application. I also want to thank Chief Gomes, District Chief Joseph Barros and Fire Union President Billy Cabral for their advocacy on behalf of New Bedford’s application. Chief Gomes, President Cabral and I have each made several trips to Washington, D.C. to advocate on behalf of New Bedford’s grant application, and I am pleased that our efforts have borne fruit.”

“When I took office, New Bedford was using the SAFER grant to fund 70 firefighter positions and had no identified means of paying their salaries after the grant expired. Through careful planning over the last two years we have put our Fire Department on a sustainable pathway that will enable it to keep our residents safe,” Mitchell said.

New Bedford Fire Chief Michael Gomes said of the award, “This is great news for the New Bedford Fire Department and the citizens of our city. The grant will allow the Fire Department to go forward with a stable foundation with which to plan our future staffing structure. This SAFER funding is part of our plan to meet our response needs without federal assistance at the end of this grant. This has been a long and winding road from the 70 firefighter positions initially funded by SAFER to the gradual draw down to the present 21 positions. Our application clearly defined this plan and was looked upon favorably. This success was a joint effort involving members of our staff, the Mayor’s Office and the leadership of Local 841. In particular, I want to recognize and thank District Chief Joseph Barros, our primary grant writer and point person for this application, for his efforts.

Ari J. Sky, Chief Financial Officer for the City of New Bedford said, “The SAFER award announcement is great news for the City, and will allow us to proceed with the current staffing plan as envisioned by the FY 2017 budget. Going forward, we will continue working to ensure that fire services are provided in a cost effective and sustainable manner.”

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