



City of New Bedford  
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

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Date: February 3, 2016  
For Immediate Release

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **Mayor Mitchell Announces South End Public Safety Center and Other Important Updates to City's Capital Improvement Program**

**New Bedford, Massachusetts** –Mayor Jon Mitchell announced today that New Bedford will study, design and construct a new public safety center in the city's south end as part of a series of significant updates to New Bedford's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and as was recommended by an independent expert review of the City's public safety facilities recently completed by the FACETS consulting firm.

"The City is long overdue for new fire and police stations. This CIP reflects my administration's commitment to giving our emergency responders the tools they need to keep New Bedford's neighborhoods safe," said Mayor Mitchell.

"Our updated capital plan continues the efforts we began in 2013 to address long unmet facility and equipment needs. While we have seen real progress resulting from last year's bond, it is important that we continue our momentum and address these essential needs. Over time, the implementation of the CIP will result in a City that is properly maintained and serves its residents more effectively," Mitchell added.

The CIP is New Bedford's long-term plan for addressing the facility and equipment needs of the City of New Bedford, first introduced in 2013 and updated again this year through 2020. The updated CIP includes a proposal for a Fall 2016 bond, which would fund the study design and construction of the public safety center, in addition to pressing renovation and improvement needs at public safety buildings, school department facilities, facilities designed for public use and at those designed to house general government operations.

The new combined public safety center will serve as the operations base for those police, fire and emergency medical services currently provided by Fire Station 6 on Purchase Street built in 1882, and Fire Station 11 on Brock Avenue built in 1907, as well as Police Station 2 on Cove Street which was originally constructed as a library. Mayor Mitchell also announced that he would formally ask that the City Council name the new public safety facility "The Chief David A. Provencher Public Safety Center," in honor of the City's late police chief who died unexpectedly in December of 2015.

“This year’s CIP builds upon the progress that we have made in funding renovations over the past two years. The multiyear approach allows the City to fund core needs while restraining debt of the long term, which is a key objective of the City’s debt management policy,” said City Chief Financial Officer Ari Sky.

Sky added that the recent affirmation of the City’s AA- bond rating by Standard & Poor’s (S&P), combined with favorable interest rates, has allowed the City to finance major projects at an affordable cost. S&P just recently raised the classification of the City’s financial management from “strong” to “very strong”- the highest rating attainable for the category. In its rating, the agency cited the City’s financial policies and practices in place and the development of a five-year long-term financial plan as the basis for the upgrade.

The Capital Improvement Program is designed ensure that the highest priority projects receive public funding in a manner that is in keeping with the City’s ability to pay. The total budget for the five-year plan is \$70.8 million and the Mayor has already submitted a \$5.5 million Fall 2016 bond request to the City Council to continue the progress achieved over the last two years. The CIP also captures previous authorizations for the Hannigan Elementary School project and an upcoming allocation for repairs to four elementary schools, which will be submitted as a separate authorization.

The FY2016-2020 Capital Improvement Program contains a complete listing of the highest priority capital improvement projects and their descriptions.

### **Highlights of the Capital Improvement Program**

- The first step in creating the plan was the development of a Capital Needs Assessment (CNA) by the City’s Chief Financial Officer, Ari Sky, which identified roughly \$66 million in needs across all City departments.
- The CIP provides a plan to address current and projected renovation, restoration and major equipment replacement needs. The plan was first introduced in 2013, with the initial version extending through 2018. With this update, the CIP extends through FY2020.
- Under the CIP, the City will pursue \$70.8 million in projects over the next five years. The plan is updated with new projects and cost estimates annually, with much of the focus on repairs and deferred maintenance.
- Top funding priorities under the CIP are:
  - Up to \$7.5 million to study, design and construct a South End Public Safety Center to house fire, EMS and police services in a single facility that would modernize and better coordinate public safety services in New Bedford’s South End, as was recommended by the independent public safety facilities review conducted by FACETS in 2015.
  - \$2.8 million for police, fire, and EMS equipment and vehicles
  - \$33.1 million for the local share of school capital projects, including renovations to Carney, Gomes, Hayden-McFadden, and Pulaski elementary schools the construction of the new Hannigan Elementary School, as well as a future

renovation to Parker Elementary School s and construction of a replacement to the Congdon and Devalles schools.

- \$6.1 million for replenishment of ambulances, fire apparatus and the City's fleet of aged vehicles.
- Affordability was the most important factor in developing the CIP. In 2013, the City established a series of affordability indicators to gauge the impact of debt on the City's finances. The CIP was designed with the objective of restraining long-term financing costs and overall debt over the course of the five-year planning period.

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