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CITY OF NEW BEDFORD  
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

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## PRESS RELEASE

### City Moves to Build New North End School

*The proposed new building would consolidate Ashley and Swift Schools*

**New Bedford, Massachusetts**– The New Bedford School Committee voted unanimously to submit Statements of Interests (SOI) to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) relative to the Charles S. Ashley and Jireh Swift Elementary Schools during its February 13 school committee meeting. Mayor Jon Mitchell subsequently filed the SOI with the City Council and the Council approved the measure at its meeting earlier this week. Local approval of an SOI is the first step in serving MSBA support for a local school construction property.

“The quality of the learning environment is an important factor in student academic achievement, and that is why we have made the modernization of New Bedford school facilities a high priority,” said Mayor Mitchell. “Built at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Ashley and Swift Elementary schools served generations of students well, but they are nearing the end of their useful lives. We want to make sure future generations of students have a school that meets their needs.”

Ashley Elementary School is 100 years old and the Swift Elementary School is 114 years old.

Superintendent Thomas Anderson noted Ashley and Swift Schools are closely situated, about 1.4 miles apart. “Their combined enrollments for the 2019-20 school year was 433 students. A consolidation makes sense educationally and is part of our master plan to replace all the century-old buildings while also upgrading schools built in the 1960s and 1970s. We must

continue elevating the working conditions for both students and adults as we continue on a positive trajectory in New Bedford Public Schools.”

Similar to the ongoing work of the MSBA DeValles/Congdon School Building Subcommittee, chaired by School Committee member Bruce J. Oliveira, the Ashley/Swift SOIs are for one new school to be built in compliance with MSBA requirements that two SOIs be submitted, one for each school.

Andrew O’Leary, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations noted to the committee, “Our intent is to submit two SOIs – one for the Ashley Elementary School and one for Swift Elementary School to replace both of these 100-year-old schools with a new facility to house both student populations. This resubmission incurs no financial obligation on the part of the City. However, if the MSBA Board votes to allow this project to proceed, a request will be needed for an appropriation during the first half of FY2025 to fund a feasibility study.”