



## **Committee on Public Safety - Minutes**

March 12, 2013 – 7:00 PM

Chambers of the City Council, City Hall, Room 214

**\*\*View Agenda\*\***

**MEETING: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & NEIGHBORHOODS**  
**DATE: MARCH 12, 2013**  
**TIME: 7:02 P.M.**  
**PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLORS BRIAN GOMES, CHAIRMAN; JAMES OLIVEIRA, VICE-CHAIRMAN; DAVID ALVES; HENRY BOUSQUET; DEBORA COELHO; JANE GONSALVES (7:30); JOSEPH LOPES; STEVEN MARTINS; JAMES OLIVEIRA; JOHN SAUNDERS (7:15)**

**ABSENT: COUNCILLORS BRUCE DUARTE, JR.; DENIS LAWRENCE, JR.**

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Councillor Gomes called the Public Safety Committee Meeting to order and took attendance. Memos from Councillors Gonsalves and Duarte stating they would be late were read into the record and received and placed on file by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Lopes.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Gonsalves, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with the Commissioner of Inspectional Services, the Director of Public Health, a Representative from Coastline Elderly Services and a Representative from the Fire Department's Fire Prevention Division to explore the possibility of creating a task force to address hoarding as has been done in other cities in Massachusetts including Gloucester, Newton, and Beverly. (Ref'd 1/14/10, 10/19/10 – table for six months **APRIL**, 3/12/12 - tabled – invite Cynthia Wallquist instead of Romanowicz) and a COMMUNICATION/ARTICLE, "When Clutter Turns to Crisis", by Stephanie Schorow, from Boston Globe Magazine dated January 10, 2010. (Ref'd 1/14/10, 10/19/10 – table for six months **APRIL**, 3/12/12 - tabled – invite Cynthia Wallquist instead of Romanowicz). (1, 1a)

On motion by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter at this time, at the request of Councillor Gonsalves, and that it be heard when she arrives. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Gomes, Oliveira and Coelho, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with City Solicitor and the Police Chief for the purposes of discussing the policies and procedures of the Liquor Licensing Board which has been jeopardized due to the fact that the previous Administration not only took them off the payroll, but removed the resources that are needed in order to enforce the Liquor Licensing laws across the City (Ref'd 10/25/12, 11/19/12 - tabled) was removed from the table by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Lopes. (2)

Councillor Oliveira took the chair so Councillor Gomes could ask questions and debate on this motion.

Councillor Gomes asked Steve Beauregard, Chair of the Licensing Board, what happened to the practice of Board Members being out in the city inspecting bars, restaurants, etc. Mr. Beauregard stated that the Lang Administration chose to change the Board Members from being city employees to essentially independent

contractors and place them on 1099's. The result of which is that they are no longer covered by the city if they were to get hurt or in an altercation while conducting inspections. Therefore, the members stopped doing the inspections because it is unreasonable to put themselves at risk.

Councillor Lopes asked Police Chief Provencher and Steve Beauregard if they were familiar with the model that Brockton uses, in which police officers rotate on and off of the Licensing Board and assist with inspections. The Chief was not aware of it, and Steve Beauregard was to a certain extent. Mr. Beauregard stated he would research it and get back to Councillor Lopes on it.

Councillor Gomes inquired what the stipend is that Licensing Board Members received then and now. Mr. Beauregard stated that it has not changed; only that taxes are no longer deducted by the city, as they are all on 1099's. He further explained that as Chair, he receives a stipend of approximately \$67 per week, while the other members each receive approximately \$52 per week.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Coelho, the Committee VOTED: That the City Council recommends to the Mayor and City Solicitor that the Members of the Licensing Board are once again made city employees and receive all the protection and backing that employment with the city entails, so that they may once again proactively inspect bars, restaurants and other establishments in the city in order to improve the safety of our neighborhoods; and further that the Police Department also be involved in these inspections as well. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Items number three (3) and four (4) were taken up together without any objection.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with Fire Chief Michael Gomes, Union President of the Fire Department Bill Cabral and a representative from the Administration to discuss the situation presently facing our Fire Department, that antiquated equipment is being used in the City and the replacement of equipment that has not been done which jeopardizes the public safety aspect of our firefighters, at the present time we have several pieces of fire equipment that is down and needs to be addressed immediately due to the fact that taxpayers pay their taxes and the best equipment should be available not only for firefighters but for the Citizens of the City of New Bedford (Ref'd 2/14/13) and a Written Motion, Councillors Lopes, Gonsalves, Bousquet, Alves, Oliveira, Lawrence, Gomes, Coelho, Duarte and Council President Martins, requesting, that the Mayor and Fire Chief Gomes present this City Council with both short term needs of the New Bedford Fire Department; and further, that Chief Gomes provide this Council with a detailed analysis of the pieces of apparatuses in use by the Fire Department, the useful life of each piece, current status of each piece, along with the cost associated with replacing said apparatus (Ref'd 12/20/12) were received and placed on file by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Martins. (3 & 4)

Councillor Gomes asked Fire Chief Gomes to explain the issues the department is facing with equipment. The Chief passed out a copy of a plan he had put together to ensure that the department's apparatus remain in good working order. The Chief also explained that the number of "runs" that his firefighters and trucks go on increases every single year and they have not received one single piece of new equipment in 5 years. He stressed the need for a long term plan to steadily and consistently replenish the department's fleet. Adding to the problem currently is the fact that DPF's repair division has gone from 5 employees down to 2, so at a time when no new trucks are being purchased, the department is also having a hard time keeping the existing ones on the road due to a slower turn around time in repairs.

The Chief further explained his plan that calls for a systematic purchasing of new vehicles and other equipment steadily each fiscal year. He pointed out that he had presented this plan to the previous administration in 2011, but nothing was followed up on at that time.

Councillor Alves asked if the Chief realized that he is asking for between \$600,000 and \$700,000 of his budget to be devoted strictly to the purchase of new equipment. The Chief stated that he is absolutely aware of that fact and that it is necessary.

CFO Sky explained that he was representing the Administration on this matter, even though it is only his second day on the job. Councillor Bousquet asked Mr. Sky the Administration's position on this. Mr. Sky replied that the Mayor is extremely supportive of a long term replacement plan all across the city and has instructed him to develop such a plan that meets the needs, not necessarily all of the wants, of city departments in a fiscally responsible time frame. Mr. Sky suggested that this plan would most likely be ready in a few months.

Bill Cabral, Fire Union President agreed with the Chief's assessment of the situation, calling old apparatus unsafe for fire fighters and citizens.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Martins, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on Public Safety forward the Chief's action plan to the Mayor and ask that the Mayor respond to this committee to clarify on whether or not he intends to execute some similar type of plan within 21 days. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Councillor Martins made a motion to remove item 1 from the table, which was seconded by Councillor Alves.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Gonsalves, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with the Commissioner of Inspectional Services, the Director of Public Health, a Representative from Coastline Elderly Services and a Representative from the Fire Department's Fire Prevention Division to explore the possibility of creating a task force to address hoarding as has been done in other cities in Massachusetts including Gloucester, Newton, and Beverly (Ref'd 1/14/10, 10/19/10 – table for six months **APRIL**, 3/12/12 - tabled – invite Cynthia Wallquist instead of Romanowicz) and a COMMUNICATION/ARTICLE, "When Clutter Turns to Crisis", by Stephanie Schorow, from Boston Globe Magazine dated January 10, 2010. (Ref'd 1/14/10, 10/19/10 – table for six months **APRIL**, 3/12/12 - tabled – invite Cynthia Wallquist instead of Romanowicz). (1, 1a)

Councillor Gonsalves stated that when she first brought this issue up three years ago, many thought it was somewhat of a joke. She, however, knew even then that hoarding is not a joke, as she had been living next door to a hoarder for 10 years. She asked Brenda Weis, Director of Public Health, to address the Committee about her ideas and what they deal with regarding this issue, and perhaps how to deal with this rising problem throughout the city.

Dr. Weis handed out materials and referred to it throughout the discussion. The handout consisted of several ideas that she and others have come up with as to how the city should develop an overall strategy to deal with this issue, including the development of an interdepartmental task force. She fully admitted that she and her staff are not experts on this and do not have all the answers. However, they are learning from other organizations, including state agencies that have begun distributing information. Dr. Weis continued on to say that her department sees this problem on a daily basis. She reported that the "good news" is that Hoarding is now recognized as a mental illness and can therefore be billed for through health insurances. Using a formula given to her by state agencies, she estimates that New Bedford has between 150 and 500 hoarders! She said that Mass. Housing has put together some great resources, and that there are currently 25 Hoarding Task Forces in municipalities throughout the Commonwealth. These task forces include participation from inspectional services, the Police Department, Fire Department, Health, Mental Health Professionals, etc. She stressed the need to have mental health as a part of any task force due to the fact that this indeed is a mental illness that cannot be eradicated simply by enforcing codes and/or dealing with the "symptoms" of the problem.

Cynthia Wallquist from Coastline Elderly also indicated that she sees this problem a lot with the elderly. But Dr. Weis was quick to point out that they also see this in people in their 20's and even teens. They both again stressed the need to have a mental health component in any plan that is developed to confront this epidemic. Dr. Weis asked that she be allowed to do some more research on this topic and be invited back to a future meeting in order to propose some concrete recommendations.

On motion by Councillor Gonsalves and seconded by Councillor Bousquet, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter for ninety (90) days. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Alves, the Committee VOTED: To table items five (5) and six (6) at this time. They are as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Gomes and Oliveira, requesting, that the Mayor take immediate action and explore the possibility of a bond with the purposes of obtaining new Police cruisers that have been requested by the Police Department, due to the fact that the fleet of cruisers that is presently running is nearly five to six years old and beginning to show wear and tear from their years of service by breaking down or needing frequent repair, we have reached a point where it is crucial that a new line of front line cruisers be purchased for the purposes of not only moral but assistance to the general public and City; and further, that the Police Department along with the City look into whether any State or Federal vehicles are available that may be bought at a cheaper cost for the second line of the fleet cruisers that may also assist us in replacing some of those special assignment cruisers that have become old in service to the City. (Ref'd 6/28/12) (5)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Gomes and Oliveira, requesting, that a public hearing be held with the Administration, Department of Public Infrastructure Commissioner Ronald Labelle, Department of Public Facilities Commissioner Kenneth Blanchard, and any other parties concerned to discuss snow removal during the Blizzard of 2013, that a plan of action be placed on the books for any type of storm related to the Blizzard of 2013 procedures and policies that will be followed in order to guarantee that we open up streets of the City of New Bedford as soon as possible and that the proper equipment is in place during a storm; and further, requesting that NSTAR officials be invited to said meeting to discuss their policies and procedures during the Blizzard of 2013 and what procedures were put in place to guarantee the constituents of the New Bedford area, rapid response from NSTAR and also requesting that during a hurricane or blizzard situation or any other emergency situation that arises, that NSTAR set up a command center similar to the one that is being done in the northern part of the state, such as National Grid which is a live operator speaking to residents giving them a breakdown of what has happened and how long it will take before their power is restored; and further, that this request be accepted by NSTAR due to the fact that the information that was coming out of NSTAR to the general public through an automated phone operator was not the way to handle a crisis such as this, and we demand that NSTAR explain why some areas took so long to get power back, also there were some small abutting areas where electricity was restored while others still had no power; and further, that NSTAR put in place policies and procedures that address areas where there are nursing homes or elderly housing due to the fact that these people should be prioritized due to the urgency of them possibly getting sick or freezing to death, so that the City can put in place along with information being fed from NSTAR a policy and procedure of emergency evacuation shelters to be set up to accommodate those affected; and further, requesting that if the City of New Bedford is going to award the contract to ABC Disposal, that we look into the possibility of amending the contract to include using their trucks and plows during major snow storms and that ABC Disposal be compensated for said service. (Ref'd 2/14/13) (6)

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Lopes, Gonsalves, Bousquet, Alves, Oliveira, Lawrence and Gomes, requesting, that the Department of Public Facilities evaluate the living

conditions at each of the Fire Stations, and prepare a maintenance plan for each station, and that said maintenance plan be part of the next Short Term Municipal Maintenance Bond. (Ref'd 12/20/12) (7)

On motion by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Coelho, the Committee VOTED: To take the Chair's recommendation and follow the recommended action on this matter. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that our State Delegation look into the possibility of filing an amendment to gun control in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that would make the laws stricter and penalize individuals that are involved in selling illegal firearms which then is used in a criminal act, if proven that the gun was sold illegal and if the seller is identified, that the individual be held accountable for selling said firearm and that a mandated prison sentence be placed, making the laws stronger against illegal guns on our streets. (Ref'd 2/14/13) (8)

On motion by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Coelho, the Committee VOTED: To take the Chair's recommendation and follow the recommended action on this matter. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Gomes, Gonsalves, Alves, Duarte, Martins, Coelho and Saunders, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods request in Executive Session, a tour of the present camera surveillance system that has been set up throughout the City, and that a computerized cruiser be made available to see if the updates have been made that would make it easier for patrols to request and analyze information with the system; and further, once more, requesting that the Police Chief provide the City Council with a "wish list" of equipment needed in order to bring the Police Department into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and to better serve the people of this City. (Ref'd 3/13/08, 3/25/08, tabled – letters to the State Delegation & Congressman Frank requesting that the State Rep's, Senator & CF do their very best to secure grant money to assist the NBPD in to install surveillance cameras within the City of New Bedford) (9)

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Alves, the Committee VOTED: To follow the Chair's recommendation and take "No Further Action" on this matter at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Lawrence, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with representatives from the Administration, Department of Public Infrastructure and the Department of Public Facilities to discuss the possibility of installing elevated crosswalks in the areas of our City's schools, this discussion has been requested on behalf of Neighborhoods United, due to the recent report released on the increase of pedestrian/vehicle accidents. (Ref'd 1/13/11, 11/29/11 – tabled, letter that Ron Labelle provide the Committee with the State Language that regulates elevated crosswalks, 3/12/12/ - tabled) (10)

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Alves, the Committee VOTED: To follow the Chair's recommendation and take "No Further Action" on this matter at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

Councillor Gomes made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Alves.

This meeting adjourned @ 8:31 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Clerk of Committees