



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

December 9, 2013 – 7:00 PM  
Chambers of the City Council, City Hall, Room 214

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

**MEETING: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND NEIGHBORHOODS**  
**DATE: DECEMBER 09, 2013**  
**TIME: 7:10 P.M.**  
**PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLORS BRIAN GOMES, CHAIRMAN; HENRY BOUSQUET; DEBORA COELHO; DENIS LAWRENCE, JR. (7:14); JOSEPH LOPES; STEVEN MARTINS; JOHN SAUNDERS**

**ABSENT: COUNCILLORS JAMES OLIVEIRA, VICE-CHAIRMAN; DAVID ALVES; BRUCE DUARTE, JR.; JANE GONSALVES**

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Councillor Gomes called the Public Safety Committee Meeting to order and took attendance. The Clerk read Memos from Councillors Oliveira, Gonsalves and Alves stating they would not be in attendance due to his illness, her personal commitment, his prior commitment and a Memo from Councillor Duarte stating he would be late in attending due to a prior commitment. These Memos were received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Bousquet.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Bousquet and Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods invite the Mayan Community Leaders to a Committee meeting to share their concerns with the Council and Station Headquarters Captains Flood and Cordeiro, it is our feeling that with increased patrols and bilingual Officers placed in targeted areas, better witness accounts can make an impact on the hostile climate these individuals face, and as Citizens of New Bedford legal or not, they do not deserve to be victims of hate crimes (Ref'd 11/14/13) was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Lopes. (1)

Councillor Bousquet addressed the Committee, he stated that as a former Guardian Angel in New Bedford, he witnessed first hand to the problem of violence and victimization against the Mayan community, and he is concerned that things have not improved since then. Understanding that Mayans are targeted for various reasons, of which a few are the facts that because they do not trust banks, they often carry large sums of cash on them, and since many are not legally in this country, do not report crimes and attacks against them for fear of being deported. He also expressed disappointment that Captain Flood or another representative from the Police Department was not in attendance.

Ms. Marcelina Pina-Christian, Executive Director of the Human Relations Commission, stated that the Mayans are targeted for all the reasons that Councillor Bousquet alluded to and more. She said that this community feels disrespected and neglected by the Police Department, and at a recent community meeting, Chief Provencher was made aware of specific instances of this type of behavior from officers and promised that he would address those situations and such behavior from officers, if found to be the case, would not be tolerated.

Ms. Pina-Christian handed out an information packet, which was received and placed on file by Councillor Bousquet and seconded by Councillor Lopes.

Ms. Pina-Christian asked the Committee to support the Mayan community in whatever way they could. She urged the confirmation of a potential appointee to the Human Relations Commission who is a Mayan. She stated that the woman's name is Ernestine Perez, and her application is with the Mayor currently and that they are hopeful he will send her to the Council for confirmation soon.

Mrs. Carol Walsh from the Human Relations Commission also spoke and asked that the Committee take action to protect and assist the Mayan community so that all residents of the city can feel safe and equal.

Ms. Jessica Wildman from the Human Relations Commission also spoke and explained that there was a huge banking crisis in Guatemala, in which thousands of people lost all of their money, because there is no Federal insurance for bank accounts there, and therefore the Mayans have a great fear and distrust of banks of any kind.

Councillor Gomes also stated some obstacles that the Mayan community is facing: 1. They use North Front Street as a regular route when walking out of fear of ICE – they feel this street is safer than a more main street; 2. They carry cash on them as opposed to depositing money into a bank account and using a debit card, etc.

Councillor Coelho stated that the Mayan community needs to somehow overcome their fear of “the system” and start to call 911 when necessary, utilize banks, etc.

Marcelina Pina-Christian recommended that a specific Assistant District Attorney should be designated as the permanent liaison ADA to deal with the Mayan Community, so there can be trust and familiarity.

Mrs. Walsh also pointed out that often, cash is not taken from the Mayan victims of physical attacks, but rather the attackers simply want to invoke pain on these people out of hate.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Coelho, the Committee VOTED: That in order to increase lighting and provide for safer passage, the Department of Public Infrastructure look at the lighting situation on Front Street, from Cove Road north to the Coggeshall Street /Sawyer Street areas and bring that wattage up to either 100 or 125 watts as necessary. This motion passed on a voice vote.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Bousquet, the Committee VOTED: That the City Council requests the Mayor to immediately forward for confirmation the application of Ms. Ernestina Perez to the Human Relations Commission. This motion passed on a voice vote.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Coelho, the Committee VOTED: That the next Public Safety meeting be held at St. Anthony Church, as it is perceived by the Mayan Community to be a ‘safe haven’, thereby potentially encouraging many within that community to attend the meeting and share their concerns and issues with the council members.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Lawrence, the Committee VOTED: That the City Council ask SRTA Bus Company to provide a bus route along the waterfront in the fish house area which can provide for safer travel for not only the Mayan community, but to all who work, live and travel that section of the city. This motion passed on a voice vote.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Coelho, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on Public Safety send a letter to the Chief of Police and to all station commanders instructing them to notify all police officers that the city will accept nothing less than full professionalism and full investigation

into and prosecuting of assaults, robberies and other crimes against all residents of the city, including those within the Mayan community. This motion passed on a voice vote.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Lawrence, the Committee VOTED: That the City Council recommends placing, in every city building, a placard/plaque indicating that every resident and/or visitor of the City of New Bedford has the right to safely live, work, visit, etc. in the city; and furthermore, that the City of New Bedford has zero tolerance of any type of hate crime whatsoever; and that every member of the City Council, the Mayor, the District Attorney and Police Chief sign these placards; and that this be referred to Legal Counsel for drafting of the language. This motion passed on a voice vote.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Lawrence, the Committee VOTED: That District Attorney Sam Sutter, be invited to the next Public Safety meeting at which this item is discussed. This motion passed on a voice vote.

On motion by Councillor Bousquet and seconded by Councillor Coelho, the Committee VOTED: That this matter be tabled for approximately sixty (60) days. This motion passed on a voice vote.

Councillor Coelho made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Bousquet.

This meeting adjourned @ 8:05 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Clerk of Committees