



Appointments and Briefings

March 18, 2014 – 7:06 PM – **Minutes**
Chambers of the City Council, Room 214

****View Agenda****

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS & BRIEFINGS
DATE: MARCH 18, 2014
TIME: 7:06 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS DAVID ALVES, CHAIRMAN; JAMES OLIVEIRA, VICE-CHAIRMAN; HENRY BOUSQUET; NAOMI CARNEY; DEBORA COELHO; BRIAN GOMES (7:10); JOSEPH LOPES; STEVEN MARTINS; LINDA MORAD; DANA REBEIRO; KERRY WINTERSON

ABSENT: NO ONE

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Councillor Alves called the Committee on Appointments & Briefings Meeting to order and took attendance. Councillor Gomes arrived at 7:10. There was no one absent.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a PUBLIC HEARING, on an APPLICATION, U-HAUL INTERNATIONAL, INC., for SPECIAL PERMIT for MOTOR VEHICLE SALES & RENTALS at 99 Rockdale Avenue, New Bedford, MA 02740. (Duly advertised in the Standard-Times on Wednesday, March 5, 2014 and Wednesday, March 12, 2014) The hearing was opened by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Coelho. (1)

Mr. Thomas Snell, Executive Assistant for U-Haul in Rhode Island and Ms. Susan Aldridge, General Manager for U-Haul were present and answered questions from the Committee.

Councillor Lopes stated that the previous owner at that location did not do a good job of keeping the property clean, neat and free of graffiti. Ms. Aldridge stated that they have already begun to clean the area and will continue to maintain the property. Mr. Snell stated that there is a cosmetic-improvement project slated for the spring, and that how the property is presented is very important to them and will continue to be going forward.

Councillor Morad asked if there was any fuel being stored on the property, to which Mr. Snell said there is not.

Councillor Morad then asked Danny Romanowicz if the building and property met with all codes, laws and his expectations. Danny replied that everything at the property is in order and meets code and expectations.

Jill MacLean, City Planner, echoed that statement stating that there were issues with the way the former owners used the site, but there are no such issues thus far now.

No one spoke, or wished to be recorded in favor or opposition. The Hearing was closed. On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Oliveira, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council to Grant the APPLICATION of U-HAUL INTERNATIONAL, INC., for a SPECIAL PERMIT for MOTOR VEHICLE SALES & RENTALS at 99 Rockdale Avenue, New Bedford, MA 02740.

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Items three (3) and four (4) were taken up out of order, together, without objection.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Communication, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the REAPPOINTMENT of JOHN RADCLIFFE, New Bedford, MA 02740, to the CONSERVATION COMMISSION, this term will expire June 2016 (Ref'd 1/9/14) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Martins. (3)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Communication, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of ROBERT J. SCHILLING, New Bedford, MA 02740, to the ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS, replacing Jennifer Smith who has resigned; this term will expire December 2018 (Ref'd 2/13/14) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Martins. (4)

Councillor Martins asked Mr. Radcliffe what his interest is in continuing on the Conservation Commission. Mr. Radcliffe stated that the city needs volunteers who are dedicated and informed on issues. He has been a member for four (4) years and has enjoyed helping the city. He has taken several college level courses in order to enhance his own understanding of conservation issues.

Councillor Morad asked Mr. Radcliffe to recognize that not all residents are aware of the Conservation regulations and laws, and therefore feel intimidated by the Commission. She asked that he and the other members take that into consideration when dealing with the public. He replied that he certainly would do so. He firmly believes that education is a better policy than enforcement.

Councillor Lopes asked Attorney Schilling to explain his interest and experience. Attorney Schilling replied that he has been an attorney for twenty-five (25) years and has lived in the city for twelve (12) and is very interested in the property development that is happening in the city. He informed the Mayor that he would like to serve in some capacity, and the Mayor stated that this would be a good place for him.

On motion by Councillor Coelho and seconded by Councillor Morad, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council Approval of the REAPPOINTMENT of JOHN RADCLIFFE, New Bedford, MA 02740, to the CONSERVATION COMMISSION, this term will expire June 2016; and the Approval of the APPOINTMENT of ROBERT J. SCHILLING, New Bedford, MA 02740, to the ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS, replacing Jennifer Smith who has resigned; this term will expire December 2018. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Council President Lopes, Councillors Martins, Bousquet, Winterson, Rebeiro, Morad, Gomes, Coelho and Carney, requesting that Mr. Joseph Mulvey, Real Estate Specialist with the United States Postal Service, meet with the Committee on Appointments and Briefings, to discuss the future of the Downtown New Bedford Post Office (Ref'd 2/13/14) and a Communication, Mr. Joseph Mulvey, Real Estate Specialist to the United States Post Office, to and from Mayor Mitchell, regarding the future of the Downtown New Bedford Post Office (Ref'd 2/13/14) were received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Winterson. (2, 2a)

Mr. Joseph Mulvey, Real Estate specialist for the United States Post Office , explained that the Postal Service is looking into the possibility of moving out of the existing downtown post office into a smaller downtown location in order to consolidate services and save money. He explained that there is no specific building or location identified as of yet, so no move is eminent. He stated that the post office's retail services would only require approximately 1,600 square feet, which is what would be moved to a potential new downtown location; and that the delivery and bulk rate services would be moved, most likely to Mt. Pleasant Street, with delivery services being divided between the Mt. Pleasant and Orchard Street locations. He stressed there would be no disruption in services or personnel layoffs whatsoever.

He explained that all written comments can be sent to him at: United States Postal Service, 2 Congress Street, Room 8, Milford, MA 01757-9998.

He continued in his comments to explain that this proposed relocation is similar to what the USPS is attempting to do and has done in many other cities and is due to the nation's changing postal needs, which have resulted in very strenuous financial difficulties for the USPS, which does not receive any tax dollars. He explained that comments will be reviewed and a final decision will then be made, which the Mayor and City Government Officials would be notified of. That decision can be appealed within 30 days, and then the Vice-President of the USPS reviews the appeal and makes a final decision.

He stressed that the location will only move if they can sell the existing building and also find another location within that area that can meet their needs. He also stated that the Judge Leighton name will transfer to the new site.

Also, he estimated that they may begin looking for a new site in four (4) to six (6) months, if the decision is made to do so after the comment/appeals process, with a potential new location opening in

1.5 to 2 years from now. He explained that the new location would most likely be within ¼ to ½ mile away from the current location.

Arthur Bernier, Post Master for New Bedford stressed that with 75% of the workers at that location being from the Greater New Bedford area, that no one would be losing their job and no services would be lost. Bulk rate mail would most likely go through the Mt. Pleasant Street office, and daily delivery services would be divided between Mt. Pleasant and Orchard. He said that the 02740 deliveries would go to the Mt. Pleasant office and the 02744 would go to Orchard Street.

Councillors raised several concerns, such as whether or not ample space for parking of postal, employee and customer vehicles; the appropriate number of post office boxes being available at the other locations, etc. Mr. Mulvey and Mr. Bernier assured the Committee that these things have been taken into consideration and plans are in place for if and when the move occurs.

Councillors also expressed concern that this particular building, named for Judge Leighton, is near and dear to the city, its history, its people and its character. Several expressed that to close/relocate the downtown branch away from this building would be nothing less than an “insult” to the City of New Bedford.

Ms. Christine Dugas, Communications Agent for the USPS stressed that the USPS is losing \$25,000,000 per day and must do something to curtail expenses.

Councillor Gomes expressed disappointment that, to him, it appears that the decision has already been made to move out of the Leighton Post Office. Mr. Mulvey replied that this is a detailed process that is taken seriously and that potential plans have to be made, but all opinions and input will be looked at before a final decision is made.

Several elected officials and residents spoke in opposition to the closing/re-location of the downtown branch: Register of Deeds J. Mark Treadup; Ms. Inez Ouellette representing Congressman Keating; Former New Bedford Mayor Scott Lang; Scott Lima of 61 Orchard Street; Steve Paiva, Retired Postal Worker of 163 Lafayette Street; Rosemarie Stolmeier of 725 Pleasant Street and Phillip McDonald of 359 Pleasant Street.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council that it go on record in opposition to the United States Postal Services’ attempt to either close or relocate the Downtown New Bedford Post Office. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 11, Nays 0.

On the question, Councillor Gomes expressed, once again, his and the Committee’s opinion that it would be unconscionable to close this building or turn it into anything other than what it is, the Downtown Post Office. In closing, he referred to the building as “the Beacon of Downtown New Bedford.”

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on Appointments & Briefings sends a Communication immediately to the

Administration requesting that a petition in opposition to the closure or relocation of the Downtown Post Office be placed in the Lobby of City Hall so that the City residents can sign and reflect their opposition to this action. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Lopes, requesting, that Mayor Mitchell provide the City Council with his plans and timelines for Taylor School and Hannigan School before the beginning of the upcoming school year (Ref'd 7/19/12, 12/10/13 – Remain in Committee) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Bousquet. (5)

Mr. Pat Murphy, Business Manager for New Bedford Public Schools and Dr. Barry Rabinovitch, former Wareham Superintendent and current consultant to NBPS for MSBA projects made a presentation to the Committee.

Mr. Rabinovitch provided an overview of the Hannigan Feasibility Study. He stated that they have had two meetings of the Building Committee, of which Council President Lopes is a member. They are currently considering four (4) finalists to be the project's OPM. Once MSBA approves their final OPM candidate, an architect will be hired to design the building, etc.

He also discussed the proposed addition to Sea Lab a/k/a Taylor School at Sea Lab, which includes items like: four (4) new general classrooms, one (1) Kindergarten classroom, one (1) Pre-K classroom, a cafeteria, a new Teacher's planning room, a gym, storage space, a new PT/OT Room, etc.

The architect for the project has a design that ensures enough room to operate both the Taylor School and Sea Lab program out of the same building.

He then discussed the Grant Conversion project. He explained that leftover money from other MSBA projects will be going toward NBHS and the Hannigan projects.

An RFQ for OPM on the Hannigan School project has been advertised, and they are hopeful work will begin this summer in order to improve the technology, infrastructure, heating, and other upgrades, at a price tag of \$6,000,000. In response to a question from Councillor Bousquet, Mr. Rabinovitch explained that an OPM is hired on the basis of several criteria, such as: experience on MSBA projects, qualifications as either an Engineer or Architect, having at least seven (7) years of General Contracting experience, financial stability of the company, and certifications by the state to work on such projects, etc.

Councillor Rebeiro asked if any consideration has been given to the thought of putting greenhouses into the schools. Mr. Rabinovitch stated that they are considering that in Hannigan.

Councillor Morad asked if Hannigan is at an 80 or 90 percent reimbursable rate. Mr. Rabinovitch replied that it is an 80% project, while Sea Lab is at 90 and that is approximately \$12,000,000.

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

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Gomes and Duarte, requesting that the City reach out to the Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School for the purpose of refurbishing our trolleys that are now close to two decades old and in need of serious repair work especially on the wood portions of the trolleys and these Councillors feel that Voc-Tech can be of significant help in refurbishing said trolleys which are a beacon within the City and the expertise of the Vocational students to perform this work would be greatly appreciated. (Ref'd 8/16/12, 12/10/13 – Remain in Committee) (6)

On motion by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Gomes, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Appointments and Briefings meet with the Administration, Vice President of Berklee College of Music's Outreach Program called City Music, along with Berklee College of Music's Satellite Program Coordinator and Professor Jackie Santos for the purpose of finalizing the Berklee College of Music's Satellite Program at St. Mary's Home, located on Kempton Street, which has been in the works for some time now and Berklee College of Music is ready to locate a satellite program here in the City of New Bedford; and further, that during said meeting that a date of opening be discussed. (Ref'd 2/14/13) (7)

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Martins, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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

This meeting adjourned @ 9:15 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Committees