



Committee on Public Safety

March 25, 2014 – 7:05 PM - **Minutes**
Chambers of the City Council, City Hall, Room 214

****View Agenda****

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & NEIGHBORHOODS
DATE: MARCH 25, 2014
TIME: 7:05 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS BRIAN GOMES, CHAIRMAN; HENRY BOUSQUET, VICE-CHAIRMAN; DAVID ALVES; NAOMI CARNEY; DEBORA COELHO; JOSEPH LOPES; STEVEN MARTINS; DANA REBEIRO; KERRY WINTERSON

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS LINDA MORAD; JAMES OLIVEIRA

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Councillor Gomes called the Committee on Public Safety & Neighborhoods to order and took attendance. Communications were read into the record for Councillors Morad and Oliveira stating the reasons for their absences. These communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Carney.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods, meet with the Superintendent of Schools, a representative of the Administration, along with the Chief of Police to discuss what prevention policies are in place in City schools to guarantee the safety of all students, elementary to high school, in buildings across the City; and further, to discuss any safety precautions that can be implemented to guarantee the safety of all students while attending our public schools and anything that the City Council can do to make this an affirmative action on behalf of the students and the teachers in the New Bedford Public School system (Ref'd 12/20/12, 5/14/13 – tabled) was removed from the table by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Coelho. (1)

On motion by Councillor Coelho and seconded by Councillor Lopes, 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, Councillors Gomes and Gonsalves, requesting, that the School Department immediately look into the possibility of alarming all schools in their main office with panic buttons that would alert our Police Department in case of an emergency; and further, that we look into the possibility of alarming every classroom and at what cost would it be to do this throughout the city; and further, requesting that no new schools in the City of New Bedford be built without putting this safety mechanism in place in all classrooms and offices for the purposes of making our schools safe in the City of New Bedford for our students and faculty, making our school system one of the first in the Commonwealth to implement such a security system in order to guarantee the parents and the taxpayers of this City that their kids are attending school in a safe atmosphere with a resource to get immediate emergency response in case of any type of attack or emergency within each

school building; and further, if implemented that the city look into if the panic button system can work in conjunction with the camera systems installed at some of our schools. (Ref'd 2/14/13) (2)

On motion by Councillor Coelho and seconded by Councillor Lopes, 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, 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, 12/9/13 – tabled) (3)

This matter remained on the table.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Coelho, Alves, Gomes, Carney and Martins requesting, that a representative of the Gang Unit appear before a Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meeting to brief Committee members on the status of gang activity in the City, given the recent shooting of a New Bedford Police Officer, the location of the shooting has seen a recent increase of gang related graffiti; and further, to discuss the increasing number of criminals that are relocating to New Bedford, the reasons for that and the risk they pose to the City (Ref'd 2/13/14) was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Lopes. (4)

Councillor Coelho asked Sergeant Safioleas of the City's Gang Unit how many gangs currently have a presence in the city. Sgt. Safioleas responded that there are 18 official street gangs in the city. He indicated that the only two national gangs in the city right now are the Latin Kings and the JLD's, both of which have taken significant losses as of late due to the investigations conducted by the Gang Unit. He added, however, that the Unit has seen a resurgence of neighborhood-oriented gangs. When asked by Councillor Coelho what he expects to see this spring and summer, he stated that he expects obvious increased activity after a long winter, but assured the Committee that his Unit and the entire department will be on their toes and prepared to prevent and respond to crime.

Councillor Martins asked how many detectives are in the unit. Sgt. Safioleas responded that there are six (6) including him. He indicated that this is a "good size" unit for a city the size of New Bedford. Chief Provencher also responded to that question, indicating that of course he would like to have more, but that six is very good considering that Fall River has only two and Providence has ten; the Chief also praised Sgt. Safioleas and his team.

In response to other questions from Councillors, Sgt. Safioleas indicated that he and his Unit are in constant contact with the School Resource Officers and all units within the department; and that they also work closely with federal, state and outside law enforcement agencies all along the East Coast, as well as state and county prison officials. In response to a specific question that Councillor Rebeiro had regarding her recognizing that there was significant Aryan Nation gang activity in New Bedford when she first came to the city, Sgt. Safioleas stated that there is really not any such activity now.

On motion by Councillor Coelho and seconded by Councillor Bousquet, 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, Councillor Martins, requesting, that Fire Chief Michael Gomes be invited to the next Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meeting to update the Committee members on the status of the 889 red fire alarm boxes, 809 of which need an upgrade; and further, the City owns about 100 properties, many of which connect to fire alarm boxes and the public should be informed of any new update to said fire alarm system, this Councillor would like to see this issue addressed, to see if this is a long-term capital plan. (Ref'd 2/28/13, 5/14/13 - tabled) (5)

This matter remained on the table.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with the Mayor and the Police Chief to view the Winnebago City Unit was purchased some time ago, for the purpose of looking at the condition of said vehicle and to update the vehicle as far as its radio and camera status and anything else that is needed to make this vehicle up –to-date for the 21st Century, to be used not only by the City for surveillance and emergency situations but also by our Police Department (Ref'd 4/11/13, 5/14/13 – letters to Congressman Keating, Senator Warren and Chief Provencher) was received and placed on file by Councillor Bousquet and seconded by Councillor Coelho. (6)

Councillor Gomes stated that the “Winnebago” has been ill-equipped for necessary tasks since its arrival and asked Chief Provencher what needs to be done to increase its usefulness and effectiveness within the department.

Chief Provencher responded that he asked Mark Mahoney to accompany him to this meeting for this item specifically.

Mr. Mahoney indicated that the unit is now 10 years old and that there are indeed several shortfalls when it comes to equipment and capability. The purchase price at the time was \$99,999.00. They are currently looking at what they would like to have in the unit so that they can have a comprehensive list of upgrades for the capital expenditure plan.

The Chief agreed that the vehicle is ill-equipped in many areas, but is also useful in many others, such as communications and information technologies. Ideally, they would have to spend \$500,000 on the perfect unit, but feels that \$300,000 would get the job done nicely.

On motion by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Carney, 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, Councillor Coelho, requesting that after the recent vandalism to the historic century old Whaleman Statute in front of the Downtown Main Public Library that the City move to install cameras at the Downtown Bus Station, City Hall and the Main Public Library and that these cameras should be equipped with a live feed to the Police Station, in an effort to provide higher security to the Downtown area (Ref'd 5/23/13) was received and placed on file by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Lopes. (7)

The Clerk read a Communication from Erik B. Rousseau, Administrator for SRTA, informing the Committee that he is unable to attend the meeting due to a prior commitment and also informing the

Committee that SRTA has cameras in and around the bus terminal. He also stated that SRTA strives to work closely with the New Bedford Police Department to address any reasonable request which the police department makes. This Communication was received and placed on file by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Carney.

Councillor Coelho asked the Chief if the city has cameras. The Chief stated that the city does have a number of cameras, some of which are live feeds into the stations. However, he would not give specifics about locations, etc. He also explained that they are stationary, however, and would like to purchase portable cameras in order to move them to different areas as needed. However, cameras are expensive, approximately \$28,000 per installation. They are so expensive because they need them to be High Definition be able to tilt, pan, zoom, etc. They are, he continued, capable of being monitored from the Housing Authority and all stations.

On motion by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Coelho, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods send a letter to Congressman Keating and Senators Warren and Markey asking that they do whatever they possibly can to assist the City of New Bedford's Police Department in securing Homeland Security or other funding for the purpose of purchasing additional cameras and other technical support as necessary. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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On motion by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Coelho, the Committee VOTED: To take "No Further Action" on items eight (8) through eleven (11). This motion passed on a voice vote. The items are as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Gonsalves, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety & Neighborhoods meet with Neighborhoods United to discuss with them the possibility of how their roles in neighborhoods might expand, in light of Raven Business Group Consultant, Mr. Glenn Bachman's recommendation that these groups look and work on issues beyond public safety. (4/23/12, 11/19/12 – tabled, invite Neighborhood Watch Groups) (8)

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) (9)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Gomes and Oliveira, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods along with the Mayor's Office and the Police Department look into Wendy's, located on Kings Highway, providing a Detail Officer, from 9:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m., on Fridays and Saturdays, due to the numerous calls that come into the Police Department over the course of the weekend and the ongoing problem of groups hanging around, traffic build-up and noise complaints coming from that location, as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods, we believe that a Detail Officer would curb many of these problems existing at this location during the night time hours of operation. (Ref'd 3/14/13) (10)

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 and 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, 5/14/13 – Letter to NSTAR) (11)

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

This meeting adjourned @ 8:37 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Committees