



Committee on Public Safety & Neighborhoods

March 19, 2015– 7:05 PM - **Minutes**
Chambers of the City Council, City Hall, Room 214

NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & NEIGHBORHOODS
DATE: MARCH 19, 2015
TIME: 7:05 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS BRIAN GOMES, CHAIRMAN; KERRY WINTERSON, VICE-CHAIRMAN; HENRY BOUSQUET; NAOMI CARNEY (7:10); DEBORA COELHO; JOSEPH LOPES (7:18); STEVEN MARTINS; LINDA MORAD (7:13); JAMES OLIVEIRA; DANA REBEIRO

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS DAVID ALVES

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Councillor Gomes called the Committee on Public Safety & Neighborhoods to order and took attendance. The Clerk of Committees announced that he received a phone call from Councillors Carney, Lopes and Morad stating that they would be late in attending tonight's meeting. He read a Communication from Councillor Alves informing the Committee he would not be in attendance due to a personal prior commitment. This Communication was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Winterson.

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The Chairman asked that item one (1) not be read and that "No Further Action" be taken on this matter as it is in the process of being resolved; the motion is as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Council President Lopes and Councillors Alves, Gomes, Martins, Morad, Coelho, Winterson, Bousquet and Rebeiro, requesting, that Department of Inspectional Services, Commissioner Romanowicz and Fire Chief Gomes meet with the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods to discuss the proper policies and procedures that are required by homeowners who are in the process of selling their homes with finished basements that were constructed without Building Permits. (Ref'd 08/21/14) (1)

On motion by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Coelho, 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, Oliveira, Martins, Winterson, Bousquet, Alves, Coelho, Carney, Rebeiro, Council President Lopes and Councillor Morad requesting, that the New Bedford Police Union, Police Chief Provencher and Mayor Mitchell adopt the following wording "Loyalty, Integrity, Courage" uniformly placed on every Police vehicle, which will be a Mission Statement to the people and the City they serve, this will be the first time ever in the City of New Bedford that a statement in

wording has ever been placed on Police Cruisers (Ref'd 09/11/14) was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Bousquet. (2)

Councillor Gomes gave an explanation on his rationale behind the motto "Loyalty, Integrity, Courage" being placed on the cruisers for the New Bedford Police Department.

Deputy Chief David Lizotte was recognized by the Chairman to see if they would be in favor of putting such a motto on the cruisers. He informed the Committee that the Chief is not averse to having such a motto or some form of motto on the cruisers; but that would require a larger conversation to take place between all parties involved.

On motion by Councillor Bousquet and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter until such a conversation can take place. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Carney, requesting that Police Chief Provencher come before the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods, to discuss ongoing problems of drug related activities in certain city neighborhoods, and also to discuss why Police Officers are disclosing the person(s) who are calling the Police Station to report illegal activities (Ref'd 10/09/14) was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Coelho. (3)

Councillor Carney spoke on concerns about how people calling into the Police Department are being disclosed when Police Officers visit complaints, for example telling the home that received the complaint that it was the neighbor next door who called in the complaint.

The Deputy Chief said that should not be taking place and if it does it needs to be brought to their attention and they would discuss it and take care of it so that it no longer happens.

Councillor Carney said she would have a private discussion with the Deputy Chief and provide them with the information with an example so that he can address the situation.

Councillor Coelho asked the Deputy Chief to take her through the 9-1-1 call process. Deputy Chief Lizotte explained that home phones go directly to the station; cell phones go to the State Police and are redirected to the Police station in the city. A majority of the calls coming in currently come from cell phones, 70% of the calls are from cell phones while 30% are from land lines.

Councillor Bousquet asked if it was the Police Department's policy to give out tipster information. Deputy Chief Lizotte informed the Committee that he was told it is not. No personal information is given out over the airwaves. If the name is given out over the airwaves it is done assigned dispatch to the computer in the Police cruiser.

On motion by Councillor Carney 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 Rebeiro, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods invite Emmanuel Maciel, Animal Control Officer, to discuss the trapping and euthanasia of feral cats and also to discuss the possibility of a catch and neuter release program (Ref'd 10/23/14) was received and placed on file by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Winterson. (4)

Mr. Maciel was recognized to speak on behalf of the motion. Councillor Rebeiro was also recognized and asked Mr. Maciel how feral cats are trapped and what process is used to euthanize caught cats. He

informed the Committee that local organizations help to capture feral cats; they are able to rent traps from the City of New Bedford for a small fee. When the traps are returned the fee is reimbursed to the people that were renting. They are called hard traps that are used to catch the cats. He explained that in 2014, 300 cats were captured out of the 300, 180 were adopted; others were transferred to other organizations that also deal with cat adoption. Those cats that were sick or injured were euthanized. The biggest problem with the owners of cars when cats go missing they never hear from an owner making an attempt to pick up their cats. He explained the city works with great organizations throughout the city to save cats and spay and neuter them. The city's current euthanasia rate is down.

Councillor Bousquet asked what the people to stray animal ratio were; he was told that the average person has 2-1/2 animals. The city makes a concerted effort to save, take care and adopt all animals that are captured.

Mr. Maciel went on to explain that on the average they receive 15,000 calls and they are understaffed and they run the department for 2-1/2 people on the average right now they are down to 1-1/2 individuals working for the department. They receive 30 to 35 calls a day into that department. The cost to taking a cat that is trapped is anywhere between \$6.00 to \$12.00 boarding fee for a total of \$36.00; and then there is a nominal charge to euthanize a cat if the cat is ill or injured, that totals \$46.00 per animal.

On motion by Councillor Rebeiro and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter for thirty (30) days. 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 Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with Police Chief Provencher and a Representative from the Administration, for the purpose of discussing the purchase of a new device that is available to public safety responders which interprets different languages, making it easier to respond to and address the cultural diversity which makes up the City of New Bedford; and further, once we look into this device, that we consider the possibility of purchasing it for the Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services and depending on the price per unit that we consider purchasing them for Departments throughout the City, to be able to communicate better with all cultures throughout the City (Ref'd 11/13/14) was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Lopes. (5)

The Chair called for a recess at 8:04 p.m. and returned into session at 8:09 p.m.

Councillor Gomes asked if there has been any discussion with the city and its' Emergency departments as to whether or not they are able to purchase a device that interprets different languages making it easy to respond to an address due to the cultural diversity which makes up the City of New Bedford.

Deputy Chief Lizotte explained that they were unaware of a portable device but would be more than happy to look into it. Currently the city uses a dispatch program called language link. It takes about a minute to connect. So for example if someone calls in speaking Spanish and they do not have a Spanish Officer on duty, they are able to connect with language link and have a three-way conversation in which the Spanish-speaking person is able to be translated toward the non-Spanish-speaking individual taking the emergency 9-1-1 call. He explained a lot of other Police Departments use language link as does the city. He went on to say that it would be worth looking at and he asked that the Committee table this motion for ninety (90) days until they are able to look into such a device.

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

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Coelho, Martins, Alves, Gomes and Carney, requesting that Police Chief Provencher, a Representative of the Mayor's Office and a Representative of the Women's Center, be invited to a Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meeting, to discuss the increase of prostitution in the City, especially on Acushnet Avenue, between Coggeshall and Sawyer Streets, including the side streets, and on North Front Street and Ashley Boulevard, which is affecting the quality of life in these neighborhoods; said discussion should include ways to stop this violent attack on the self worth of women struggling to survive in this City (Ref'd 11/13/14) was received and placed on file by Councillor Winterson and seconded by Councillor Coelho. (6)

Councillor Coelho asked the Deputy Chief about arrests and the prostitution issue; are they local residents or are they out-of-state residents. His answer was most of them are local residents of the City of New Bedford that are suffering from substance abuse. She asked how to resolve this issue. Deputy Chief explained that the ladies are working in specific concentrated areas.

Councillor Martins asked if there was a game plan in place to control prostitution for this year. The Deputy Chief said they will be dealing with prostitution aggressively throughout the city; they have more resources this year to deal with it. Last year, they paid more attention to the heroin problem in the city and dealing with heroin dealers. Prostitution will be addressed within the next thirty (30) days and they should see some action taking place and they will notice a remarkable difference.

On motion by Councillor Coelho and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro, 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 Bousquet and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: To waive the reading on items seven (7) through fourteen (14), receive and place on file and follow the recommended action from the Chair. This motion passed on a voice vote. They are as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of 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, 05/14/13 - tabled) **Refer to the Fire Chief and the Mayor (7)**

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 02/28/13, 05/14/13 - tabled, 03/25/14 - tabled, 06/30/14 - remain tabled) **Refer to the Fire Chief (8)**

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, 12/09/13 - tabled, 03/25/14 - tabled, 06/30/14 - letters) **Refer to the Police Chief (9)**

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Bousquet, Gomes, Lopes, Oliveira, Gonsalves, Coelho, Duarte, Alves, Lawrence and Saunders, requesting, that New Bedford Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Pia Durkin report the number of teacher assaults in the last three months, and what policy changes have been discussed to reduce the number of fights in our schools and what efforts are being made to make students and teachers feel more secure in what needs to be a safe environment for learning to occur. (Ref'd 11/26/13) **Refer to Superintendent of Public Schools** (10)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Alves, requesting, that the Traffic Commission address the issues at the Zeiterion Garage, as they relate to the safety and security of residents and patrons. (Ref'd 08/21/14) **Refer to Traffic Commission** (11)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Council President Lopes, requesting, that the City's Animal Control Office look into establishing an on call Animal Control Officer position(s) which would be on duty after normal business hours. (Ref'd 08/21/14) **Refer to Animal Control** (12)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Related Motion, Councillor Morad, in consideration of the City Council's request, that for the purpose of making our schools safe in the City of New Bedford, that Superintendent of Schools Dr. Pia Durkin, respond to the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods within 30 days as to the plans for implementation of panic buttons in all New Bedford Public Schools. (Ref'd 09/11/14) **Refer to the Superintendent of Public Schools** (13)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Council President Gomes, and Councillor Lopes, requesting, that the City Council go on record against any possible decision or consideration by the Administration or the Chief of the Fire Department to close Firehouse 11, located on Brock Avenue in the City's South End; and further, before any decision or consideration is made by the Administration or the Chief of the Fire Department, that they meet with the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods for purposes of alternative action. (Ref'd 01/08/15) **Refer to the Fire Chief Michael Gomes and the Mayor** (14)

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On motion by Councillor Bousquet and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To Waive the reading on items fifteen (15) and sixteen (16) and follow the Chair's recommendation for "No Further Action". Councillor Lopes severed number sixteen (16) to remain in Committee. This motion passed on a voice vote. They are as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with Police Chief Provencher and Commanding Officers of the Special Units within the Police Department, especially the SRT Unit, for the purpose of discussing what equipment the department needs and presently has and whether equipment issues should be addressed under the circumstances of the past months when the SRT Unit and Special Units were being called upon several times because of situations with guns and criminal stand-offs throughout the City which calls for this kind of resource to be available; and further, that this resource is becoming more frequently used in different criminal situations in the City, that the Police Department and the City take whatever actions necessary on the State, Federal, and Homeland Security levels for the purposes of grants or surplus equipment that is needed for these criminal situations that seem to be arising through our City that calls for more than just a regular patrol response. (Ref'd 04/26/12) (15)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Coelho and Lopes, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods, invite the Department of Public Infrastructure Commissioner Labelle, to a meeting for discussion of the current conditions of the restrooms/bathhouses at our public beaches and possible options for improving the conditions for the convenience of patrons visiting the beaches and for health concerns in the neighborhoods near the beaches. (Ref'd 07/18/13) (16)

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

This meeting adjourned @ 8:28 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Committees