



Committee on Public Safety & Neighborhoods

September 17, 2015– 7:06 PM - **Minutes**
Chambers of the City Council, City Hall, Room 214

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & NEIGHBORHOODS
DATE: SEPTEMBER 17, 2015
TIME: 7:06 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS BRIAN GOMES, CHAIRMAN; KERRY WINTERSON, VICE-CHAIRMAN; HENRY BOUSQUET; NAOMI CARNEY; DEBORA COELHO; STEVEN MARTINS; DANA REBEIRO (7:36)

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS DAVID ALVES; JOSEPH LOPES; LINDA MORAD; JAMES OLIVEIRA

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Councillor Gomes called the Committee on Public Safety Meeting to order and took attendance. Communications were read into the record from Councillors Alves, Lopes, Morad and Oliveira explaining their absences from this meeting. These Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Carney. The Chair announced that he received a phone call from Councillor Rebeiro stating she would be late in attending this meeting this evening.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Bousquet, Council President Lopes, Councillors Martins, Gomes, Coelho, Morad, Carney, Alves, Winteron, Rebeiro and Oliveira requesting, on behalf of the Citizens of New Bedford, that Chief of Police David Provencher and his Community Police force appear before the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods to discuss their neighborhood by neighborhood strategy to quell the eruption of violence in the City. (Ref'd 06/26/14, 04/22/15-tabled) (1)

On motion by Councillor Winteron 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 Gomes, Oliveira, Martins, Winteron, 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, 03/19/15-tabled) was removed from the table by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Winteron. (2)

Police Chief David Provencher was present to answer questions from the Committee. He told the Committee that he likes the idea and it should reflect the mission and values of the Police Department. He would like to see something more current to reflect on the Police Department today. He used the Wal-Mart slogan as an example, Quality Products – Low Prices, it stands out and is relatable. He did express concern on how to incorporate onto the sides of the city’s cruisers. It should be a philosophy on everything they do. He would like to meet with the New Bedford Police Union President Hank Turgeon and have him go back to his body and see what they would like to see it say. He thinks this is a good idea and an important step to what they stand for as a department.

Councillor Carney thinks it is a good idea, but she questioned how much it would cost to add a slogan to the vehicles. She was told it would not be insurmountable; it would be a minimal cost.

Hank Turgeon, New Bedford Police Union President also spoke on the issue. He commended the Council for showing their pride towards the men and women of the New Bedford Police Department. He too, thinks they should go with a slogan that describes how the officers feel they contribute to the city. It should be something that shows the community what they do and how they want to do it. He likes the word “commitment”. He suggested that he polls his body of officers and work with the Chief to come up with a proper slogan.

On motion by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Winterson, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter for sixty (60) and have the Police Chief and the Police Union President come back with a recommended slogan for the cruisers. 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 the Police Chief Provencher and a Representative from the Administration, for the purpose of discussing the purchase of a new devise 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 devise, 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, 03/19/15-tabled for 90 days (**JUNE**) was removed from the table by Councillor Winterson and seconded by Councillor Carney. (3)

Councillor Gomes gave an explanation as to why he has submitted this motion. He wants to make sure the department has the proper tools to aid them in translations of different languages.

Police Chief Provencher explained that currently they use the AT& T Language Line which provides translation services. They have multiple call takers that speak other languages. He is all for new technology that can gap the language barriers between the department and non-English speaking people.

Councillor Gomes asked the Police Chief if the current system in place works and he was told it does. He did say if there was a hand carrying device available that might work better.

On motion by Councillor Coelho and seconded by Councillor Winterson, 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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Item number six (6) was taken out of order without objection.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Winterson, requesting, that the City of New Bedford consider establishing “Safe Zones” located at Police or Sheriff Stations parking lots or lobbies to enable users of Craigslist and other online classified services complete their transactions in a secure environment (Ref’d 05/14/15) was received and placed on file by Councillor Winterson and seconded by Councillor Martins. (6)

Councillor Winterson explained he submitted this motion to create an area, using the Police Department buildings as a place where people meet to swap products sold on the internet, for instance, if you buy tickets for a concert on Craig’s List and you are to meet to pay for them and pick them up that it be done in a safe environment.

Police Chief Provencher said he likes the idea and he will consider possible locations. He believes the Police Departments on Rockdale Avenue and in the North End would probably be appropriate. They would have to set a time, hours, like 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. He would like some time to review and come back with a plan to discuss at the next Public Safety Committee Meeting.

Councillor Coelho asked if the Chief was aware of any type of internet deals that went bad, where there was an issue and she was told he is aware of one.

Councillor Bousquet stated that this was a great idea. He is not sure if the volume would be high, but that perhaps the Traffic Commission could create signs which tell people that you can make internet sales in this Safe Zone.

Police Chief Provencher said he would like to see what other communities are doing, like Dartmouth before he commits to the program.

Councillor Gomes spoke in support of the motion as well.

On motion by Councillor Winterson and seconded by Councillor Bousquet, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter for thirty (30) days at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Council President Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods hold a meeting with Fire Chief Michael Gomes, Special Council Arthur J. Caron Jr. and a Representative from the Administration, for an explanation as to why the Chief is presently looking for another job; further, is there a problem which has not been dealt with previously in the past fourteen months which could lead to the loss of Fire Chief Gomes. (Ref’d 6/11/15) (7)

On motion by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Coelho, the Committee VOTED: To waive the reading and 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 Coelho, requesting, that in light of the discussion regarding feral cats at the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meeting on March 09, 2015, and the public’s interest in animal welfare, that the City and Animal Control Director, Manny Maciel look into establishing an animal emergency phone number, manned by a person not a recording, there have been many complaints that the current number immediately goes to a recording and the messages left are never returned, this is not in the best interest of animals in need of help (Ref’d 03/26/15) was received and placed on file by Councillor Coelho and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro. (4)

Councillor Coelho explained her reasons for submitting the motion. She complimented Animal Control on the job they do but she has received complaints that when people call Animal Control they get a recording, leave a message and are not called back.

Manny Maciel, Director of Animal Control, spoke on the issue and he explained that he is on call and he calls in for messages about every hour, hour and a half during business hours. If it is an emergency call the voice mail directs them to hang up and call the police department non-emergency number. If there is an emergency they reach out to the On-Call Animal Control Officer.

Councillor Coelho asked how many calls the department gets a month. She was told in June 1,082 and in July 1,094. He said he also answers calls while on the road, out working the streets.

On motion by Councillor Coelho 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 Lopes, requesting, that Department of Public Infrastructure Commissioner Ronald Labelle provide this body with an update as it relates to the Route 18 Phase II Project. (Ref’d 04/09/15) (5)

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

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Council President Gomes, requesting, that the City Council and the Mayor go on record in complete support of New Bedford Police Department and the men and women of the department who do a very dangerous job protecting the City and its Citizens each and every day; and further, that the Citizens of the City join us in showing support for the Police Department by placing a blue light on your front porch, or in your windows as a sign of support, for the remaining days of the month of January; and further, asking our School Department and students from every middle school and elementary school to draw posters of support, and post them in the windows of every school across the City and that every school be recognized for its efforts and award three students from every school with Citations for the best post of support, which will be awarded by the Councillor from each Ward and At Large Councillors; and further, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with Police Chief Provencher, Police Union President Hank Turgeon, Vice-President Jimmy Estrella and Sgt. Josh Fernandes, to discuss measures that can be implemented to make a better relationship between the Citizens and young people across the City; and further, that the Police Department consider creating a Young Police Cadet Program, these initiatives will improve relationships across the City. (Ref’d 01/08/15) (8)

On motion by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro, the Committee VOTED: To waive the reading and follow the Chairman’s recommendation. This motion passed on a voice vote.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Coelho, requesting, once again, that the Police Department take action and deal with people who ride unregistered, uninsured and unlicensed motorcycles in the City, these motorcycles are being ridden on public streets and sidewalks, they are a danger to pedestrians, drivers and themselves, people do not feel safe walking in their own neighborhoods. (Ref’d 6/25/15) (9)

On motion by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro, the Committee VOTED: To waive the reading and follow the Chairman’s recommendation. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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On motion by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro, the Committee VOTED: To waive the reading and follow the Chairman's recommendation to take "No Further Action" on items ten (10) through thirteen (13). This motion passed on a voice vote. They are as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Gomes, Coelho , Carney, Alves, Winterson and Martins, requesting that the company installing the new LED lighting throughout the City, install the high intensity LED lighting similar to the one being used on some of the main streets in the City and in Dartmouth; and further that any main street in the City of New Bedford be required to use the highest intensity of LED lighting, for the public safety of pedestrians crossing streets in high traffic areas; and further, that an entire evaluation of the lighting throughout the City be discussed as soon as possible before the Committee on Appointments and Briefings or Public Safety and Neighborhoods due to the public safety aspect of the lighting in some areas of the City. (Ref'd 10/09/14) (10)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor 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 the City. (Ref'd 11/13/14 tabled for 90 days) (**JUNE**)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion Councillor Oliveira, Lopes, Council President Gomes, Martins, Winterson, Alves, Carney and Rebeiro, requesting, that the New Bedford School Department consider assigning a daily crossing Guard or Flag person at all City schools to control traffic and hinder the high rates of speed the daily commuter continue travel during school hours. (Ref'd 2/12/15, 05/21/15-tabled) (12)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Coelho, Council President Gomes, Councillors Oliveira, Martins, Lopes, Winterson, Rebeiro, Bousquet, Carney and Alves, requesting, at Council President Gomes recommendation at the Committee on Finance meeting of March 18, 2015, that the City Council organize a drive-along, consisting of members of the City Council, a representative from Siemen's and Scott Durkee, Energy Manager, the purpose being to personally verify the many constituent complaints regarding poor lighting throughout the City, in some areas the lighting is so dark it has become a public safety issue and should be evaluated. (Ref'd 03/26/15) (13)

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

This meeting adjourned @ 7:52 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Committees