



Appointments and Briefings

January 25, 2016 – 7:05 PM – **Minutes**
Chambers of the City Council, Room 214

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS & BRIEFINGS

DATE: JANUARY 25, 2016

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS HENRY BOUSQUET, CHAIRMAN; IAN ABREU; NAOMI CARNEY; JOSEPH LOPES; STEVEN MARTINS; LINDA MORAD; JAMES OLIVEIRA; DANA REBEIRO (7:06); KERRY WINTERSON

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS BRIAN GOMES, VICE-CHAIRMAN; DEBORA COELHO

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Councillor Bousquet called the Committee on Appointments & Briefings to order and took attendance. Communications were read into the record for Councillors Gomes and Coelho stating the reasons for their absences. These Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lopes.

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There was no Citizen's Input Time for this meeting.

Item number two (2) was taken out of order with no objection.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Communication, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of JAUNNA ADESSO, New Bedford, MA, to the COMMISSION FOR CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES, replacing Gloria Hill; this term will expire May 2016 (Ref'd 12/17/15) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lopes. (2)

Jaunna Adesso, 1056 Cherokee Street, New Bedford, was present to answer questions from the Committee.

Councillor Lopes asked Ms Adesso what qualifications she brought to the Commission. She explained that she has a son with disabilities and has had to act as an advocate on his behalf, over the years she has created a network that included a lot of people that she feels she can reach out to help the Commission.

Councillor Oliveira informed the Committee that he knew the applicant and thinks she is more than qualified to be a member of the Commission. He asked Ms. Adesso to give some examples of how she has had to advocate on behalf of her son which she did.

On motion by Councillor Winterson and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council, APPROVAL of the APPOINTMENT of JAUNNA ADESSO, New Bedford, MA to the COMMISSION FOR CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES, replacing Gloria Hill; this term will expire May 2016. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Item number three (3) was also taken out of order without objection.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Lopes, Winterson, Carney, Martins, Morad, Bousquet, Oliveira, Council President Gomes, Alves, Rebeiro and Coelho, requesting that a Representative from Mayor Mitchell's Office, Patrick Sullivan, Director of Planning, Housing and Community Development and Cynthia Wallquist, Director of Community Services, Carl Alves, Executive Director of PAACA and Reverend David Lima, Inter-Church Council meet with the Committee on Appointments and Briefings to discuss the City's Plan for an emergency drop-in shelter for this upcoming winter (Ref'd 10/22/15, 12/15/15-tabled) was removed from the table and received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Martins. (3)

Reverend David Lima, from Interchurch Council, was present and explained the RISE initiative. He explained that there is an issue with emergency overflow shelters in the City of New Bedford. Emergency overflow shelters are when it is extremely cold and the regular shelters are filled to capacity only a private and public sponsored shelter will open to accommodate the homeless. It is understood from passed Committee meetings that Catholic Social Services is to open such a shelter at the old St. Hedwig Church in the city; unfortunately it did not open on the date it was scheduled to, due to the recent cold weather and a number of homeless individuals were without shelter.

RISE has helped to raise \$15,000 towards the project. The City of New Bedford has pledged an additional \$15,000 towards the project.

Councillor Lopes asked Reverend Lima to explain the difference in the way the City of Fall River and the Town of Wareham run their shelters. Reverend Lima provided an overview.

Councillor Rebeiro asked if City Hall tells PAACA when to open the doors and she was told that was correct. The call was made from Emergency Management, Mark Mahoney, once the call goes out throughout the city all the entities such as PAACA, Fire Department and the Police Department are notified that the overflow shelter is being activated.

Ari Sky, CFO was asked if the \$15,000 given by the city has to be exhausted before the shelter can use the funds raised by RISE. Mr. Sky explained that his knowledge on how the money spent is limited that he is primarily responsible for securing the funding within the city's budget to help fund the overflow shelter.

Cynthia Wallquist, Director of Community Services, explained the city is contracted with PAACA for \$300 a night for a total of 10 nights, which includes extra staffing. She also does not know when the Catholic Social Services will be opening.

Mr. Sky explained that they were looking to build the funding into the producers budget for next year.

Councillor Abreu asked if 32° or lower is used as the freezing point to open the overflow shelter. Mark Mahoney, Emergency Management Director explained that the focus is normally below 20° or lower.

Councillor Morad asked Mr. Mahoney if it was his decision alone to open the shelter and he said yes it was. She then asked if he was ever challenged on his decision and he said no.

A discussion took place as to how many homeless people there are in the City of New Bedford and it was explained that the average is extremely difficult to say, but a homeless count was going to take place this weekend; however, there was probably 50 homeless people, if not more.

Mr. Peter Muse, President and CEO of First Citizens Bank, 33 Pope Circle, Marion, MA, who also represents the South Coast Homeless Network, spoke on the issue as well.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Winterson, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter for 60 days and asking that Cynthia Wallquist provide the Committee with a written update on the homeless issue in the city, after the new home has opened and the homeless count has taken place. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Communication, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a request that the FACETS Team meet with City Council on January 25, 2016, to present the findings of the Fire/EMS study (Ref'd 12/17/15) was received and placed on file by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Lopes. (1)

Ari Sky, CFO, was present to answer questions from the Committee. He introduced the members of the FACETS Consulting Team which consisted of Mr. Kevin Roche and Mr. Eric Tade. They presented the Committee with a packet of their Power Point Presentation of the possible merger of EMS and the Fire Department as well as possible recommendations towards the closing of specific firehouses. The presentation was approximately 40 minutes long, and at the completion of the presentation then Chairman opened up the floor to questions.

A motion was made by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Abreu to receive and place on file the packet submitted by the FACETS Team and a letter from the Fire Department Local Union 841 with specific questions as it related to the presentation. This motion passed on a voice vote.

Councillor Winterson expressed concern that he wanted to make sure that there was a sufficient number of firefighters working in the City of New Bedford, right now there is 218. He wanted to make sure they are able to protect the city, but also allow the city to cut back on overtime charges.

Councillor Abreu discussed that he found 16,000 calls to be a high volume of calls. He was told that the calls were way above the national average, but New Bedford is a busy but challenging city.

Councillor Lopes asked the CFO if the city was looking into purchasing a new ambulance, since the last purchase occurred in 2013 and if they were looking at charging a franchise fee for independent ambulances to do runs on behalf of the city. He was told they were looking at franchise fees, but it was too early to see if that would be the way to go; and that yes, the city would be looking at the possibility of purchasing another ambulance.

A discussion ensued about the appropriate number of firefighters needed as well as the concern as to how the city has had to result in brown outs at fire departments across the city.

Councillor Morad made mention that there was no negating on the report against the Fire Department or EMS. She was told that both are doing an incredible job with what they have to work with and that it seems a matter of pride in what they do is number one. Unfortunately, the only way to cut costs is to look at the possibility of closing or merging fire houses. It would also be cost effective to merge EMS into the Fire Department.

Councillor Oliveira asked that Chief Gomes be recognized. The Chief appreciates the report done and stated he has been doing much of what the report recommended to the best of his abilities. That unfortunately he does not like the idea of closing a fire house, but he is a realist. He does support the consolidation of EMS and the Fire Department. Unfortunately, the SAFER Grants will not be around forever, so changes need to be made.

Councillor Martins asked that Billy Cabral, the New Bedford Fire Department Union President be recognized to speak. He expressed his concerns about current brown outs and would like to see the Nbfd staffed to its full compliment.

On motion by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To receive and place on file this Communication from the Mayor. This motion passed on a voice vote.

On a Related Motion by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: That the City Council President establish an Ad Hoc Committee of the City Council to include representatives from EMS, Fire and Police to discuss and review recommendations presented by the FACETS Consulting Team and to present recommendations to the Mayor's Office. This motion passed on a voice vote.

Councillor Lopes made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Carney.

This meeting adjourned @ 9:50 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Committees