



Committee on Public Safety & Neighborhoods

March 15, 2016– 7:05 PM - **Minutes**
Chambers of the City Council, City Hall, Room 214

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & NEIGHBORHOODS

DATE: MARCH 15, 2016

TIME: 7:05 P.M.

PLACE: ABRAHAM LINCOLN SCHOOL, 445 ASHLEY BOULEVARD, NEW BEDFORD, MA

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS DEBORA COELHO, CHAIRPERSON; BRIAN GOMES, VICE-CHAIRMAN; IAN ABREU; HENRY BOUSQUET; NAOMI CARNEY; JOSEPH LOPES; STEVEN MARTINS; LINDA MORAD; DANA REBEIRO (7:25); KERRY WINTERSON

ABSENT: COUNCILLOR JAMES OLIVEIRA

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Councillor Coelho called the Public Safety Committee Meeting to order and took attendance. The Clerk read a letter into the record from Councillor Oliveira explaining his absence from the meeting. This letter was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Winterson.

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Councillor Coelho announced the start of Citizen Input Time and had the Clerk read the rules. Two people signed up to speak at Citizen Input Time. They are as follows:

Jerry Pinto a School Bus Driver, spoke about Public Safety issues as they relate to drivers not obeying traffic laws when a school bus has stopped and is loading and off-loading children.

Loretta Bourque, of the Cove Street Neighborhood Association, asked if the Public Safety Committee will be at every Neighborhood Meeting. She expressed her concerns that this may cause people to shy away from her meetings, for some issues are privately discussed.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Coelho, Lopes, Carney, Winterson, Abreu, and Martins, requesting that Acting Police Chief Lizotte provide the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods with the data of overdoses in the City of New Bedford for the past six (6) months (Ref'd 2/25/16) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Martins. (1)

Lt. Resendes of the New Bedford Police Department was representing Acting Police Chief David Lizotte, who was unable to attend. He submitted a packet with overdose statistics for 2015. This packet was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Winterson.

He reviewed the numbers submitted and discussed how officers carrying Narcan use the drug to revive those who have overdosed. He told the Committee that once Narcan is administered the Law dictates the person who is revived has to be sent to the hospital for review.

Councillor Morad asked if the figures presented were only Police Department numbers and she was told it included every 911 OD call, this would take into consideration the New Bedford Fire Department who are first responders as well and also have the ability to administer Narcan.

Councillor Coelho asked if a follow up is done on those that Narcan is provided to and she was told that if Narcan is used the person it is administered to is sent to the hospital. Once at the hospital they do have the ability to check themselves out, but that they do not have a choice if administered by the First Responders they have to go to the hospital for evaluation.

Councillor Lopes asked if he could get a breakdown of Narcan calls for multiple visits to the same residences. The Lt. is able to do this and will send a list. He also asked about disposal of needles and medications and how they are handled by Gloucester. He was told the New Bedford Police Department has received a Grant to purchase sharp disposal containers.

Fire Chief Gomes gave an overview of the New Bedford Fire Department procedures and how Narcan is administered by his Department. They administered 10 doses of Narcan this month alone; though it has slowed down some. Overdoses are still a common thing in the city. Since July of 2015 they have administered approximately 150 doses. There was a time where they believed there was some bad stuff on the street.

Councillor Coelho asked what the cost is per call when the engines have to respond. The Chief said to figure a cost would not be taken into consideration that a run is a run, this is what they do. 10-15 calls a day normal and medical responses is normal, 4% of their calls are overdose related. It's a societal issue not a public safety issue.

Councillor Morad asked if a repeat offender (person who overdoses) could be placed into protective custody, much like a person who is caught driving under the influence. Lt. Resendes explained that MGL addresses protective custody for DUI's, etc. It is not applicable to repeat Narcan administered issues.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Bousquet, the Committee VOTED: To take "No Further Action" 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, Lopes, Abreu, Council President Morad, Councillors Oliveira and Winterson, requesting, that the Administration work with the Health Department to develop a hoarding task force, an interagency response team to identify, recover, and get help for people who suffer from this condition it shall include Health, Police, Fire, Minimum Housing and the Solicitors Office representatives working together on this Citywide epidemic (Ref'd 2/25/16) was received and placed on file by Councillor Bousquet and seconded by Councillor Lopes. (2)

Councillor Bousquet explained his reasons for sponsoring the motion and asked how boarding is being dealt with in the city.

Gail Joseph, Sanitarian for the New Bedford Board of Health was present and addressed the Committee. She spoke in favor of such a task force that there are enough homes in the city that have hoarding issues. They currently work with the Police, Building Department and Fire Department when a hoarding issue is reported. When hoarders are discovered they meet with them, come up with a plan to clean the home and how to make their homes safer, and introduce them to classes. There are Grants that allow for helping veterans, seniors and the disabled.

Councillor Bousquet asked if there was an Officer assigned to the City's Task Force now, he was told there is one. Lt. Resendes said any responding Officer, for any reason if a hoarding issue is identified they notify the Board of Health.

Councillor Lopes explained he knows of a repeat offender in the South End and wanted to know how repeat offenders are dealt with; for example is a list kept. Ms. Joseph was aware of the home and they are working with that individual. She reminded the Committee that this is a psychological problem, inbred, dealing with stress perhaps that can start at a very young age.

Councillor Abreu asked if it was safe to say the city was doing all that it could to address the hoarding issue. He was told yes, with the funds they have available. The problem is not the number of cases reported; the problem is keeping up with the people and getting them to follow through with the resources available to them.

Councillor Rebeiro asked if there was a profile of a hoarder and she was told it can start at a very young age and that it occurs for many reasons.

Councillor Winterson asked for information to be sent to him as it relates to the resources offered to hoarders.

On motion by Councillor Bousquet and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To refer this matter it to the Mayor and to table it in Committee. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Bousquet, requesting on the behalf of the residents of Rockdale Avenue, that several areas be considered for sidewalks and sidewalk improvement where there is a push for safe routes to schools; and further, that crosswalks also need to be assessed in an effort to make walking to schools safer for children trying to do so (Ref'd 11/24/15, 2/16/16- tabled) was removed from the table by Councillor Bousquet and seconded by Councillor Morad. (3)

The Clerk read the Communication from DPI Commissioner Ron Labelle explaining his absence from the meeting and submitting a list of sidewalk proposals and encouraged Councillors to reach out to Mr. Labelle directly to discuss this matter.

On motion by Councillor Bousquet 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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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Carney, Abreu, Winterson, Morad and Martins, requesting that the Fire Chief be invited to the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods to discuss the public safety issues regarding the proposed brownouts and provide a scheduled list of closing, hours of closure and what fire stations are going to be affected (Ref'd 1/28/16) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lopes. (4)

Fire Chief Gomes was present and addressed the Committee. He explained that brownouts have been happening in the city since the States 9C cuts in 2009. The brownouts today are not as drastic as they have been in past years. He has started doing brownouts at night because he does not have the manpower to fully staff the

city's ten (10) firehouses. In 2010 they were down to eight (8) fully staffed fire houses, currently that number is nine (9). The only way to address the problem is to add additional personnel; but there is a cost involved and if you went this route it would take at least six (6) months to add these personnel. The other way is to keep giving money for overtime costs and reduction of services and permanently close a fire station. None of the choices are palatable; however, 60% of the brownouts are at double stations, so it is technically still staffed, the issue is when a single engine fire house is a part of the brownouts it is a 40% single engine fire house. Once the city builds and consolidates the department in the south end the city will be at the standard requirement.

Councillor Winterson addressed the need to provide proper coverage in the city.

Councillor Morad asked what has changed that has caused the Chief to go to evening brownouts when he was doing day brownouts. The Chief explained it was a fiscal decision, rather than eliminate a day company when there are more calls during the day, and less at night. Councillor Morad asked if it was a dollars and cents issue. She was told that it was that overtime as a result of the brownouts in the evening is down from \$40,000 to \$14,000. They are putting into FY2017 budgets to hire an additional 6-8 firefighters.

The Safer Grant was discussed. It is due 3/25/16, it will be sent in 3/23/16. They are 98% done with the application process. If successful it will cover twenty-four (24) positions. The amount asked for this year is smaller than in the past, \$4.6 million. This would come to \$2.1 million for the first year of the Grant and \$2.2 million for the second year. The Chief was asked if there was anything the Council could do on behalf of the Safer Grant. The Chief said lobbying on their behalf with the federal delegation would be appreciated. The Safer Grant process/review begins in June of 2016.

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.

On a Related Motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: That the City Council Committee on Public Safety write a letter to our Legislative Delegation in Washington to support the New Bedford Safer Grant submission for the year 2016 and 2017. This motion passed on a voice vote.

On a Related Motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Bousquet, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on Public Safety send a letter to Chief Financial Officer Ari Sky to estimate the cost of additional overtime funds necessary between now and July 1st to keep the Fire Department operational and eliminate the need for overnight brownouts, and said estimate be referred to the Finance Committee and respond within thirty (30) days.

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

This meeting adjourned @ 8:17 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Committees

