



Committee on Public Safety & Neighborhoods

February 21, 2107– 7:05 PM - **Minutes**
Chambers of the City Council, City Hall, Room 214

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & NEIGHBORHOODS

DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 2017

TIME: 7:05 P.M.

PLACE: NEW BEDFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS, 871 ROCKDALE AVENUE, NEW BEDFORD, MA

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS DEBORA COELHO, CHAIRPERSON; BRIAN GOMES, VICE-CHAIRMAN; IAN ABREU; NAOMI CARNEY; JOSEPH LOPES; STEVEN MARTINS; DANA REBEIRO; KERRY WINTERSON

ABSENT: COUNCILLOR LINDA MORAD

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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 Morad explaining her absence from the meeting. This letter was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Lopes.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Coelho, requesting, that a representative from the Police Department be invited to appear before the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods to update the Committee members on the status of surveillance cameras throughout the City, these cameras are a tool in preventing crime; and further, that we look into the possibility of adding additional cameras in areas where panhandlers are aggressively attacking motorists in an attempt to curb some of this nuisance behavior (Ref'd 4/28/16, 5/19/16-table) was removed from the table by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Lopes. (1)

Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro was present as well as Deputy Chief Oliveira and Sergeant Demers who programs the city's camera systems. The Chief gave an overview of the camera program and the Committee was shown how the camera system works throughout the city. They were given a real time presentation, which ended in a visit to the communications center, where they were shown how the cameras and the shot spotter system are monitored.

The following information was presented and discussed with the Committee.

The Police Department has access to the city's cameras and the New Bedford Housing Authority and the Harbor Development Commission cameras as well. They also have a registry of commercial and private home cameras. Although they do not have access to the private and commercial cameras live, if there was an incident and they knew there was a camera registered to that specific area they could reach out to that owner to see if the cameras might reveal any activity. The city also owns portable cameras that can be moved to problem areas as needed. The Housing Authority cameras will be monitored in the uniform station desks. The Housing Authority has been very proactive in providing cameras and access to the New Bedford Police Department.

All cameras have the ability to pan in and out and register a private camera which can be done on line. All cameras are active with the exception of those that are undergoing repairs. The Police are aware that banks have cameras, though not the best, if there was an incident in the area oaf a bank the Police would reach out to the bank. The portable cameras can be used to address the reports of aggressive panhandling that has been reported as of late.

The recent Cranston, RI Panhandling Ordinance has been put in place. The Chief would like to see how that would pan out in time before making any recommendations to the Committee. He reminded the Council that they had to change their way of addressing panhandling when the ACLU threatened the city with a suit.

The Chief recommend that the city consider environmentally changing the median strips, which would be designed so panhandlers would be unable to stand in the areas of concern.

The Committee asked if all the cameras were in working order and the Chief stated some had problems but they were working on them. They are all recording when they are in working order. They are also able to reposition cameras as needed for specific reasons. The Chief declined to state what the total number of cameras that were in place for security reasons coupled with the fact that the meeting was being recorded.

The Committee visited the Communications area and were given several demonstrations, cameras were not allowed into the area for security purposes.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Gomes, the Committee VOTED: To take “No Further Action” on this matter at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Martins, the Committee VOTED: To follow the Chair’s recommendation, waive the reading and refer items two (2), three (3), four (4) and five (5) to the appropriate Committees. This motion passed on a voice vote. They are as follows:

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, 9/17/15-tabled) (2)

Referred to the Committee on Internal Affairs.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Lopes, requesting, that as part of the Special Event Application for Fort Tabor Park, that a Traffic Enforcement Officer be required to patrol the area when one of the three parking lots are rented. (Ref’d 8/18/16) (9/8/16-returned unsigned by the Mayor) (3)

Referred to the Committee on Internal Affairs.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Lopes, Bousquet, Martins and Abreu, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods invite a representative from Murray Sign Company to the next committee meeting to discuss providing the City of New Bedford with free public service announcements on their digital bill boards located across the City, suggesting that people donate money to charity and not to the panhandlers. (Ref’d 9/22/16) (4)

Referred to the Committee on Internal Affairs.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Lopes, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods, review Ballot Question 4, which allows for the Legalization, Regulation and Taxation of Marijuana in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and that the City of New Bedford begin the process for a ballot question on the next bi-annual State Election, to ask whether to allow, in the City of New Bedford, the sale of marijuana and marijuana products for consumption on the premises where sold, and that this be submitted to the voters of the City of New Bedford on the next bi-annual State Election. (Ref’d 9/22/16) (5)

Referred to the Committee on Licensing and Zoning for Cannabis.

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

This meeting adjourned @ 7:45 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence, Jr.,
Clerk of Committees