

NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & NEIGHBORHOODS
DATE: FEBRUARY 27, 2019
TIME: 7:00 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS BRIAN GOMES, CHAIRMAN (7:14); DEBORA COELHO, VICE CHAIRPERSON; IAN ABREU; NAOMI CARNEY; HUGH DUNN; MARIA GIESTA; SCOTT LIMA; JOSEPH LOPES (7:14); WILLIAM BRAD MARKEY (7:14); DANA REBEIRO (7:27)

ABSENT: COUNCILLOR LINDA MORAD

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Councillor Coelho called the Public Safety & Neighborhoods Committee Meeting to order and took attendance. The Clerk announced he received phone calls from Councillors Gomes, Lopes, Markey, Morad and Rebeiro stating they would be late in attending tonight's Committee meeting.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Rebeiro and Abreu, requesting, that the Local and Regional Managers of the King Village Apartments come before the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods to address the progress with mediation between the residents and new owners regarding the many concerns about upkeep, security and policies; and further, that a letter be sent to our local State Delegation inviting them to said meeting as the property is a part of HUD and it appears there had been a breakdown in communication and a lack of attention to this property (Ref'd 9/28/17) (10/24/17-LACK OF QUORUM, informal discussion took place) (10/30/18-tabled 90 days) was removed from the table by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Lima. (1)

Robert Cockburn, Building Manager of King Village was present to answer questions from the Committee. He explained the issues that were brought up at the last meeting have been addressed. There is now security on site from 9 pm to 2:30 am; smoking violations were addressed there is a sign in requirement for those visiting tenants; air conditioning units were replaced, and new boiler and heating systems were installed. He explained any issues that have been brought up to management by the tenants are addressed. The office is open daily from 7 am to 3 pm and there is a twenty-four (24) hour emergency line to call.

Councillor Giesta asked Commissioner Romanowicz if the building management has done due diligence and Commissioner Romanowicz said they visited the location and since their visit his department has only received one complaint call.

Councillor Lima asked the name of the owners of the building, he was told Hikel Purtez is the company that owns the building.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council to take "No Further Action" on the WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Rebeiro and Abreu, requesting, that the Local and Regional Managers of the King Village Apartments come before the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods to address the progress with mediation between the residents and new owners regarding the many concerns about upkeep, security and policies; and further, that a letter be sent to our local State Delegation inviting them to said meeting as the property is a part of HUD and it appears there had been a breakdown in communication and a lack of attention to this property. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Lopes, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods invite Kristine Arsenault from Mayor Mitchell's Office, Police Chief Cordeiro, DPI Commissioner Ponte, and Health Director Chaplin to review the homeless encampment removal policy. (Ref'd 3/8/18) (11/29/18-tabled) (2)

Councillor Lopes informed the Committee that he is working with Reverend David Lima and Damon Chaplin from the Health Department to try and figure out a resolution and as soon as that is done he will bring it back before the Committee.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Coelho, the Committee VOTED: To keep this matter on the table 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, Abreu, Carney, Coelho, Dunn, Giesta, Lima, Lopes, Markey, Rebeiro and Council President Morad, requesting, that the Fire Chief Gomes and the Administration report to the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods as to what is the delay in the reconstruction of the downtown fire station which had a three month plan of completion; and further, if this project completion continues to be delayed, action must be taken to address the housing of Ladder One and Engine One under the original plan proposed by this Councillor, said plan would be to locate Ladder One at Liberty Street and rent a house camper for the firefighters and place Engine One on Kempton Street at former Station Three, strong consideration has to be taken in light of the weather conditions changing and Engine One cannot be kept outside once the inclement weather and freezing temperatures approach which would not be good for the mechanics of that apparatus or in the best interest of response time to the residents living in high-rise units and the business community of the central and west areas of the City (Ref'd 10/11/18) was received and placed on file by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Dunn. (3)

Deputy Fire Chief Scott Kruger was present and gave the Committee the status on the remodeling of the downtown fire station. He stated the remodel is on schedule, in January they moved Ladder One and Engine One to a temporary location at the City Yard on Liberty Street. They are doing their best with what they have and they are on schedule to return to the downtown location at the end of April, though the date is flexible.

On motion by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council to take "No Further Action" on the WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Gomes, Abreu, Carney, Coelho, Dunn, Giesta, Lima, Lopes, Markey, Rebeiro and Council President Morad, requesting, that the Fire Chief Gomes and the Administration report to the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods as to what is the delay in the reconstruction of the downtown fire station which had a three month plan of completion; and further, if this project completion continues to be delayed, action must be taken to address the housing of Ladder One and Engine One under the original plan proposed by this Councillor, said plan would be to locate Ladder One at Liberty Street and rent a house camper for the firefighters and place Engine One on Kempton Street at former Station Three, strong consideration has to be taken in light of the weather conditions changing and Engine One cannot be kept outside once the inclement weather and freezing temperatures approach which would not be good for the mechanics of that apparatus or in the best interest of response time to the residents living in high-rise units and the business community of the central and west areas of the City. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Abreu and Markey, requesting that representatives of the "House of Hope," located at 848 Mount Pleasant St., New Bedford, come before the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods to discuss its security plan and overall operating procedures, as residents from the nearby neighborhood have expressed concerns over the alleged behavior and actions by many of the facility's clientele (To be Referred to the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods, representatives of the "House of Hope," "Neighborhood Task Force and Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro). (Ref'd 10/25/18) (11/29/18-tabled 60 days for a recap) was removed from the table by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Coelho. (4)

Councillor Abreu asked Attorney John Flor if changes have been made to the House of Hope location since the last meeting. He was told the city is involved with the property and they are waiting on the final action plan from the owners and architects. They expect the plans within the next few months.

Police Chief Cordeiro was present and informed the Committee that since the last meeting in 2018 they have had only eight (8) calls to that location and six (6) of them were medical calls. They are making plans to tap into the properties security system on the exterior of the building.

Councillor Markey stated that it seems that this year things are getting better, though it is winter.

Councillor Abreu asked Reverend Robert Hughes, Director of the House of Hope, if he agreed that things are getting better and Reverend Hughes said it was and that he has been working with the city to correct any issues.

Councillor Carney asked Commissioner Romanowicz to give an update and he stated that there will be renovations to separate families from regular patrons. The unit will be sprinkled and installing a commercial kitchen with a hood, segregating the women from the men in case a family comes in, and so there will be major renovations.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Markey, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council to take "No Further Action" on the WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Abreu and Markey, requesting that representatives of the "House of Hope," located at 848 Mount Pleasant St., New Bedford, come before the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods to discuss its security plan and overall operating procedures, as residents from the nearby neighborhood have expressed concerns over the alleged behavior and actions by many of the facility's clientele. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Abreu, Lima, Gomes and Coelho, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods, Police Chief Cordeiro, and the Administration work collaboratively together to identify the potential installation of surveillance cameras at our public parks and parking lots where there may be no current surveillance, the appropriate installation of such surveillance cameras would be not only a deterrent for potential crime, but would also be used as another tool at the disposal of our law enforcement professionals when investigating cases which may have occurred at said areas. (To be Referred to the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods.) (Ref'd 6/28/18) (5)

On motion by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To follow the Chairman's recommendation to follow the requested action. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: To waive the reading and follow the Chairman's recommendation to take "No Further Action" and report out to the City Council items 6,7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. This motion passed on a voice vote. They are as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Abreu, Rebeiro, Bousquet, Coelho and Winterson, requesting, that Department of Public Infrastructure Commissioner, Ronald Labelle, look into the possibility of erecting signs in high solicitation areas throughout the City in the spirit of educating both our residents and visitors that their donations to individual solicitors can be better used to help a larger number of needy individuals if donations and contributions are made to registered organizations instead of individual solicitors; and further, that DPI work with this Council, the Mayor's Office and representatives from the "Homeless Services Providers Network", in discussing a marketing initiative similar to the "Make Your Change Count" campaign used by several other communities throughout the Country, in which the sign lists a website directing both residents and visitors alike to our local food pantries, homeless shelters, addiction treatment services and other various non-profit and social advocacy agencies which are always in need of donations. (To be Referred to the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods, DPI Commissioner Ronald Labelle, the Mayor's Office and Carl Alves, Chairperson of the "Homeless Service Providers Network") (Ref'd 4/28/16) (6)

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 Cordeiro, Fire Chief Gomes, EMS Director McGraw, Emergency

Management Director Mahoney, Health Director, Dr. Weis, a representative from the Mayor's office and Bristol County Sheriff Hodgson, for the purpose of discussing a terrorist attack or a home grown terrorist attack and a plan of action for the City of New Bedford; and further, that the plan include State and Federal resources with an immediate response of mutual awareness campaign be placed before the general public stating that if you see something, you hear something, you know something, you are required to notify authorities immediately in the best interest of keeping our community safe. (Ref'd 9/22/16) (7)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods call an immediate Public Safety Summit to include a Representative of the Mayor's Office, Police Chief Cordeiro, Massachusetts Homeland Security Director, Bristol County Sheriff Hodgson, the Commanding Officer from the State Police Barracks in Dartmouth and a Representative of the Bristol County District Attorney's Office to discuss measures, procedures and strategies to be utilized and implemented, such as stop and search, crime-free zones, and zero tolerance for crimes in our parks and playgrounds and that SRT Tactical Unit be on call and utilized anytime its needed, also that extra patrols and undercover units be placed in high crime neighborhood; and further, that a Public Awareness Campaign be put together to reach out to the neighborhoods and the citizens of this City for their assistance in fighting crime; furthermore, that this summit be held in executive session, due to the information that may be provided and also strategies that may already be in place that not only protect our Police Officers, Agencies but also the public. (Ref'd 6/8/17) (8)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Coelho, requesting, on behalf of concerned constituents that Police Chief Cordeiro be invited to a Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meeting to discuss crime statistics, to compare and contrast the numbers from last year to this year; and further, if these figures are not yet available, that Chief Cordeiro be invited when said figures become available. (Ref'd 9/14/17) (10/24/17-LACK OF QUORUM, informal discussion took place) (9)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Gomes, Lopes, Abreu and Carney, requesting, that the City Administration, Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, Police Department, Animal Control and the Department of Public Infrastructure take immediate action on behalf the residents of the East Rodney French Boulevard pertaining to beach area problems; the parking, drinking in public, loud music, speeding, drug use, and the location of the beach volleyball net to name a few of their concerns; and further, that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with residents of that area to determine if these issues can be resolved within 30 business days before the summer season approaches. (Ref'd 4/12/18) (5/1/18-returned unsigned by the Mayor) (5/21/18-tabled 60 days) (10)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Councillor Gomes, submitting letters from East Rodney French Boulevard residents detailing their concerns regarding problems surrounding the East Beach area. (Ref'd 4/12/18) (5/1/18-returned unsigned by the Mayor) (5/21/18-tabled 60 days) (10a)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Gomes, Giesta and Carney, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods

meet with Whalers Place Elderly and the Assistant Living Management to discuss security surveillance, speeding and criminal activity around said buildings; and further, that the Committee work with Whalers Place Management to hold a Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meeting on site with residents and the Commanding Officer at Police Station 3 for the purpose of working together to make the area safe for all residents. (Ref'd 9/13/18) (11)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Gomes, Lopes, and Rebeiro, requesting, on behalf of the residents of the area of Acushnet Avenue and Blackmer Street, that the City-owned lot located on the south east corner of Acushnet Avenue and Blackmer Street be cleaned and the overgrowth of weeds and bushes be cut back; and further, that the Department of Public Infrastructure remove two trees located on Acushnet Avenue, east side between Rivet Street and Blackmer Street, the removal of the trees will give an open view to an area that has been plagued by criminal activity; and further, that all street lights be changed to the LED high efficiency lighting from Rivet Street South to Division Street, this action will assist the Police Department and the City in making this area safer and improve the quality of life for the residents of this area. (Ref'd 9/13/18) (10/1/18-returned unsigned by the Mayor) (12)

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

This meeting adjourned @ 7:29 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence, Jr.,
Clerk of Committees