

NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS & BRIEFINGS
DATE: JULY 18, 2017
TIME: 7:05 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS BRIAN GOMES, CHAIRMAN; IAN ABREU; NAOMI CARNEY; HUGH DUNN; STEVEN MARTINS; LINDA MORAD; DANA REBEIRO; KERRY WINTERSON

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS JOSEPH LOPES, VICE-CHAIRMAN; DEBORA COELHO; JAMES OLIVEIRA

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Councillor Gomes called the Appointments & Briefing Committee Meeting to order and took attendance. The Clerk read Communications from Councillors Lopes and Oliveira explaining their absences. These Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Carney.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of MANUEL DEBRITO, New Bedford, MA to the ELECTION COMMISSION, replacing Maria Tomasia whose term will expire upon Council approval of Mr. DeBrito's appointment; this term will expire April 2018 (Ref'd 6/8/17) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Winterson. (1)

Manuel DeBrito was present to answer questions from the Committee. Councillor Winterson asked Mr. DeBrito to tell the Committee about himself and what brought him to post for the position. Mr. DeBrito explained he was born and raised in New Bedford, graduated from Bishop Stang and graduated from BSU in 2000. He was formerly employed by the Bank of New York Mellon as a Corporate Action Specialist. He speaks four (4) languages, Cape Verdean, English, Spanish and some Portuguese. He is familiar with data entry and research.

Councillor Rebeiro asked Sandy Vezina, Personnel Director to give a summary of the job requirements, which she did. She went on to say that once the Department Head position is filled Maria Tomasia would assist with the transition as well as the City Solicitor's Office.

Councillor Abreu asked Mr. DeBrito how he came to know about the position and how would he address his lack of experience when it came to the Election Commission. He was told his wife found the position on line; she was looking for a job for him closer to home with less travel time involved. The position requirements had many similarities to what he was doing for the Bank NY Mellon.

Councillor Dunn asked how Mr. DeBrito would go about increasing voter turnout. He was told finding the right people on the ground to do outreach would help to increase voter turnout, including the use of social media.

Councillor Morad asked Mr. DeBrito when he left his former job and she was told 6/30/17. He was transparent with his former employer and they were looking for an end date from him and he chose June 30th.

Councillor Morad asked Christine Arsenault why the Mayor's office changed the way they submitted Mr. DeBrito's application. First was to take the place of Commissioner Paleologos, then it was withdrawn and resubmitted to take the place of Maris Tomasia, and why was the position posted as a Department Head position, when the selection of the person to head the Election Commission is done by the Commission and not the Mayor. This was not a transparent move on behalf of the Administration and the Administration does not have the right to select the person to head the Election Commission. Ms. Arsenault stated the process was flawed and the Administration chose to submit Mr. DeBrito the way they had.

Councillor Carney asked if the Commission was full and she was told that it was not but with the appointment of Mr. DeBrito there would be one vacant position which would need to be filled with a Republican. However, Mr. DeBrito would make the third member of the Commission and they need a quorum of three to select who will run the Election Commission Office and Mr. DeBrito would be able to vote for himself.

Councillor Martins asked Ms. Vezina about the posting process. She informed him that the job was posted 1/5/17 using a number of venues, including the city website. Between 1/5 and 4/3 there were 12 applicants, they were interviewed by Ms. Vezina, Christine Arsenault and then Election Commissioner Celeste Paleologos. The position was not filled and then re-posted. Those interviews were conducted by Ms. Vezina and Ms. Arsenault only.

Councillor Morad asked why the position was posted when it is an appointment of the Commission by the Commission and not a Department Head position. She was told they treated it like a Department Head position and she did not realize the position was in the City Code differently.

Councillor Martins expressed concerns with the Mayor. The lack of transparency in the process itself, it looks a little shady. Celeste Paleologos, then Commissioner resigned from her position to make a way for a relative to apply for the position and then he is nominated for the job, it just does not look good.

Councillor Rebeiro agreed with Councillor Martins' comments, she will vote for Mr. DeBrito tonight but she is not happy with the process.

Councillor Gomes explained that he too had issues with the way the Mayor's office handled this appointment and brought it to the attention of Ms. Arsenault. She said she understood the concerns but that the Administration had faith in Mr. DeBrito and that they were prepared to answer and deal with any questions from the Committee.

On motion by Councillor Winterson and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPOINTMENT of MANUEL DEBRITO, New Bedford, MA to the ELECTION COMMISSION, replacing Maria Tomasia whose term will expire upon Council approval of Mr. DeBrito's appointment; this term will expire April 2018. This motion PASSED on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 8, Nays 0.

On a Related Motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council that the Committee on Appointments & Briefings refer to the Committee on Ordinances a motion to have the Election commission and Election Commissioner appointment process reviewed. This motion passed on a voice vote.

On a Related Motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro, the Committee VOTED: That the City Council be advised by the current Election Commissioner Maria Tomasia seven (7) days before the Election Commission will meet to select the new Election Commissioner. 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 AN ORDER that the City hereby waives its rights to an appraisal and to damages relating to the temporary easements shown as TE-10, TE23 on plan entitled Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Upgrades for (District 5) New Bedford Facilities, and that the City hereby authorizes the Mayor to sign the attached Right of Entry With Prejudice Form and Certificates of Donation Form granting temporary access at the two locations (Ref'd 6/22/17) and a COMMUNICATION, New Bedford School Committee to Council President Lopes, notifying that the Committee voted unanimously to waives its rights to an appraisal and to damages relating to temporary easements on a plan entitled "Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Upgrades for (District 5) New Bedford Facilities" (Ref'd 6/22/17) were received and placed on file by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Abreu. (2, 2a, 2b)

Zeb Arruda, DPI Commissioner was present and addressed the Committee explaining that this process was initiated two years ago, to update pedestrian and bicycle upgrades on city streets and sidewalks. The city applied for funding to work on wheel chair access in school zones and install lighting. They would replace school zone lighting, they applied for 17 schools and were ultimately approved for 8, then it was cut to 4 (Swift, Parker, Carney and Gomes Schools). This work will include flashing signs installed and when chair ramps. The city needed to provide the state with a signed easement on property that needed it. It was discovered that two of the properties were city property, but the state was still requiring a signed easement from the city. This is why it is before the Council; in order for the Mayor to sign the easements it needs Council approval.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Winterson, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of AN ORDER that the City hereby waives its rights to an appraisal and to damages relating to the temporary easements shown as TE-10, TE-23 on plan entitled Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Upgrades for (District 5) New Bedford Facilities, and that the City hereby authorizes the Mayor to sign the attached Right of Entry with Prejudice Form and

Certificates of Donation Form granting temporary access a the two locations. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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

This meeting adjourned @ 8:00 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence, Jr.,
Clerk of Committees