

NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS & BRIEFINGS
DATE: OCTOBER 19, 2017
TIME: 7:02 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS BRIAN GOMES, CHAIRMAN; JOSEPH LOPES, VICE CHAIRMAN; IAN ABREU; NAOMI CARNEY; DEBORA COELHO; HUGH DUNN; STEVEN MARTINS (7:29); LINDA MORAD; DANA REBEIRO (7:09); KERRY WINTERSON

ABSENT: COUNCILLOR JAMES OLIVEIRA

* * *

Councillor Gomes called the Appointments & Briefings Committee Meeting to order and took attendance. The Clerk read a Communication from Councillor Oliveira stating the reason for his absence. This Communication was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lopes.

* * *

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of JOSEPH M. TAVARES, New Bedford, MA to the HARBOR DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION, Mr. Tavares will be replacing James Boyle whose term has expired; this term will expire December 2019 (Ref'd 9/14/17) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lopes. (1)

Joseph Tavares was present to answer questions from the Committee and he gave an overview of his qualifications. He is a lifelong resident of New Bedford and has always wanted to serve on a Board, but was waiting for what he believed would be the right fit. The Mayor reached out to him and asked if he would consider the HDC and he said he would. He brings to the table a financial background, having worked for local financial institutions for the past twenty-five (25) years. He believes he can bring an active role and contribute to the financial stability of the HDC. He has banking experience with boat owners and fishing industry houses. He currently serves on a number of Boards, such as the United Way, and the Prince Henry Society.

Councillors Winterson, Morad, Carney, Abreu and Rebeiro spoke highly of Mr. Tavares and felt he would be a great fit in contributing to the HDC.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Winterson, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPOINTMENT of JOSEPH M. TAVARES, New Bedford, MA to the HARBOR DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION, Mr. Tavares will be replacing James Boyle whose term has expired; this term will expire December 2019. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 9, Nays 0, with Councillor Martins not present for the vote.

* * *

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the APPOINTMENT of HEATHER HEFFERNAN, New Bedford, MA to the ELECTION COMMISSION, Ms. Heffernan will be replacing Celeste Paleologos who has resigned from the Commission; this term will expire April 2021 (Ref'd 9/14/17) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lopes. (2)

Heather Heffernan was present to answer questions from the Committee. She gave an overview of her qualifications and desire to serve on the Election Commission. She has lived in New Bedford for the past ten (10) years and is employed in the Insurance industry. She enjoys living in New Bedford with her family. She is a graduate of the South Coast Leadership Program and worked with the Mayor's Office with the Clean Air Initiative Program. It was through this relationship that the Mayor asked if she would consider serving on the Election Commission. Ms. Heffernan, a Republican, was honored to be asked and said yes.

Councillor Morad expressed her frustration with the Commission having served in office some 16 years, that there have been some questionable activities and steps taken by the Commission in the past and it is her hope that Ms. Heffernan will play a positive role in her position and that the Commission is to serve all not just one or two people.

Councillor Winterson asked about her party affiliation and she explained she was Republican and the way the Commission is set up by law, it has to consist of members from each electoral party.

Councillor Rebeiro thanked her for her energy and excitement in wanting to serve on this Commission. She stated it was nice to see a Committee that is diverse.

On motion by Councillor Winterson and seconded by Councillor Rebeiro, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of the APPOINTMENT of HEATHER HEFFERNAN, New Bedford, MA to the ELECTION COMMISSION, Ms. Heffernan will be replacing Celeste Paleologos who has resigned from the Commission; this term will expire April 2021. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 9, Nays 0, with Councillor Martins not present for the vote.

* * *

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a ONE-YEAR WAIVER OF RESIDENCY for SUSAN BRUCE, Plymouth, MA 02360, our selection for PURCHASING DIRECTOR for the City of New Bedford (Ref'd 10/12/17) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Abreu. (3)

Ms. Susan Bruce was present to answer questions from the Committee and gave an overview of her qualifications. She has previously served as the Purchasing Officer/Procurement Officer for Barnstable County Sheriff's Office for thirteen (13) years the City of Chelsea and for the Hanscomb Air Force Base. She is State certified having completed all four requirements to be a purchasing officer in the Commonwealth.

Councillor Abreu asked if she would consider moving to New Bedford and she explained she would, but she just recently bought a home in Plymouth, and is unable to put her home on the market for two years, which is the reason for the waiver request.

Councillor Rebeiro expressed concern about her coming to a city of 100,000 people and becoming the Purchasing Officer, when the communities she worked in were much smaller than New Bedford.

Councillor Carney expressed her concern that the city is moving to hire people from outside of the community when there are qualified people in New Bedford.

Councillor Morad asked that Sandy Vezina, Personnel Director give the numbers as to who applied and what were their qualifications. Ms. Vezina responded with there were 16 applicants, 5 from New Bedford and none from New Bedford were completely certified. Some had completed as many as 2 certifications, but to assume the role of a purchasing agent, you must have been certified in all four areas of procurement. The only completely certified applicant was Ms. Bruce.

Councillor Morad expressed her frustration that not all Unit C employees were being treated the same or fairly, that the city needs to take a better position on whether or not you must be a resident to service in a Unit C position; not to simply pick and choose. That if lower than Unit C employees are not allowed waivers the same should apply to Unit C employees as well. 83% of the Unit C employees do not live in New Bedford.

Councillor Rebeiro agreed with Councillor Morad's comments and said she believes New Bedford people should be given the jobs and that she would not be voting for the waiver, even though the applicant is qualified.

Councillor Carney expressed the same concerns and position on this matter.

On motion by Councillor Winterson and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of a ONE YEAR WAIVER OF RESIDENCY for SUSAN BRUCE, Plymouth, MA 02360, our selection for PURCHASING DIRECTOR for the City of New Bedford. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 8, Nays 2, with Councillors Carney and Rebeiro opposed.

* * *

The Chair explained that on items four (4) and five (5) he had received a Communication from MASS DOT regarding the road improvements and that they are working on addressing the Committee's issues and asked that these items be kept on the table.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Abreu the Committee VOTED: To receive and place on file the Communication from MASS DOT. This motion passed on a voice vote.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To keep items four (4) and five (5) on the table. This motion passed on a voice vote. They are as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Gomes, requesting, that the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (DOT), meet with the Committee on Appointments and Briefings, for the purpose of discussing replacing the signage along Route 18 North and South, which has become old and has sustained reflective deterioration especially in the nighttime hours; and further, to also discuss possible signage changes that would announce attractions, placed at main intersections along with the present directions on the signage; and further, that our State Representative for that area be requested to attend said meeting along with a representative from the Mayor's Administration. (Ref'd 5/14/15) (10/28/15-tabled) (4/20/17-tabled) (4)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Appointments and Briefings meet with Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Mass DOT) for the purpose of discussing the immediate action to be taken on Exit 15 Downtown New Bedford, on both Exits off of 195, east and west; and further, immediate action has to be taken on both these exits due to the present conditions, this is not the first time the issue of these two exits have been addressed, they have been in deplorable condition for some time; and further, these are the exits that welcome you to the City of New Bedford, also requesting that Mass DOT fix all the lights on North Front Street, between Kenyon Street and Cedar Grove Street, on Belleville Avenue, between Kenyon Street and Cedar Grove Street located on the support wall under 195 east and west, on Logan Street, between Acushnet Avenue and Purchase Street, located on the support wall under Rt. 18, north and south of JFK Memorial Highway, these areas are very dark and are the responsibility of the Mass DOT. (To be Referred to the Committee on Appointments and Briefings, with a request that a letter be sent to Massachusetts Department of Transportation (DOT). (Ref'd 10/13/16) (4/20/17-tabled) (5)

* * *

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Martins, requesting, that Attorney Richard Manning, 167 William Street, who represents Empire Loan, be invited to the Committee on Appointments and Briefings, to address concerns with the regulatory provisions related to pawnbrokers recently adopted by the City Council in 2013; and further, requesting, that Empire Loan be given the opportunity to address their concerns with the Council and provide additional information which, hopefully, will result in the recommendation of some changes. (To be Referred to the Committee on Appointments and Briefings) (Ref'd 4/14/16) (9/11/17-tabled) and a COMMUNICATION, Councillor Martins, submitting a letter dated March 15, 2016, from Attorney Richard Manning Jr., regarding regulatory provisions related to Pawnbrokers. (To be Referred to the Committee on Appointments and Briefings) (Ref'd 4/14/16) (9/11/17-tabled) (6, 6a)

Councillor Martins explained he had received a Communication from Attorney Manning on this item stating that this issue is from so long ago that he is not sure if he is still representing Empire Loan on this matter and would like time to contact his client.

On motion by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Morad, the Committee VOTED: To keep this matter on the table at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

* * *

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that a letter be sent to the owner of the old HESS Gas Station or Speedway franchise located at the corner of Cove Road and Crapo Street, asking for immediate action as to what their intentions are for this location; and further, that City Solicitor McDermott begin the process of making sure that this company is held accountable for the deterioration and underground gas tanks and any other contaminants at said location; and further, that the Department of Inspectional Services and the Treasurer's office inform the City Council if there are any problems at this location or any taxes due. (To be Referred to the Committee on Appointments and Briefings.) (Ref'd 11/10/16) (11/30/16-returned unsigned by the Mayor) (7)

Councillor Gomes explained that there had been a series of communications from Hess/Speedway Gas regarding the parcel on Cove Road and that the plan was to comply with State regulations as it relates to the in-ground tanks and to sell the property. The company has filed a plan with the State.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Dunn, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter at this time and to send a letter to the Speedway Representative who indicated a plan had been filed with the State and that a copy of that Communication and plan be forwarded to the Committee. This motion passed on a voice vote.

* * *

Item numbers nine (9) and ten (10) were taken out of order and were as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Appointments and Briefings meet with local banks, mortgage institutions and credit unions, along with all local realtors, for the purpose of putting together a strategic plan of action to maintain and protect any deterioration in the neighborhoods across the City dealing with the over 1000 bank-owned or homes in foreclosure; and further, more importantly to protect those homes from becoming part of a growing number of properties deteriorating within our neighborhoods across the City. (Ref'd 9/24/15) (3/8/16-Remain in Committee) (9)

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Dunn, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council to take "No Further Action" on the WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Gomes, requesting, that the Committee on Appointments and Briefings meet with local banks, mortgage institutions and credit unions, along with all local realtors, for the purpose of putting together a strategic plan of action to maintain and protect any deterioration in the neighborhoods across the City dealing with the over 1000 bank-owned or homes in foreclosure; and further, more importantly to protect those homes from becoming part of a growing number of properties deteriorating within our neighborhoods across the City. This motion passed on a voice vote.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Coelho, requesting that Eversource Gas be invited to a meeting of the Committee on Appointments and Briefings, to brief the City Council regarding policy requirements on the placement of residential meters inside and outside residential buildings. (Ref'd 3/9/17) (10)

On motion by Councillor Dunn and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: To keep this matter in Committee. This motion passed on a voice vote.

* * *

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Councillors Dunn, Abreu, Winterson, Gomes, Council President Lopes, Councillors Morad, Oliveira and Martins requesting that Mayor Mitchell provide assistance to any evacuees from Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria (Ref'd 9/28/17) was received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney. (8)

Cynthia Wallquist, Director Human Services, provided the Committee with an update. She reported that to date, 30 adults and 31 children had been displaced and arrived in New Bedford seeking accommodations. The city is working with faith based organizations and the New Bedford Housing Authority to place these citizens. The city is waiting for FEMA to sign off on their proposals so that federal funding may be acquired.

Councillor Dunn asked about shelters if they were working with the city as well. He was told yes, but for the most part hotel vouchers were being issued to accommodate the influx of people. The shelters themselves are accommodating singles, not families. He stresses that raising the flag in support of Puerto Rico is nice, but that putting together an effective relief program to deal with the incoming citizens who have been displaced is better.

On motion by Councillor Dunn and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council to take "No Further Action" on the COMMUNICATION, Councillors Dunn, Abreu, Winterson, Gomes, Council President Lopes, Councillors Morad, Oliveira and Martins requesting that Mayor Mitchell provide assistance to any evacuees from Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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

This meeting adjourned @ 8:08 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence, Jr.,
Clerk of Committees