

OPINION: The New Bedford Mayor's Commission on Police Force is a Distraction

Submitted by: BREATHE! A New Bedford based grassroots movement that seeks to strategically create change in the policies and practices that have upheld institutional racism, state violence, and injustice.

Mayor Mitchell's Commission on police force is window dressing that is meant to pacify the good people of New Bedford. Do not be fooled; this is not the Mayor responding to Black Lives Matter calls for justice. This commission will not result in any sustainable change but instead maintain the status quo.

The new commission is limited to reviewing three policies that already exist: police use of deadly force, use of less-lethal force, and the use of electronic control weapons. Chaired by Councilman Brian Gomes, a strong supporter of illegal "Stop and Frisk" policing, the commission can only comment on these three policies. This commission has no power over disciplinary action of the New Bedford Police Department (NBPD), it has no control over the hiring and firing of officers, and it cannot comment on any problematic policies outside the limited scope of three documents. Mitchell's commission will not end NBPD's history of racial profiling and police violence.

In May 2012, five months into Mayor Mitchell's inaugural term, **Malcom Gracia** was murdered at the hands of New Bedford Police because of what was deemed an illegal stop by the Superior Court. This tragic loss of life was the outcome of Mayor Mitchell's continued endorsement of a High Energy Patrol Initiative that disproportionately targets Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in our community. In the eight years that have passed, we have heard the Mayor's claims that

community/police relations have improved, but by what measure?

Citizens of New Bedford should have the power to investigate and discipline police misconduct. If Mayor Mitchell is committed to stopping police from targeting BIPOC communities, he will support the community's demand for an Independent Oversight Board with subpoena power and disciplinary authority. This oversight board would hold police officers accountable for wrongdoing. New Bedford needs an oversight board to ensure police stop their policies and practices of targeting BIPOC communities, low-income people, and other marginalized groups.

The oversight board must be independent, not only from the police department, but also from elected politics, and have a fixed budget, so it is able to independently investigate complaints. The board's structure needs to be designed by the community, not the Mayor. This ensures true community voice and perspective centered around the needs of those most impacted by police violence, abuse, and misconduct. The leadership and majority of the board membership must be victims of police misconduct and/or their family members, with other local citizens nominated by grassroots civic and community organizations trusted by the communities most impacted by the criminal justice system.

Instead, the current Mayor's Commission, which has no legal authority, is heavily represented by the police and District Attorney's Office and lacks representation from victims of police violence or their families. The current commission has no ability to open an independent investigation of the murder of Malcolm Gracia or any other trauma and violence the police have inflicted on our community.

Mayor Mitchell, your community does not want to be appeased with symbolism attached to **President Obama's legacy**. We want change. We want to trust that our elected officials and police will carry out written policies with integrity. If the City of

New Bedford had an independent review board, perhaps Malcolm Gracia would not have been racially profiled, illegally stopped, and murdered. If there had been an independent review board, perhaps our city would have been spared from this grief. Moreover, all the officers involved in the murder of Malcolm and those involved in the cover-up would have been held accountable.

New Bedford roadwork sites for the upcoming week of June 22, 2020 –June 26, 2020

The City of New Bedford has roadwork sites for the upcoming week of June 22, 2020 –June 26, 2020 and they are as follows:

Eversource:

Eversource will replace the gas mains at the following locations:

- Kings Hwy – Tarkiln Hill Rd. to Mt Pleasant St.
- Hill St. from Hillman St. – Mill St.
- Hillman St. from County St. – Pleasant St.
- Cottage St from Parker St – Campbell St

Eversource will be doing final street and sidewalk restoration at various locations city-wide.

Other:

- Contractor (PA Landers) to continue drainage work at MassDOT Project #606709, New Bedford- Roadway Reconstruction and Related Work (including signals) along a section of Kings

Highway and Tarkiln Hill Road, Construction to take place during regular working hours (Monday – Friday), police details and traffic controls will be in place.

- Department of Public Infrastructure will be filling potholes on a continuous basis throughout the city.
- Contractor (PA Landers) will be working on Route 18 between Cove St. and Potomska St. to repair crosswalks on the east side of the roadway.
- Department of Public Infrastructure conducting its annual street sweeping program city-wide.
- The contractor (WES Construction) is scheduled to continue construction of the new pumping station and installation of the site utilities at the Front St./ Elm St. site. Elm St, between JFK Memorial Highway (RTE 18) and Macarthur Dr. will be closed to westbound traffic. Westbound traffic will be detoured via MacArthur Drive. There will be detour signage and traffic controls in place.
- Due to ongoing construction at the High Hill Reservoir residents may experience discolored water. The water is safe, and the discoloration will be temporary. We recommend allowing the water to settle for a few hours and then flushing your service line by letting the bathtub run for a few minutes until the water clears.

*** Please note: Contractors will continue to follow guidelines and protocol regarding COVID-19 social distancing while conducting work in construction zone.*

Due to the current COVID-19 situation the Department of Public Infrastructure will be closed to the public entry. Office staff is available to assist by email and telephone.

Dozens of Protesters demand Bristol County Sheriff Thomas Hodgson's resignation

The following was submitted by Bristol County for Correctional Justice:

Over 100 people demonstrated in New Bedford this afternoon, demanding the Bristol County sheriff's resignation. Approximately 65 protesters held signs at the Federal building in downtown New Bedford chanting, "No white supremacy in Bristol County," and "Sheriff Hodgson's got to go." A group of another 50 joined them in a car caravan. The rally was called by Bristol County for Correctional Justice to protest the sheriff's white supremacist associations, including a photograph where he's pictured wearing a Confederate-themed tie.

"The issue isn't just the tie," said Lindsay Aldworth of BCCJ. "Hodgson is a board member of the Federation of Americans for Immigration Reform, which the Southern Poverty Law Center has designated a white supremacist group. He's a close associate of Stephen Miller, a White House major policy maker, with well-known white supremacist views and connections. The tie is merely a symbol of that allegiance."

As to Hodgson's denial that he saw no connection with the stars and bars on his tie and the Confederate colors, Marlene Pollock, also of BCCJ added, "The idea that Sheriff Hodgson, with these public white supremacist connections, chose to wear this tie without making that connection is laughable." She continued, "When faced with multiple organizations affirming that it was indeed a Confederate-themed tie, he had two choices. To renounce and regret it or to defiantly flaunt it, insisting that he'd continue to wear it. The fact that he

chose the latter course is very telling.”

The car caravan of protesters toured the city, passing the Dartmouth jails, the Ash Street jail and also historical sites connected with the area’s Abolitionist history. The caravan ended at Union and County Streets, joining the protesters who marched there on foot, where Black Lives Matter supporters have been gathering for three weeks. Organizers said they wanted to show their “solidarity and support.”

New Bedford passes 100 total COVID-19 related deaths

New Bedford health officials reported three more COVID-19 related deaths bringing the total to 102 in the city. New Bedford has seen 17 COVID-19 related deaths since last Thursday.

Mayor Jon Mitchell’s office reported nine additional confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Bedford on Thursday, bringing the total positive cases in the city to 2,086, up from 2,077 on Wednesday.

According to New Bedford health officials, Hispanics/Latinos are 20% of New Bedford’s population but account for 45.5% of the COVID-19 cases in the city. New Bedford’s white population was 67.2% of the city and accounted for 28.1% of the COVID-19 cases. Full details [here](#).

6 additional cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Fall River, according to the Mayor’s Office. This makes the total in Fall River at 1,549. Full details [here](#).

Dartmouth's Paper Shredding Day scheduled for June 27 is canceled

The Paper Shredding Day that was scheduled to take place in Dartmouth on June 27, 2020 is canceled. It is very difficult to keep all of those involved in running a paper shred day at least six feet apart, so for safety reasons the event will not take place.

Several companies offer paper shredding services if you need to shred papers promptly.



Proactively reduce the paper that you must deal with by reducing the paper coming into your home.

Go paperless for as many bills, financial statements, and magazines as possible. Choosing electronic statements saves trees, reduces pollution, reduces clutter, and reduces the number of physical documents that contain your personal information.

Directly contact companies to unsubscribe from unwanted mail. Also, catalogchoice.org allows you to unsubscribe from catalogs. To opt out of credit card or insurance offers, call toll-free 1-888-5-0PT-OUT (1-888-567-8688) or visit optoutprescreen.com. The phone number and website are operated by the major consumer reporting companies.

If you shred your own paper, you can compost it, use it as packing material, or use it to dry out old latex paint. Shredded paper does not belong in the recycling cart. It becomes a contaminant (and then trash) at the sorting facilities.

For more information, please call the Department of Community Services at (508) 979-1692 or the Greater New Bedford Regional Refuse Management District Recycling Office at (508) 979-1493 or email Marissa@gnbrmdistrict.org.

Dominican national who lived in Massachusetts illegally sentenced to prison in drug trafficking conspiracy

A Dominican national who previously resided illegally in Methuen was sentenced yesterday in federal court in Boston for

trafficking cocaine.

Cesar Rodriguez-Sanquentin, 27, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton to 37 months in prison and four years of supervised release. On Feb. 12, 2020, Rodriguez-Sanquentin pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine and possession with intent to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine.

In 2018, federal and state law enforcement began investigating a Brockton drug crew allegedly headed by Djuna Goncalves, a violent Brockton-area drug dealer. During the investigation, agents identified different Boston-based drug trafficking organizations that allegedly supplied Goncalves and others with heroin, fentanyl, cocaine, crack cocaine, and marijuana.

On Dec. 17, 2018, federal agents intercepted calls in which Rodriguez-Sanquentin promised to deliver a kilogram of cocaine to a customer. After Rodriguez-Sanquentin met with the customer, federal agents stopped and searched Rodriguez-Sanquentin's car. Agents recovered a Kellogg's Corn Flakes box that contained \$33,611 in cash. On May 13, 2019, agents intercepted calls in which Rodriguez-Sanquentin agreed to supply cocaine to a Boston drug crew that had supplied Djuna Goncalves. Agents stopped Rodriguez-Sanquentin on the way to meet with the customer and recovered one kilogram of cocaine wrapped in a Christmas-themed gift bag from the engine compartment of Rodriguez-Sanquentin's car.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Michael Shea, Acting Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston; Brian D. Boyle, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Boston Field Division; Colonel Christopher Mason, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police; Brockton Police Chief Emanuel Gomes; John Gibbons, United States Marshal for the District of Massachusetts; and Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy Cruz made the announcement. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christopher Pohl and

Alathea Porter of Lelling's Narcotics and Money Laundering Unit prosecuted the case.

The details contained in the criminal complaint are allegations. The remaining defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

3rd EyE Unlimited Launches “Your New Bedford” on Juneteenth; Virtual pop-up events to foster bonds between downtown and neighborhoods

On Friday, June 19th – “Juneteenth” – the youth empowerment organization 3rd EyE Unlimited launches “Your New Bedford”, a monthly pop-up event featuring music, dance, visual arts, education and a community corner for dialogue about local needs and challenges.

The event runs from 6 to 9 p.m. and will be live-streamed on 3rd EyE's Facebook page and YouTube Channel. “Your New Bedford” is a collaboration between 3rd EyE, which uses the five pillars of hip hop to foster young people's creative capacities, and community partners attuned to the needs and resources of specific neighborhoods or populations.

Our partner for the first event is Hatch Street Studios, New

Bedford's largest community of visual and performing artists housed in two adjoining historic mill buildings in the city's North End. The project is designed to deepen connections between neighborhoods and downtown, build partnerships between cultural organizations and community groups, and strengthen the creative economy and arts ecosystem.



"It is both coincidental and highly appropriate that our first 'Your New Bedford' event falls on Juneteenth – the day in 1865 that enslaved people in Texas learned about the Emancipation Proclamation", noted project manager Peter Lonelle Walker, a local businessperson and community activist. "This gives us a rich opportunity to connect the history of racial injustice with the youth-led social protest movement unfolding around us."

This Friday's event will intersperse performances by young artists active in local Black Lives Matter initiatives, with live painting, a studio tour and live music by Hatch Street artists, and a special guest appearance by New Bedford's Poet Laureate Patricia Gomes. Other featured artists include Lynea Gilreath, a spoken word artist and leader of local youth protests, dancer Momo (Monique) Hobson, painter Devin McLaughlin and glass mural designer Tracy Silva Barbosa.

The event's educational component will be rounded out by the

New Bedford Historical Society and Groundworks South Coast. The event will be co-hosted by local break dancing legend C.J. “JunnYahh” Burnett and health and wellness promoter Shianne Costa.

“Your New Bedford” demonstrates that New Bedford’s arts scene is more than its rich whaling and abolitionist histories – it is also a hothouse for inclusive and cutting-edge youth-oriented culture. “A thriving community is more than just what’s seen on the surface, it’s also what is not immediately visible,” said Walker.

“The New Bedford that visitors see, particularly in our revitalized historic downtown, is fueled by the influence, expression and culture of the communities and neighborhoods that lie outside the tourist map.” Shianne Costa, the evening’s co-host, adds, “It’s harder to connect right now, and our goal is to use the virtual space to create a platform that empowers and showcases our communities and neighborhoods, celebrating the contributions we and our neighbors have made and will continue to make.”

Your New Bedford is the pilot project of the Art is Everywhere initiative, established by the Barr Foundation and Mass Development to accelerate arts-based development.

**LifeStream Now Accepting
Applications for its 2020
Sandra M. Cabral Nursing**

Scholarship

LifeStream, Inc., a New Bedford human services organization helping individuals and families throughout southeastern Massachusetts, is now accepting applications for its 2020 Sandra M. Cabral Nursing Scholarship.

The \$2,000 scholarship is awarded annually to one student. Eligible applicants must be pursuing a Registered Nurse or Licensed Practical Nurse degree at a college or university and be able to demonstrate a firm commitment to assisting people with disabilities in community-based settings currently or upon graduation. Deadline for applications is July 31, 2020.

“Nurses and other healthcare providers have been critical in addressing the Covid-19 crisis,” said LifeStream President/CEO Bonnie Mello. “The need for nurses is greater than ever. We are pleased to offer this scholarship and hope that it helps lessen the financial burden for a qualified candidate.”

The scholarship, established in 2000, honors the noteworthy contributions to the field of nursing made by former LifeStream employee Sandra M. Cabral, who was a registered nurse and nursing coordinator. Reflecting Cabral’s career and LifeStream’s mission, the scholarship is offered to enhance the quality of medical support available to people with disabilities living in community settings.

To learn more and to download an application, visit <http://www.lifestreaminc.com/about/sandra-cabral-nursing-scholarship/>

Ranked-choice voting could come to Massachusetts in 2022

Matt Murphy

State House News Service

Elections may never be the same after COVID-19. As the Legislature steams toward passage of a massive expansion of vote-by-mail for the 2020 elections, ranked-choice voting could be implemented in 2022.

The Legislature may have given itself until the end of the month to consider proposals for ranked-choice voting in future elections, but the extension for lawmakers did not change the deadline ballot campaigns face to turn in the final 13,374 voter signatures to local clerks by 5 p.m. On Wednesday.

Voter Choice for Massachusetts said Wednesday that it had submitted 25,000 additional signatures for inspection, adding to the record-setting 111,268 signatures the campaign had certified during the first round of gathering.

“Ranked Choice Voting is simple, fair and easy. On your ballot, you can vote for just one candidate like you always have, or you can rank your first choice, your second choice and your third choice, just like you rank things in order in your everyday life,” said Shauna Hamilton, Deputy Campaign Manager. “If your favorite candidate can’t win, your vote is instantly counted for your second choice so your vote matters more.”

Under a ranked-choice system, no candidate would win an election until they receive 50 percent of the vote. If no candidate has a majority after the initial votes are counted,

the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and the ballots are recounted based on a voter's highest-ranked remaining candidate until someone clears 50 percent.

Critics of ranked-choice voting argue that it's too complicated and could lead to unintended electoral consequences. The Legislature hasn't taken a position. The Committee on Election Laws has extended its deadline to June 26 to issue recommendations on all ranked-choice voting bills, including the initiative petition that could wind up on the ballot regardless of what the House and Senate decide.

Governor Baker files bill to implement police officer certification system

The Baker-Polito Administration today filed legislation to create a framework for certifying Massachusetts law enforcement officers, provide accountability, ensure that police departments in and outside Massachusetts have access to candidates' training and disciplinary records, and provide incentives for officers to pursue advanced training to better serve their communities.

"This bill will create a more modern, transparent and accountable system for law enforcement credentialing and training. It will provide police departments with the tools they need to build trust and strong relationships with every community across the Commonwealth—at a time when we need it most," said Governor Charlie Baker. "We are grateful for the Black and Latino Caucus' and Public Safety officials' collaboration on this bill, and look forward to working with

the Legislature to get it passed.”

The bill, entitled An Act to Improve Police Officer Standards and Accountability and to Improve Training, would for the first time require police officers in Massachusetts to be certified, and it would allow for decertification, suspension of certification, or reprimand in the event of certain misconduct. Toward this end, the bill would create the Police Officer Standards and Accreditation (POSA) Committee, which would be comprised of law enforcement and civilian representatives, at least half of whom would be required to be persons of color.

“Massachusetts is one of four states without a police certification process,” said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. “But the high standards of training we require for our police departments give us a strong foundation on which to build one. This bill will allow police departments to make better-informed recruitment and hiring choices while improving accountability for all the communities we serve.”

The bill would charge the POSA Committee with the responsibility of certifying all law enforcement officials in Massachusetts, including those from non-municipal departments serving transit agencies, colleges, and other entities. The bill would also require the Committee to create a database of certified officers, ensure that training and misconduct records are available to officers’ current and future employers, and develop a standardized background check for those seeking employment with a new police department. The background check would include a check of the POSA database and the National Decertification Index.

“A comprehensive POSA system will enhance accountability and apply consistent standards statewide,” said Secretary of Public Safety and Security Thomas A. Turco. “It will improve public safety and public trust for the men and women who serve, protect, and inspire our cities and towns.”

Finally, the Administration's bill would provide incentives for law enforcement officers who pursue advanced training in relevant skills and specialties beyond the levels required of all police officers. Such training would include foreign languages, advanced domestic violence and sexual assault response, advanced de-escalation techniques, and other high-level proficiencies.