

Three seek to open retail marijuana businesses in New Bedford

Three companies are seeking approval to open recreational marijuana businesses in New Bedford; SoCo Green, Whisk & JANE and Old Soul Gardens. Each has plans/letters that will be submitted to the Licensing and Zoning for Cannabis Committee for review on December 19, 2018. Here's a look at each:

SoCo Green LLC

1._COMM_-_SoCo_Green_LLC

Whisk & JANE LLC

Download link [here](#).

Old Soul Gardens

Download link [here](#).

Massachusetts Man Arrested for Sending Threatening Letters, White Powder to Federal Agencies

A Southwick man was arrested today and charged in federal court in Springfield, Mass., for sending four packages, two of which contained white powder, to federal agencies.

Kevin A. Johnson, 47, was charged by criminal complaint with two counts of conveying false information and hoaxes and two counts of mailing threatening communications. Johnson was detained following an initial appearance in federal court in Springfield.

According to the charging document, between July and November 2018, the FBI's Springfield Office and the Springfield Social Security Administration Office (SSA Springfield), received collectively three packages containing either threatening communications and/or suspicious substances. The Springfield Branch Office of the United States Attorney's Office received a letter from an individual claiming responsibility for sending the packages. All of the packages contained a piece of white-lined paper with a hand-drawn logo that appeared to combine the "anarchist A" symbol (the capital letter "A" surrounded by the letter "O") and the symbol for ISIS. Two of the packages contained suspicious white powder.

As alleged in court documents, on July 23, 2018, security cameras at the FBI Springfield Office captured an individual throwing a manila envelope at the front door. The package contained a handwritten note saying: "Death to TRUMP."

On Oct. 23, 2018, SSA Springfield received a package containing white powder and a handwritten letter stating, among other things: "FOR ALLAH YOU DIE, ATHENA KNOWS YOUR LIES, DEATH TO YOU TRAITORS, AND THE FU— FBI."

On Oct. 24, 2018, the FBI Springfield Office received a package through the mail addressed to "AGENT UNCLE HAM." The package contained white powder and a handwritten note stating: "FOR ALLAH YOU DIE, ATHENA KNOWS YOUR LIES, DEATH TO THE N.O.R.A.D SPIES, AND THE FBI." Laboratory testing later determined that the white powder in the packages did not contain hazardous material.

On Nov. 13, 2018, the Springfield Branch Office of the U.S.

Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts received a letter through the mail addressed to the U.S. Attorney. The return address stated: "WANTED FOR TERRORISM." The package included a handwritten letter and two newspaper articles. One of the newspaper articles was a report that the SSA Springfield building closed after receiving a suspicious package. The article noted that the powder was found to be onion salt. The words "onion salt" were circled in pen on the article. The second article was about the death of James "Whitey" Bulger Jr. The phrase "5 finger Freddy" was written in pen next to the name "Freddy Geas" on the article. News media outlets have reported Geas as Bulger's suspected killer.

The charges of false information and hoaxes provide for a sentence of no greater than five years in prison, one year of supervised release, and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charges of mailing threatening communications provide for a sentence of no greater than 10 years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Harold H. Shaw, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division; Joseph W. Cronin, Inspector in Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Boston Division; Scott Antolik, Special Agent in Charge of the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Boston Field Division; Stephen A. Marks, Special agent in Charge of the U.S. Secret Service, Boston Field Division; and Southwick Police Chief Kevin A. Bishop, made the announcement today. Assistance was provided by the Western Massachusetts Joint Terrorism Task Force, Hampden County Sheriff's Department, and Holyoke Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Deepika Bains Shukla of Lelling's Springfield Branch Office is prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the charging documents are

allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Five reasons your property taxes are going up in New Bedford

Guess what New Bedford property owners? Your **property taxes are going up next year**. Residential property taxes in New Bedford will go up on average \$220 and commercial property owners will see an average increase of \$26 for the year.

Here are 5 reasons why property taxes in New Bedford are going up year again next year and will continue to do so unless these major issues are resolved:

1. Simply put – property taxes go up every year because the City budget increases each year

Let's compare it to a personal level – if your rent, electric bill, and cable bill go up and your child is heading off to college, you better have a large savings account or ask your boss for a raise. When it comes to City government, the property taxpayers are the boss that the City is forcing the raise on.

One of the biggest issues with New Bedford's budget is that 85% of City spending is non-discretionary (predetermined by state mandates and other contractual agreements) with only 15% discretionary. For FY19, \$287.9 million is non-discretionary spending of the \$338.7 million total budget. City government,

the mayor and city council, really only have control of the 15%, or \$50 million of the total \$338.7 million FY19 budget.

2. Increase in property valuations

Generally, there are three ways to raise property taxes – increase the tax rates on properties, increase property values or a combination of both. The Assessor's Office increased the average residential property value by 5.2%. The city council can actually lower a tax rate, but you'll still see your tax bill go up if your property value goes up significantly.

The real battle that city councilors fight is where the increase in taxes will come from – residential or commercial sources. Clearly, the burden this year was put on the residential homeowners as they saw an 8-fold increase compared to commercial owners (\$220 Vs. \$26) resulting in a residential property tax rate average next year of \$3,742.

I've seen **drug dens raided constantly by police go up in value year after year**, so I'm assuming most of these home value increases are simply happening to raise taxes, not because the building is actually worth more.

3. Charter school obligations

From the **FY19 budget proposal press release** sent out by the mayor's office:

"The Commonwealth continues to fail to meet its own statutory obligation to partially reimburse municipalities' costs. As a result, the City's net obligation will rise from \$12.1 in FY 2018 to \$13.8 million in FY 2019. This growth in New Bedford's obligation toward charter schools diverts more and more funds away from New Bedford Public Schools."

4. City of New Bedford Healthcare and pension costs

From the **FY19 budget proposal press release** sent out by the mayor's office:

Employee benefits costs will continue to place an increasing strain on overall finances. Projected increases in medical claims and the City's pension assessment will require \$2.1 million in additional general fund support.

5. According to Mayor Jon Mitchell, the State not meeting its statutory funding obligations

From the **FY19 budget proposal press release** sent out by the mayor's office:

"Constraints [imposed by the Commonwealth] have made it more difficult to ensure that the City remains on a fiscally sustainable path while providing the reliable and effective services that our residents expect. Our ongoing efforts to improve efficiency and operational readiness have produced a lean organization where the most advantageous efficiencies have already been implemented, making future reforms much more challenging. Nevertheless, we must continue on this path in order to move New Bedford forward.

The Commonwealth has complicated this [budget] process by not meeting its statutory funding obligations and continuing to impose requirements that serve as roadblocks to effective reform."

In closing, New Bedford's elected leaders at the local and state level need to resolve the root causes of increased budgets or taxes will keep going up every year. Until our state leaders fix some of the non-discretionary issues and get the State to meet its funding obligations, 85% of the budget will continue to grow. Until our local leadership fixes the City pension, healthcare and charter school issues, the budget will continue to grow. Next year is an important election year at the local level, let's hope that provides incentive enough.

Property taxes in New Bedford going up \$220 on average after City Council vote

As the **South Coast Today** reported yesterday, residential property taxes in New Bedford will go up \$220 on average. Commercial properties will see an average increase of \$26.

Yesterday evening, the New Bedford City Council unanimously approved a residential tax rate of \$16.47 and a commercial tax rate of \$34.84 per \$1,000 of valuation. The average New Bedford residential property tax rate next year will be \$3,742 due to residential property values increasing 5.2%.

Generally, there are three ways to raise property taxes – increase the property tax rate, increase the property value or a combination of both. The real battle that city councilors fight is where the increase in taxes will come from – residential or commercial sources. Clearly, the burden this year was put on the residential homeowners as they saw an 8-fold increase compared to commercial owners (\$220 Vs. \$26).

No one should be surprised that taxes rise each year as charter school expansions, pensions, and healthcare costs continue to put upward pressure on the budget. Until those problems are resolved you can expect higher taxes.

A good summary of New Bedford's FY19 budget can be read **here**.

OPINION: “Spiked” cobblestones at Market Basket intersection a good idea

What do you think of this effort to deter panhandlers? From a fan on our Facebook page:

“So happy they finally put these in at the Market Basket lights! Now they need to do the other side.” – Jennifer Lincoln.

Three New Bedford City Councilors disagreed when the “spiked” cobblestones were first placed at the “octopus” intersection. In May, New Bedford City Councilors Hugh Dunn, Ian Abreu, and Maria Giesta sent a strongly worded letter to Mayor Jon Mitchell regarding the “dangerous and malicious placement of spiked cobblestones median at the entry of our City is wrong.”

The letter can be read **here**.

The mayor’s office responded in May that “the improved median strip is intended to address an increasingly dangerous situation where people walking along the median have put both themselves and motorists at risk.”

New Bedford Port Authority to become official fisheries

representative to offshore wind industry

The New Bedford Port Authority has reached an agreement with all offshore wind developers operating in the Massachusetts/Rhode Island market to serve as the designated Fisheries Representative of the commercial fishing industry to each of the development companies.

Under federal guidelines issued by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)

(<https://www.boem.gov/Social-and-Economic-Conditions-Fishery-Communication-Guidelines/>) offshore wind developers must establish a Fisheries Representative to be the fishing community's primary point of contact for communicating project-related concerns to the developer.

In this role, the Port Authority will act as a central clearinghouse of information, convene stakeholders, facilitate dialogue between fishermen and respective developers, and advocate for ways to mitigate impacts of wind projects on commercial fishermen. The Port Authority will also work closely with state and federal agencies to adopt policies and regulations needed to ensure the viability of commercial fishing operations.

Responsible for managing the nation's largest commercial fishing port, the Port Authority has a long history of operating as a fishing advocate and policy facilitator. Most recently, the Port Authority convened a working group of East Coast fishing interests stretching from North Carolina to Maine. The working group has played the leading role in providing industry comment on current and future development plans, turbine layout, and transit corridors. That work, and Port Authority's history as an advocate and broker in regulatory matters involving the fishing industry, made the

agency's new designation as Fisheries Representative a logical step.

The nascent offshore wind industry is rapidly developing projects along the Outer Continental Shelf of the eastern seaboard of the United States. Massachusetts and Rhode Island waters have attracted the most interest as the waters south of Martha's Vineyard account for roughly 25% offshore wind energy reserves nationally. Developers pursuing projects in MA/RI waters include Vineyard Wind and Ørsted (the world's largest offshore wind developer). Rhode-Island based Deepwater Wind was recently acquired by Ørsted.

"As the epicenter of commercial fishing in the Northwest Atlantic, New Bedford is the most logical place for the offshore wind industry to interface with fishermen," said New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell, who also serves as Chair of the NBPA. "The New Bedford Port Authority is a key organization to successfully facilitate the development of the offshore wind industry within a vibrant commercial fishing community."

"The NBPA has been contracted by the developers to represent the interests of commercial fishermen, and to be a conduit of information between the developers and the commercial fishing industry as offshore wind farms are developed on the Outer Continental Shelf. Given the strong relationship the Port Authority maintains with all aspects of the diverse commercial fishing industry, it is logical for the organization to work with both the offshore wind industry and the various commercial fisheries potentially impacted by the design, construction and operation of the wind farms," said Port Authority Director Ed Anthes-Washburn.

Washburn added, "We're very excited to have all three developers on board for this timely announcement. Adequate and sustained engagement with the fishing industry will translate into more conciliatory communications and interactions with fishing communities up and down the eastern seaboard as the

offshore wind industry begins in the United States.”

“We are committed to working with the commercial fishing industry through every step of this process,” said Thomas Brostrom, President of Orsted North America.

Brostrom added, “The New Bedford Port Authority as one of four Fishery Representatives to Bay State Wind, allows us to effectively communicate with commercial fishermen in New Bedford, helping us understand their needs and helping them understand ours without rushing stakeholder engagement, ensuring a robust process as we build up the offshore wind industry in the U.S.”

“We’re well on our way to making New Bedford a national hub of offshore wind, and the New Bedford Port Authority has been a reliable advocate for fishermen as we navigate this new industry together,” said Erich Stephens, Chief Development Officer of New Bedford-based Vineyard Wind, which on in October entered into a lease for use of the New Bedford Marine Commerce Terminal, where the company will stage construction of the nation’s first commercial-scale offshore wind farm.

Stephens continued, “Fishing remains the anchor industry for New Bedford and the region, and as we work together to ensure that both industries thrive, the Port Authority is a natural fit to represent fishing interests to all developers.”

About The Port of New Bedford

The Port of New Bedford generates \$9.8 billion in total economic value annually, directly supporting more than 6,200 jobs. All together, this economic activity accounts for fully 2% of the Massachusetts economy. Managed by the New Bedford Port Authority, the Port is committed to adopting best management practices for port resources and pursuing aggressive growth strategies that maintain New Bedford’s long-standing status as the nation’s as top commercial fishing port while capitalizing on new opportunities that maximize the

Port's economic potential.

About Ørsted US Offshore Wind

Ørsted US Offshore Wind delivers clean, renewable energy along the US Eastern Seaboard. The company operates Block Island Wind Farm, America's first offshore wind farm, and has a comprehensive geographic coverage with the largest pipeline of development capacity, totaling over 8GW in seven states. It is jointly headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts and Providence, Rhode Island and employs over 75 people.

The Ørsted vision is a world that runs entirely on green energy. Ørsted is the world's leading offshore wind farm developer, with 5.1GW offshore wind capacity installed in Europe and 3.8GW under construction. In addition, Ørsted develops, constructs and operates bioenergy plants, innovative waste-to-energy solutions and provides smart energy products to its customers. Headquartered in Denmark, Ørsted employs 5,700 people. Ørsted's shares are listed on Nasdaq Copenhagen (Orsted). In 2017, the group's revenue was DKK 59.5 billion (EUR 8.0 billion). For more information on Ørsted, visit <https://orsted.com/> or follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter.

About Vineyard Wind

Vineyard Ward Wind LLC is an offshore wind development company seeking to build the first large-scale offshore wind energy project in the U.S.. The project is located 14 miles south of Martha's Vineyard. Based in New Bedford, Massachusetts, the company is 50% owned by funds of Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners and 50% by Avangrid Renewables. The company recently signed a lease for use of the New Bedford Marine Commerce Terminal for staging of the project. The 8 MW project will generate clean, renewable cost-competitive energy for 400,000 homes and businesses across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, while reducing carbon emissions by over 1.6 million tons per

year.

New Bedford Police Department releases strategic plan

At a press conference at City Hall, Mayor Jon Mitchell and Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro announced the findings of a strategic plan and organizational assessment of the New Bedford Police Department, which was submitted to the Department this month.

Last year, Mayor Jon Mitchell announced that the Police Department would undergo a strategic planning exercise. He underscored the review of the Department in his State of the City address at New Bedford High School in March 2018. "We're undertaking a thorough and candid self-assessment because we want our department go from good to great," Mayor Mitchell said in his address, noting that the last strategic plan for the Police Department had occurred more than 20 years ago, and as a result of a lawsuit. The new plan, sought proactively by the Department, was completed by Public Safety Strategies Group, LLC, a firm led by public safety management expert and former police officer Kym Craven.

The current assessment and strategic plan was a proactive exercise to seek recommendations on strengthening operations of the Department. It provides third-party, public safety management recommendations that would bring the New Bedford Police Department fully in line with 21st century policing practices.

To compile the data in the report and complete its assessment,

Public Safety Strategies Group's team conducted four separate site visits, each several days long, and conducted interviews with police department employees, municipal department heads, stakeholder agencies, community organizations, and members of the community. The team met with interview participants that they selected, as well as some suggested by the Department.

The review includes findings on organizational structure and culture, goals and performance measures, facilities and operations, equipment, communications, the Department's various units and divisions, and finances.

Among the recommendations, the report suggests that the Police Department:

- Consider reorganizing the narcotics and gang units under the purview of Criminal Investigations.
- Allow for the chief to appoint command staff.
- Continue to expand mobile cameras to address crime and monitor critical events.
- Secure new mapping software.
- Create a funding plan for cruiser replacement for the Department's vehicle fleet.
- Evaluate facilities and determine the best location(s) for modern police facilities.
- Secure funding to increase the training budget.
- Civilianizing certain positions, including the management information systems position.
- Consider automated recordkeeping to ensure accountability and address the time-consuming nature of manual recordkeeping.
- Continue to evaluate its opioid task force and deployment of mental health professionals in diversion programs.

"This assessment is useful for a police department that is always striving to operate effectively and innovatively," said Mayor Jon Mitchell. "A strategic plan will inform the critical operational, financial and facilities decisions with which the New Bedford Police Department is faced, and it will help the

department fulfill its mission of continuous improvement, capitalizing on its strengths and addressing areas that need restructuring.”

“The recommendations will serve as a guideline for the Police Department moving forward,” said Chief Joseph Cordeiro. “There are helpful suggestions and areas of improvement, as well as acknowledgements of the department’s progress in key areas, such as our leadership on the opioid crisis and our successful use of cameras in targeted ways. We are grateful to Public Safety Strategies Group for its comprehensive look at every level of the Department, and its assessment of our operations.”

Is it time for New Bedford to get a ‘Do Not Knock’ registry?

Spend any time on a New Bedford discussion page or in a New Bedford group, and you’ll hear complaints from New Bedford residents regarding the “energy” people knocking on their door and being very aggressive. On New Bedford Guide, we constantly get messages about aggressive people knocking on doors and in many cases pretending to work for Eversource or other companies.

It gets so bad in New Bedford that **City Councilors have taken up motions to ban companies from doing business in the city.** From 2014:

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Martins, requesting, that the

Attorney General and our City Solicitor, look into “Just Energy”, who have a bad reputation in Massachusetts for harassing people about their services, representatives from “Just Energy” are ringing door bells and telling people they are from the electric company, “Just Energy” has a troubled past in Massachusetts and in several other States, where they faced allegations of deceptive practices, convincing people to switch over once pressured and once people sign up, they are committed for five years and rates can change every month; and further, requesting, that “Just Energy” be seriously investigated and until they are, they should be banned from New Bedford to better protect our constituents.

The residents in Marlborough, Massachusetts have come up with a ‘Do Not Knock’ registry that the New Bedford City Council should consider. It’s similar to a ‘Do Not Call’ registry and goes in effect in Marlborough Jan. 1, 2019.

The city of Marlborough has introduced a new “Do Not Knock” registry to spare residents from local solicitors. Anyone looking to advertise door-to-door will have to get a license from Marlboro police, and with it, they’ll be given the “Do Not Knock” list of addresses to avoid.

Think it’s a good idea? You can contact your City Council [here](#).

Election day at Alma del Mar Charter School in New Bedford

It was election day last Tuesday! Alma del Mar Charter School

held their election for governor – here's a look at the kids voting.

New Bedford sees 40% voter turnout for 2018 midterm elections

According to New Bedford Elections Commissioner Manuel Debrito, 23,723 of the 58,220 New Bedford registered voters participated in the elections on Tuesday. That's a 40% voter turnout and **up from 25% in 2017** when 14,098 New Bedford residents voted.

The following provides how people in New Bedford voted in the 2018 mid-term elections:

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