

Changing New Bedford Through City Legislation



by
Michael
Silvia

“Isn’t it wonderful that none of us need wait a moment before starting to change the world.” – Anne Frank

Regardless of what the perception is of our city, there are a lot of positive things happening in New Bedford. Our City hosts several major events throughout the year, our fishing industry is second to none, we are one of the most artistic cities on America, and our downtown district has come to life in the last decade. These things don’t just happen by chance. People stepped up with an idea and effected change in our city. With a little time and effort, every citizen of New Bedford can effect change in the city through a legislative-type process. The problem is, most people do not know the process of using your local city government to effect change in your neighborhood. Need a stop sign on your street? Think a city ordinance is outdated and needs updating? There is a process in our city government that every citizen can take advantage of to change your our city for the better. I hope to show everyone how the process works through research and physically exercising the New Bedford legislative-type process.

This article is the beginning of a several month long process of showing how to nominate change through your New Bedford government. I have four goals that I hope to accomplish.

1. Initially explain the process as best I can through some research. That's what I hope to begin to accomplish with this article!
2. Come up with and nominate three change items. E-mail me at info@newbedfordguide.com if you have an idea!
3. Follow along and review the process as the three change items either fail or succeed. I'll work with our city council, committees and mayor's office, and document the process.
4. Get New Bedford residents to understand the process and effect change in their neighborhood and city.

The Basic Legislative Process



New Bedford City Council Chambers.

I started the process by talking to Ward 2 New Bedford City Council member and current City Council President Steven Martins to help explain the basic process of nominating change. Basically, any New Bedford resident can nominate change by contacting one of the City Council members and having them nominate the legislation through committee and city council sessions. If the nominated change item makes it through committee and the City Council, it would then head to the mayor for signature. That's the basic process, but of course it is not that simple. Depending on the change item requested, it could be city, state or federal item and could get referred. For example, getting a street light added to a busy intersection is a Massachusetts Department of Transportation (DOT) item. The process would start at City Hall, but would get deferred to the DOT for action.

The process of items getting nominated by a City Council member, going through committee and eventually landing on the mayor's desk for signature is for specific New Bedford issues that can be acted upon locally. You'd also have to stay active in the process and show up to the city council session to answer questions and defend your change item.

Nominating Three Legislative Items

To exercise the process, I'm seeking nominations for change items. Is there something that really bothers you about the New Bedford? Is there an outdated ordinance that needs to be modernized? A new ordinance that needs added? Post a comment here or e-mail me at info@newbedfordguide.com. I have a few ideas, but I'd like to make this a community exercise.