

Councilors Dunn and Coelho miss New Bedford Fire Department Engine 8 vote

New Bedford City Councilors Debora Coelho and Hugh Dunn did not attend last night's City Council session that featured a discussion and vote on the City Council going on record to oppose the planned decommissioning of New Bedford Fire Department's Engine 8. This is the seventh meeting in a row the two councilors have missed to include **all six 2021 budget meetings**.

For several months now, all New Bedford City Council meetings have been held on Zoom so councilors can attend and vote remotely.

Two motions were jointly voted on Thursday evening regarding the planned Engine 8 decommissioning that was **announced by Mayor Jon Mitchell as part of his cost-cutting in the FY2021 budget**:

"Due to a recent streamlining of dispatch protocols that has reduced the Fire Department's need to respond to medical calls rather than fire-related calls, Engine 8 will be decommissioned, and ten vacant firefighter positions eliminated. This will not result in the closure of a station. A portion of the savings will be used to assess the future configuration of fire stations in the North End of New Bedford, as was completed for the South End. There will also be added capacity in the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department to effectively respond to medical calls through EMS."

The City Council voted 8-1 to support the following motions – Councilor Linda Morad was the lone "no" vote:

“Councillor Gomes, requesting that the City Council go on record and send a letter to the Mayor in opposition to the closing of Firehouse Engine 8 on Acushnet Avenue and the Downtown Police sub-station on Pleasant Street, the closing of these two public safety buildings will be very detrimental to the areas that they serve; and further that the Council asked Mayor Mitchell to look at alternative cuts or surplus monies to keep these stations open.”

“Councillors Giesta, Abreu, Baptiste, Lima, Council President Lopes, Councillors Dunn, Markey and Carney, requesting that the Administration immediately reconsider its decision to decommission Engine 8 from the New Bedford Fire Department from its Fiscal Year 2021 budget, as its closure could potentially lead to devastating effects when it comes to the overall public safety of one of the most densely-populated areas of the community; and further that since it is confirmed that a new round of the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) federal grants from FEMA will now be available later this calendar year to help local fire departments rehire or retain firefighters as well as waive the local cost-share due to COVID-19 pandemic, that the City of New Bedford apply for said funding when appropriate to help alleviate any fiscal constraints to our annual fiscal budget, additionally the City does have a \$7.8 million in its “rainy day” fund, which could also be applied to offset any fire department related costs. (To be Referred to the Mayor’s Office, State Senator Mark Montigny, Representatives Antonio F.D. Cabral, Christopher Hendricks, Christopher Markey, William Strauss, and Paul Schmid, United States Senators Elizabeth Warren, Edward Markey, United States Congressman William Keating and Governor Charlie Baker.)”