

# **New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell issues statement on this morning's fire on Acushnet Avenue**

Statement from Mayor Jon Mitchell on this morning's fire on Acushnet Avenue:

"Early this morning, a structure fire heavily damaged two residential and commercial buildings on Acushnet Avenue in the Near North End, and the Fire Department has confirmed that two people perished in the fire. I wish to express my deepest sympathy for the families of the victims, along with the many residents and businesses that were displaced by the fire.

The City, the American Cross and the Salvation Army are extending services to those in need. Firefighters remain on the scene, and the cause of the fire is under investigation by the Nbfd, NBPD, the State Police and the state Fire Marshal's office. I am grateful for the swift and skillful response of our firefighters and the prompt support of all the responding agencies and organizations.

As the fire occurred in the area generally covered by Fire Station 8, we have been asked for an update about the plans announced last year to take Engine 8 offline in the future. While there is no basis to believe that the response to this particular fire would have been materially different without Engine 8's participation, no change to Engine 8's status is planned for this fiscal year.

The economic effect of the pandemic of course has caused considerable strain on the city's finances, which prompted reductions in services across city government, including the

Fire Department. Since that time, we have pursued alternate funding sources and are exploring solutions to streamline Fire Department operations that do not include the decommissioning of Engine 8. Our goal is to keep the Fire Department financially sustainable so that it can deliver the fire suppression and prevention services our residents need.

While a reduction in operating expenses will be necessary to achieve this goal, my preference is to do so without taking Engine 8 offline, even beyond this fiscal year.”