

Without a Mayoral race New Bedford's election interest hits an all-time low in 2021

Thanks to no mayoral race this year, 2021 has resulted in extremely low political candidate sign ups and will likely result in record low voter turnout for Tuesday's New Bedford elections.

Two years ago, residents voted away their right to vote for mayor every two years, extending the New Bedford mayoral term from two to a four-year term. Mayoral races bring election awareness, lots of money and thus drive higher voter turn out. With no mayoral race in New Bedford this year, there was only one preliminary election of of a possible nine, **only a Ward 5 Council race was held in September**. None of of the other nine races had enough candidates for a preliminary election (in the case of a mayoral race, we had none).

On the **November 2nd ballot**, three of the six New Bedford Ward Councilor races have incumbents running unopposed – to include **Ward 3 Councilor Hugh Dunn who is facing OUI charges**. The at-large city council race also shows a lack of interest with only 10 candidates running for 5 seats with four running for re-election. Debora Coelho is the only incumbent not seeking re-election and likely the seat the six non-incumbents are fighting for. It's rare to see an at-Large incumbent get knocked out because of the voting structure – voters pick 5 candidates so name recognition is critical.

A lack of candidates and an expected record low turnout on Tuesday shows New Bedford's deep lack of interest in the political system that is amplified by the lack of a mayoral race, but head over to social media and you'll hear non-stop complaining about the city. Clearly, some find it easier to

spend countless hours complaining, but have very little time to actually make an effort to change things by running for office or simply spending 10 minutes to vote. The record low candidate and voter turn out was predicable two years ago when residents extended the mayoral term to four years and the complaining on social media that will follow is just as predictable.