



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD

JONATHAN F. MITCHELL, MAYOR

January 31, 2013

City Council President Bruce Duarte, Jr.
Honorable Members of the City Council
133 William Street
New Bedford, MA

Dear President Duarte and Honorable Members of the City Council:

I am writing to express my concern about the pace at which the City Council has acted to confirm individuals I have appointed to lead key City Departments—especially given the major seasonal responsibilities of these departments.

As you know, the City Code gives the Mayor wide discretion to select Department heads of his personal choosing. However, I have opted to put in place rigorous screening processes to identify and evaluate high-quality candidates that I then select for Department-level positions.

My choice of appointments over the past year demonstrates the value of this approach. New Department heads at the Department of Health, the Zoo, and the Harbor Development Commission have all distinguished themselves as first-rate leaders in a very short time.

In sum, appointees submitted to the Council for consideration have already received a more than fair degree of scrutiny and my record of selecting strong candidates speaks for itself. My hope has been that these factors make it easier for the Council to act in a timely way when I submit appointees for confirmation.

My concern today is centered on two high-qualified appointees, both New Bedford residents, that I submitted in mid-December for Council approval: Dagny Ashley, a state tourism professional who I have chosen to lead the Department of Tourism and Marketing; and Mary Rapoza, a talented landscape designer with non-profit programming experience who I have chosen to lead the Department of Recreation and Parks.

It has now been six weeks since I requested their approval by the Council. Moreover, the next tentatively scheduled Committee hearing at which they can appear is February 19, nearly three weeks away. Assuming they receive favorable Appointments & Briefings Committee action, they will not be confirmed until the Council's February 28 meeting, a month from now.

On the present timetable these two fine candidates will have to wait two and a half months before they can begin work. It's worth putting the Council's lack of action in context:

The announcement and confirmation of our new Secretary of State John Kerry by the United States Senate proceeded in roughly half the time it will have taken the City Council to approve these two appointees.

Extended delay hurts the City in innumerable ways. Not the least of which is the possible loss of qualified appointees who choose to withdraw their candidacies. As you know, this past Fall a qualified candidate for the Tourism/Marketing position chose to withdraw when another career opportunity presented itself during her many weeks spent waiting for confirmation.

Most important, both Departments—Parks/Recreation as well as Tourism/Marketing—have extremely important seasonal responsibilities. We need these two leaders in place right away so that the City does not suffer from missed opportunities this Spring and Summer simply because the department heads come on board too late to make a difference.

For this reason I am today making emergency appointments so that two Department heads can begin their work as soon as possible. I urge the Committee's favorable action on February 19 and the Council's confirmation on February 28. Thank you for attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jonathan F. Mitchell
Mayor

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