



**General Membership Meeting  
April 6, 2023**

**9:01 a.m. – 10:01 a.m. Via Zoom**

Members present: *If you attended this meeting and your name is not listed below, please contact [gnballies@gmail.com](mailto:gnballies@gmail.com).*

Joyce Dupont, GNBCHC

Michael Jackman, District Director Rep. Bill Keating

Jean DeCoffe, College of Nursing, CCRI

Barbara Acksen, Ph D.

Darlene Dymysza, GNBCHC WIC

Karen Costello, Coastline Elderly

Anne Lynch, RN

Christine Pezzi, Bay Coast Behavioral Health

Pauline Macedo, City of New Bedford

Rev. David Lima, Inter-Church Council of Greater New Bedford

Jocelyn Alfonso, GNBCHC, WIC

Darcy Lee, Samaritan SouthCoast

Noel Sierra, MOAR

Barbara Durand, SouthCoast Health, Community Wellness

Katelyn Caton, SotuhCoast, New Beginnings

Carla Marcelino, Southcoast Health Community Wellness

Gail Roderigues, YMCA

Rachel Eckenreiter, New Bedford Health Dept.

Bernice Jensen, New Bedford Public Schools

Stephanie Taylor, Coastline Foodshed Community Engagement Coordinator

Josh Amaral, Office of Housing and Community Development - \*GUEST SPEAKER\*

Jen Clarke, OHCD

Stephanie Telfair, The Beyond House

Mike DeMedeiros, Relief HHS

Kayla Machado, The Women's Center

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Gavin Bates, SCCLC

Jim Horvath, SEMCOA

## **Minutes**

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m. by Chair, Joyce Dupont.

### **Presentation**

#### **Josh Amaral, Director, Office of Housing and Community Development**

Josh addressed the availability of affordable housing in New Bedford and the region.

The Office of Housing and Community Development is very involved in addressing housing and homelessness issues in the City. Last month Julia Orlando from Bergen County, New Jersey presented in New Bedford on the Housing First model. Many elements of this model could be replicated in New Bedford to address our housing needs. The model incorporates subsidized units with supportive housing.

OHCD is commissioning a study of the current affordable housing system in New Bedford. The system has functioned in the same way for many years despite significant changes in the housing dynamic in our area. The system should match the needs and challenges of the current situation.

Josh spoke at length about the new report issued by Mayor Mitchell, "Building New Bedford: Strategies to Promote Attainable Housing for All in a Thriving New Bedford" The report is available on the City website here: <https://www.newbedford-ma.gov/housing-community-development/>

The report describes 22 strategies in 6 main categories:

1. Facilitating New Housing Production Across Income Levels
2. Making Use of Existing Housing Stock and Space
3. Promoting Home Ownership and Independent Living
4. Updating Regulatory Framework
5. Establishing a Regional Approach on Housing Issues
6. Addressing Housing Instability and Homelessness

Josh reviewed each category and relayed an anecdote about a tenant whose out-of-town landlord visited the property, not to address needed repairs or renovations, but to let the tenant know that the rent was going up because of rising costs. The story illustrated the challenges faced on all sides of the housing issue.



Josh discussed changes in state law that might impact housing in the region. Recent zoning law changes require only a majority of the Zoning Board vote in favor of a zoning change (as opposed to a supermajority). The state also passed the MBTA Community law which requires municipalities with MBTA stations, AND bordering towns, to develop affordable housing plans to address density, zoning, affordability etc. New Bedford hosts 90% of rental housing units in the region. It will be important to examine how neighboring communities can be part of the affordable housing solution.

In response to a question about people with addiction issues being eligible for supportive housing, Josh stated that under the Housing First model, every individual needs to be provided a safe and consistent housing option, whether they are actively using, in recovery or anywhere in between. Oftentimes the housing opportunity can be the missing piece that will encourage someone to seek recovery options. One solution does not fit all circumstances, and service providers need the flexibility to be able to shape a service program to the individual's specific needs.

Josh mentioned some upcoming developments but emphasized that over the last decade, only 275 new rental units have been added to the New Bedford housing stock. The lack of supply is having a huge impact on the market, resulting in rising rents and lack of availability for those seeking housing.

Josh was asked how policy makers could prevent developers from reaping huge tax breaks while only creating the minimum number of new affordable units. Josh mentioned that New Bedford has not utilized tax breaks extensively to lure developers in the past. OHCD is looking at a state program called HDIP – Housing Development Incentive Program to see if reasonable developers could be incentivized to increase the rental stock in the city.

## Business Meeting

**Meeting minutes** -Rev. David Lima moved to accept the secretary's report for March 2, 2023. Jean deCoffe seconded. Without further discussion, all members present approved the March 2, 2023 secretary's report.

**Treasurer's Report** Jean DeCoffe presented the account balances for March 31, 2023. Mike Jackman moved to accept the treasurer's report, Rev. David Lima seconded. Without further discussion, all members present approved the treasurer's report.

## Other Business



Joyce announced that the next CHW Training under the auspices of the working group now known as SUN will be on Wednesday, April 26 at 9 AM at the White Home on the campus of St. Luke's Hospital. Email [Luz.ortega@newbedford-ma.gov](mailto:Luz.ortega@newbedford-ma.gov) for more information.

Rev. David Lima gave an update on the devastating fire at the Royal Crown Lodging House. Two people lost their lives, and several were injured; two remain in the hospital at this time. Currently 21 people are staying in hotel rooms. Since the fire last Thanksgiving, about 80 people in the city have been displaced by fires. Rise Up For Homes is collecting donations for the displaced families and individuals; please forward to Danielle Brown at Stepping Stone. Gift cards are especially needed.

### **Meeting Adjourned**

Jean DeCoffe moved to adjourn the meeting, Rev. David Lima seconded, with no discussion all members present approved to adjourn the meeting at 10:01 a.m.

### **Next Meeting**

Please mark your calendars for the upcoming General membership Meetings. They are held via zoom on the first Thursday of the month.



# 2023

January							February							March							April						
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