

Massachusetts Sober Homes owner who forgave rent for sex found liable for \$3.8 Million in damages

Defendant offered to forgive rent in exchange for engaging in sex acts or sending sexually explicit photographs

“BOSTON – The owner and operator of Steps to Solutions, Inc., a group of residential sober homes, has been found liable by a federal jury in Boston for sexual harassment of tenants.

Peter McCarthy, 51, of Lynn was found liable on May 17, 2024 for sexual harassment and retaliation in violation of the Fair Housing Act. Following a five-day trial, a federal jury awarded \$3.8 million in damages to seven identified victims who rented from McCarthy. In August 2021, the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division filed a lawsuit alleging that McCarthy subjected tenants to sexual harassment in violation of the Fair Housing Act.

The jury award includes compensatory damages for the emotional harms the victims suffered as a result of McCarthy’s conduct as well as punitive damages to punish the defendant. The Justice Department also intends to seek a civil penalty against McCarthy to vindicate the public interest and a court order for injunctive relief to prevent McCarthy from, among other things, managing Steps to Solutions sober homes or having contact with residents or prospective tenants.

“This defendant preyed on vulnerable women in recovery from addiction and forced them to choose between his sexual demands and keeping a roof over their heads. Housing is a fundamental need and every person has the right to feel safe and secure in their own home. No one should be subjected to unwanted demands

for sex acts from their landlord,” said Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy. “This case should send a powerful message to all landlords that there are severe consequences to sexually exploiting tenants.”

“Sexual harassment of tenants is abhorrent, and the department stands committed to holding housing providers accountable,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “We commend the survivors who came forward to testify about the heinous conduct that they experienced. This verdict sends a message that there is no place in our society for landlords who abuse their position of power to prey on vulnerable people.”

Since at least 2009 through 2021, McCarthy – the registered agent and sole officer of Steps to Solutions, Inc. – sexually harassed residents of his sober homes by offering to reduce or forgive rent, granting extra house privileges, or waiving security deposits in exchange for engaging in sex acts or sexually explicit photographs; and making unwanted sexual comments.

The Justice Department’s Sexual Harassment in Housing Initiative is led by the Civil Rights Division, in coordination with U.S. Attorneys’ Offices across the country. The goal of the initiative is to address and raise awareness about sexual harassment by landlords, property managers, maintenance workers, loan officers or other people who have control over housing. Since launching the initiative in October 2017, the department has filed 40 lawsuits alleging sexual harassment in housing and recovered over \$16.4 million for victims of such harassment.

Individuals who have information about this case can contact the U.S. Attorney’s Office by calling 617-748-3274, by emailing USAMA.victimassistance@usdoj.gov or by visiting the case webpage.

Acting U.S. Attorney Levy and AAG Clarke made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gregory Dorchak, Michelle Leung and Eve Piemonte of the Civil Division handled the matter along with the Housing Section of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

The Civil Rights Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office was established in 2016 with the mission of enhancing federal civil rights enforcement. For more information on the Office's civil rights efforts, please visit www.justice.gov/usao-ma/civil-rights."-Massachusetts Department of Justice.

City of New Bedford repainting crosswalks, installing drainage, setting granite curbs

"There's been a lot of roadwork around the City lately as the warmer weather settles in.

Recently, teams have been repainting crosswalks on Nina Street, installing new drainage utilities on Elm Street, and setting granite curb on West Rodney French Boulevard.

That's just a sampling of road repairs and upgrades around the City.

We update the list on our website every week so residents and visitors can see where and when work is happening."-City of New Bedford.



City of New Bedford photo.



City of New Bedford photo.



City of New Bedford photo.



City of New Bedford photo.



City of New Bedford photo.

Wareham Officer struck from behind at traffic stop sending 24-year-old operator, officer to hospital

“On May 19, 2024, at approximately 9:00 pm, a Wareham officer was on a motor vehicle stop in the area of 3132 Cranberry Highway. The officer’s vehicle was struck from behind while on the traffic stop with the officer still seated in the vehicle.

Another Wareham officer was on location and witnessed the vehicle rear-end the marked cruiser which had its emergency lights activated. Wareham EMS and Onset Fire assisted officers on scene and rendered medical attention to both the officer and the operator of the vehicle that struck the cruiser.

The operator, Cameron McPhee, twenty-four (24) years old of Plymouth, MA and the officer were both transported to Tobey Hospital by Wareham EMS.

McPhee, twenty-four (24) years old, of Plymouth, MA was charged with; Operating Under the Influence (OUI) alcohol, Negligent Operation of a Motor Vehicle, Failure to move over for Emergency Vehicle, and Possession of an Open Container of Alcohol.”-Wareham Police Department.



Wareham Police Department photo.

Humpback whale washed up on Massachusetts beach towed away to decay; returns 2 weeks later

UPDATE May 18:

Swampscott Town officials have been working with NOAA and EPA this week to develop a disposal plan. The disposal plan is to move the whale off the rocky narrow beach it is currently at, and move it to nearby land where it can be buried. This was determined as the best option due to the decomposition of the whale.

May 14:

The humpback whale carcass was observed in Swampscott. A satellite tag had been attached to track the whale carcass on May 2, and the offshore release location had been chosen to minimize the possibility of the carcass coming back to shore.

The whale did not decompose as quickly as expected, however, and yesterday was observed off Marblehead, MA, before landing in Swampscott. Swampscott town officials and MA Environmental Police are aware of the landing, and are working with NOAA and EPA to develop a disposal plan.



42ft deceased humpback whale stranded on Preston Beach in Marblehead, Massachusetts. Photo by the EPA.

April 25:

On the evening of April 25, NOAA and town officials in Marblehead, MA were alerted of a deceased humpback whale floating close to shore. Overnight, the whale landed on Preston Beach, a narrow, rocky, private beach. Since there is currently no stranding network member covering this area of MA, neighboring partners traveled to the scene on Friday with NOAA staff to take external measurements, samples to test for diseases, and a genetic sample.

Even at low tide, the whale was in shallow water. Many factors complicated the ability to conduct a more thorough examination of the whale – this beach was accessible by stairs, and heavy

equipment could not be brought in. NOAA coordinated with the town who expressed safety concerns with leaving the whale in place over the weekend, so the whale was towed to a nearby mooring while further logistics were planned.

Large whales, including this 42 ft long, 65,000 lb humpback whale, are difficult to move under the best circumstances. NOAA's best practices for the disposal of a large whale are to:

1. Bury the whale on a sandy beach (this is our preferred option),
2. Move to a landfill or compost site, or
3. Tow out to sea – which requires an emergency permit from the Environmental Protection Agency

In some cases, where a whale washes up in a remote location or an area that is difficult to reach with heavy equipment, the best option may be to let it decompose naturally where it landed.

After exploring multiple options to remove the whale and bring it to a land-based disposal site, the town, EPA and NOAA agreed that offshore disposal would be the appropriate response for this challenging case. The Town requested an emergency permit from EPA and EPA issued the permit under the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act on April 29 for disposal of the carcass. Marblehead Town officials contracted a local marine towing company, who brought the carcass out to approved coordinates far offshore and out of shipping lanes, where it will naturally break down and feed the environment.

This was done in close coordination with the US Coast Guard to avoid creating a hazard to navigation.

While our stranding network partners seek to obtain the best science and data from stranded animals, it is not always possible to complete a full necropsy on every dead marine

mammal that washes ashore. NOAA and our stranding network partners often face challenges such as staffing and resources, the decomposition of the animal, location and accessibility of appropriate heavy equipment. The disposal of a marine mammal carcass ultimately lies with the property owner, though local municipalities may assist private property owners at their discretion. A disposal plan must be in place with all stakeholders and property owners before a necropsy can begin.

Disposal Plan: The Town secured a plan that was provided by the EPA and the Town received an emergency permit from the EPA outlining the procedures for the disposal of the carcass. Working with NOAA on this, the plan consisted of having the carcass towed from its secured location out to sea. The designated area is approximately 15 miles east of the Stellwagen Sanctuary. A set and drift plan was created through NOAA to make sure that the remains didn't end up back ashore. A transmitting tag will be placed on the carcass to be able to track the drift. This operation began on May 2nd at 7:30 am. This was determined as the best option due to the nature of the surrounding landscape and the size of the mammal.

Thank you to our stranding network partners, the town of Marblehead, US Coast Guard, and EPA for all their help.

Information on necropsies: <https://bit.ly/3vTdiqK>.

To report a dead or injured marine mammal or sea turtle, call NOAA's stranding hotline at 866-755-6622, or locate your local partner here: <https://bit.ly/2s7cWJe>.

Information on EPA Emergency MPRSA Permits: <https://bit.ly/3UG0YU0>." -

Crowded Massachusetts Shelters Struggle To Find, Retain Staff

By Alison Kuznitz

State House News Service

Shelter providers serving homeless individuals urged lawmakers Wednesday to provide funding for a workforce development program as they face an escalating demand for services, including among new arrivals to Massachusetts, that is straining the capacity of their facilities.

Ahead of next week's Senate budget debate, advocates with the Coalition for Homeless Individuals are looking to build support for a Sen. Lydia Edwards amendment (321) that would inject \$10 million into the shelter workforce development initiative to "provide pathways to careers in fields related to housing and homelessness." The money is intended to address barriers to entering or staying in the field, such as transportation, loan repayment, tuition or certification fee reimbursement, and child care.

The Senate Ways and Means budget proposal did not allocate money for the program, though the House's fiscal 2025 budget steers \$10 million to the line item, said Lyndia Downie, executive director of Pine Street Inn, which operates four shelters in Boston. Downie said demand at the shelters serving individuals who are homeless increased by 35 percent over the last year.

"We're here to really make the case that there's been an increase. We're looking for some support and trying to anticipate that next winter is going to be really difficult," Downie told the News Service as she stressed the need for planning backed by state aid. "And then there's some workforce

dollars that the House put in the budget that we're hoping to get in the Senate, as well."

Both the House and the Senate Ways and Means budget direct more than \$110 million for a separate homelessness program, including assistance for organizations that offer shelter, transitional housing, and services that help people avoid entering shelters or successfully exit shelters. The coalition is requesting \$126 million, a roughly 15 percent increase over the current fiscal year to reflect heightened demand.

More than 6,500 individuals – meaning adults without children – are currently homeless in the commonwealth, according to the coalition, which represents 60 community-based providers. But the vast majority of those individuals are sheltered.

Providers say they have encountered a growing population of migrants who need to be housed and tend to stay longer than their Bay State counterparts. The state's right-to-shelter law, which has come under scrutiny as a crush of migrant families inundate the family shelter system, does not apply to individuals experiencing homelessness.

"Our state does not have the right-to-shelter protections for individuals as it does for families," Rep. John Moran said at the advocacy event in Nurses Hall. "And were it not for people in this room stepping up each and every day, we'd be in a crisis."

Individual shelter demand has increased on average by 24 percent over the past year, which the coalition attributes to a lack of affordable housing, youth mental health, addiction, a growing elderly population, more frequent extreme weather, and the migrant surge. The spike has translated into towns recording larger volumes of homeless individuals in their communities.

"What we're seeing here is just a tremendous increase of people needing our services in our emergency shelters. We've

been in overflow all year,” said John Yazwinski, CEO of Father Bill’s and MainSpring, a shelter provider serving the South Shore. “Over the last year, we’ve seen about a 30 percent increase at the shelter. We’ve seen over a 40 percent increase of people that are unsheltered in the South Shore.”

Yazwinski said his organization has “huge” worker vacancies, including frontline staff who check people into shelters, as well as those in security, maintenance and food service roles.

“The workforce money is the money that gives our agencies the ability to give cost-of-living increases and bonuses to our frontline staff,” he said. “Our frontline staff during COVID never stayed home – they kept coming. So we want to make sure that they are valued in our state.”

Edwards filed her amendment, which mirrors language approved by the House, as an additional tool to tackle the state’s housing crisis, an aide for the senator indicated. Gov. Healey’s budget proposal didn’t direct money to the program either, with budget documents saying the administration “eliminated FY24 one-time costs.”

“If we look at the staffing for homeless shelters, if they’re not able to fund that staffing and they can’t retain that personnel, then that’s less people they can bring into the shelter. That means there’s more homeless people,” Christianna Golden, Edwards’ legislative and policy director, said. “We in Massachusetts have been successful in addressing individual homelessness but we can’t continue to be successful without a workforce.”

A spokesman for Senate Ways and Means Chair Michael Rodrigues, asked about the lack of funding in the committee’s budget for the workforce development program, said the committee bill allocates \$1.14 billion in total funding for housing-related programs, an increase of \$66 million over fiscal 2024.

“We are proud to commit over 1 billion in funding to support

access to housing for our most vulnerable and marginalized residents, scaffolding them with the support services they need to transition into permanent affordable housing,” Rodrigues spokesman Sean Fitzgerald said in a statement. “This builds on the work from earlier this session when the Senate led on initiatives to increase funding for the low-income housing tax credit and for market rate housing in gateway cities.”

Fitzgerald called the housing crisis a “strong Senate priority” for the rest of the session.

“We look forward to tackling this issue with the \$4.1 billion Housing Bond Bill, while also improving on the Committee’s recommendations through the amendment process as members work collaboratively to shape the final Senate budget,” Fitzgerald continued.

The migrant crisis has unleashed a new challenge for individual shelter providers. Downie said individual migrants lack a path out of shelter due to the backlog in obtaining work authorization permits.

“When people don’t have a path out, you don’t have a bed for the next person who becomes homeless, and then that person is then sleeping on the floor,” Downie said. “Of course, our worry is that we’ll collectively run out of space, and we’ll say to people, ‘We don’t have a bed – you know it’s December, and there’s no more room.’”

Yazwinski said his organization has helped more than 60 individual migrants, including those who came to Massachusetts with relatives but did not qualify for the family shelter system. A mother with two children may be separated from her father, uncle or brother, who are then directed to the individual shelter system, he offered as an example.

People from Massachusetts typically stay in shelter for four to five months, though Yazwinski said an undocumented

individual or migrant could end up needing to remain for more than a year or two. Individuals are never turned away from shelter, Yazwinski said.

“What we’re doing is we’re taking our cafeteria, our conference rooms and we’re converting them into warming centers, so usually we have people sleeping on mats,” he said. “We got to a place where we couldn’t have enough – we had too many people sleeping on the mats – so then we turned to having people just be in a warming center, where people are just sitting in chairs, just so they’re not outside.”

Massachusetts Wildlife Rescue shares story about rescued raccoon orphans after tree cut down

“Anne was shocked when her neighbor’s tree service cut down a very old oak tree that was, in fact, on Anne’s property. Her neighbor thought any tree that overhung her property was fair game – but the law says it’s not. In California, where this happened, large oak trees are protected and there are VERY steep fines for cutting one down without permission.

Anne spoke with the tree service about how to handle what they had done. It happened to be on the same day we were asking for funds on Facebook. Anne is a long time follower. She told the tree service that, if they made a large donation to Newhouse that same day, she would not seek legal action. The tree company jumped at the opportunity.

She wrote me an email to tell me what happened.

My first thought: Wow! What a brilliant idea...So many of the orphans we receive lost their homes from trees being cut down. It was poetic to me.

Newhouse Wildlife Rescue received a whopping \$6,500 donation from the tree service that very same day.

Thank you Anne. A very ugly situation turned around and provided a lot of hope to orphaned wildlife because of you.

Poetic indeed..."-Newhouse Wildlife Rescue.

Massachusetts joins national coalition to cultivate local outdoor recreation economy, conservation

"The Massachusetts Office of Outdoor Recreation (MOOR) joins 17 other state departments at COS dedicated to advancing and embodying the central pillars of the alliance: conservation and stewardship, education and workforce training, economic development and public health and wellness. Massachusetts and Pennsylvania signed the Confluence Accords, a multi-state agreement to advance outdoor recreation and protect wild areas, inducting them as new members of the Confluence of States. As a member, MOOR will regularly collaborate with other state outdoor recreation offices to identify and solve challenges through innovative research and information sharing on best practices.

“Outdoor recreation is an essential part of living and visiting Massachusetts, and we are thrilled to join our state partners as a new member of the Confluence of States,” said MOOR Director Paul Jahnige. “Massachusetts is blessed with vibrant trail systems, diverse wildlife, and outdoor adventures of all kinds. Through the Confluence of States, we look forward to amplifying our collective voice to advance outdoor recreation and protect our natural resources.”



The Healey-Driscoll Administration joined the Confluence of States (COS), a bipartisan national coalition of state governments, dedicated to growing the outdoor recreation economy and championing conservation. Mass.gov photo.

“We are thrilled to welcome Massachusetts as the 18th member of the Confluence of States. Their commitment to enhancing outdoor recreation, conserving our natural landscapes, and fostering economic growth aligns perfectly with our four pillars,” said Katherine Andrews, 2024 Chair of the Confluence of States and Director of the Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation. “As a state renowned for its historical significance, diverse landscapes, and innovative spirit,

Massachusetts brings a wealth of knowledge to our bipartisan coalition. From the rolling hills of the Berkshires to the shores of Cape Cod, Massachusetts' unique contributions will be invaluable in our pursuit of cultivating a strong outdoor recreation economy and getting more people outdoors."

"Pennsylvania's and Massachusetts' formal commitment to the Confluence of States is testament to the groundswell of support for outdoor recreation as a driver of resilient state economies, connector of communities, and boon to public health," said Chris Perkins, Vice President of Programs at Outdoor Recreation Roundtable. "The \$1.1 trillion outdoor recreation economy is better off with robust state leadership for outdoor recreation initiatives and investments and we are proud to have showcased these directors and the Confluence of States at our National Outdoor Recreation Executive Forum."

Established in December 2022, MOOR collaborates with state and private agencies to promote activities across Massachusetts, including hunting, fishing, horseback riding, paddling, swimming, and more. Outdoor recreation is vital to Massachusetts contributing \$11 billion to the economy, creating over 102,000 jobs, and boosting tourism. MOOR looks forward to working closely with the Confluence of States to implement strategic initiatives that drive economic growth, promote equitable outdoor access for all, and improve public health in Massachusetts.

This announcement follows the hiring of Paul Jahnige as the state's first Director of Outdoor Recreation in 2023, as well as the launch of the Massachusetts Inclusive and Accessible Events Grants Program, created to advance equity and belonging across Massachusetts' recreation opportunities."-Mass.gov.

New Bedford men indicted for drug trade dispute; school bus collision, shelter-in-place, school lockdown, in Maine

Daytime shooting led to shelter-in-place order, school lockdown.

“PORTLAND, Maine: U.S. Attorney for the District of Maine Darcie N. McElwee announced today at a press briefing held outside the Edward T. Gignoux U.S. Courthouse in Portland that three New Bedford, Massachusetts men have been indicted following a February 9 drive-by shooting in Saco.

The U.S. Attorney was joined at today’s announcement by Saco Police Chief Jack Clements, Assistant United States Attorneys Johnathan Nathans and Noah Falk, and representatives of the FBI’s Southern Maine Gang Task Force including FBI Supervisory Senior Resident Agent Christopher Peavey, ATF Special Agent in Charge James Ferguson and Resident Agent in Charge Nicholas Dilello, and Acting U.S. Marshal Kevin Neal.



Maine Department of Justice photo.

In a two-count indictment returned on May 15, a federal grand jury charged Joshua Estrada (aka “Mac”), 19, Yancarlos Abrante (aka “Glizzy”), 20, and Jason Johnson-Rivera (aka “Ouda”), 18, with conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute cocaine and perpetrating a drive-by shooting.

According to the indictment, on February 9, 2024, the three men fired at least five rounds from a 9mm handgun into another vehicle in a drug trade dispute. The indictment alleges that Estrada, Abrante and Johnson-Rivera had been trafficking cocaine in and around Saco and Biddeford since at least January 2024.

Estrada was arrested in New Bedford, Massachusetts on May 6, 2024 when charged by criminal complaint for these same charges. Just prior to the press briefing today, Estrada appeared in federal court for his initial appearance in Maine and an arraignment on the indictment returned yesterday. Abrante and Johnson-Rivera, charged in the same indictment,

are currently being held by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on unrelated charges. They will be in Maine next week for their initial appearances and arraignments.



Maine Department of Justice photo.

If convicted, the three men each face up to 20 years in prison and a fine up to \$1 million on the drug charge followed by at least three years of supervised release. They each face up to 25 years imprisonment and a maximum fine on \$250,000 followed by a up to five years of supervised release on the drive-by shooting charge. An indictment is merely an accusation, and a defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

“I commend the Saco Police Department and those from the neighboring communities who responded to this incident,” said U.S. Attorney Darcie McElwee. “This joint federal and local investigation reflects that if you come to Maine and engage in violence, particularly firearm violence, there will be a swift and coordinated response from every level of law enforcement.”

“Immediately following this brazen, drive-by shooting and the ensuing chaos that followed, the FBI’s Southern Maine Gang

Task Force hit the streets collecting information, intelligence, and evidence to help our partners identify those responsible and bring them to justice. We believe the three Massachusetts men we have in custody conspired with each other to traffic cocaine and were the instigators of this drive-by shooting,” said Jodi Cohen, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Boston Division which includes all of Maine. “Violent drug traffickers have a corrosive effect on our communities, and we want everyone to know that the FBI is committed to working with our law enforcement partners to help make Maine safer for the folks who live, work, and visit here.”



Maine Department of Justice photo.

“Brazen violent crime of this magnitude is not something the City of Saco is accustomed to, but when it happens, Maine law enforcement responds,” said Chief Jack Clements of the Saco Police Department. “I want to thank not only our direct neighboring agencies but also the Maine State Police, federal law enforcement, and the municipal and county law enforcement agencies from across York and Cumberland counties that

responded. Finally, I would like to thank my detectives, the FBI's Southern Maine Gang Task Force, and the United States Attorney's Office for their tireless efforts in bringing this case to where it is today."

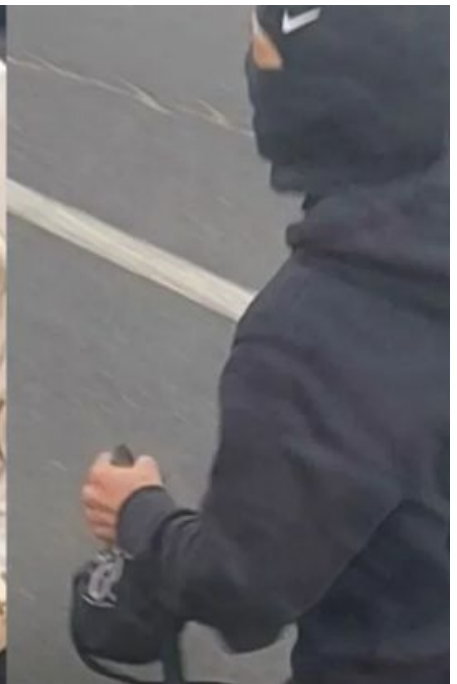
The Saco Police Department and FBI's Southern Maine Gang Task Force investigated the case with assistance from the New Bedford (Mass.) Police Department."-Maine Department of Justice.



Maine Department of Justice photo.



Maine Department of Justice photo.



Maine Department of Justice photo.

PACE Is Hiring For An Assistant Planner & Board Liaison In New Bedford

COME JOIN THE PACE TEAM!

POSITION AVAILABLE FOR: ASSISTANT PLANNER/BOARD LIAISON, APPLY NOW! Deadline is May 31st.

PACE, Inc. is a non-profit Community Action Agency incorporated in 1982 to mobilize and utilize both public and private resources to affect the improvement of the economic and social quality of life for low income residents of the Greater New Bedford area for the last 42 years.

The candidate selected to fill this position must have the following qualifications and skills:

- AA/BA with at least one (1) year experience in community work preferred;
- Self-motivated, detail oriented, and able to work independently and with supervision;
- Must possess good interpersonal, oral and written communication skills;
- Experience with data collection, aggregation, analysis and reporting;
- Ability to multi-task as well as maintain a professional relationship with all staff;
- Willingness to obtain agency ROMA Certification and on-going training as needed.

The candidate will work closely with the Director of Community Impact to measure and report on the progress of agency-wide programs and services. In addition, this candidate will act as a liaison between the agency and the Board of Directors, as well as, an ambassador at community events.

Excellent benefits include paid vacation time, personal time, sick time, and holidays; low-cost health insurance, dental, vision plans, and no-cost life insurance.

SALARY: \$24.00 per hour, 30 – 35 hours per week, 52 weeks per year

P.A.C.E. is an AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

E-mail a cover letter, resume and the name of the position you are applying for to: hrjobapplications@paceinfo.org, no later than: Friday, May 31, 2024



Air quality monitors being installed across New Bedford guide clean energy transition, cleaner air

“NEW BEDFORD – A new system of air quality monitors is being installed across the City to inform residents and guide decision-makers on public policy and equitable health

outcomes.

Air quality sensors have been installed at five locations in New Bedford with 15 more locations going online later this spring. Sensors are now operational at Pier 3, Fort Taber, on East Rodney French Boulevard near Brittany Global Technologies, on Griffin Court, and on Pearl Street. Future locations include near St. Luke's Hospital, Buttonwood Park, New Bedford High School, Brook Street, Coffin Avenue, Pine Hill Park and others. Locations will be adjusted based on data recording and community input.

The City's Office of Resilience and Environmental Stewardship is partnering with Groundwork Southcoast on the installation and maintenance of the sensors, which are manufactured by Massachusetts-based technology provider QuantAQ.

Data will be collected on air quality levels across the City to guide policy decisions and drive climate action to bring cleaner air to New Bedford. Data will be collected with solar-powered, IoT-enabled QuantAQ sensors, and will be made available to the public in real time. The City is working with Groundwork Southcoast to develop a user-friendly online dashboard for the data.

The initiative is one of 132 nationwide to be funded through grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 2022 American Rescue Plan. New Bedford's grant award was \$391,822.

"New Bedford is committed to improving the quality of life for its residents, starting with the very air they breathe," Mayor Jon Mitchell said. "The information generated by these sensors will illuminate the steps we need to take."

"Taking advantage of this emerging initiative will provide the baseline data we'll use to measure progress as we transition to cleaner energy and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions," said Michele Paul, the City's Director of Resilience and Environmental Stewardship.

The City is also partnering with Groundwork Southcoast on community outreach. Organization members have been walking around the sensor locations talking to neighbors and soliciting feedback and ideas on air quality. After taking baseline readings over the first few months, the City's Office of Resilience and Environmental Stewardship will hold a public meeting later this year to gain additional feedback and suggestions."-City of New Bedford.