

Councilor Coelho misses important 2021 New Bedford budget cut vote

New Bedford City Councilor Debora Coelho was the only councilor absent for Monday evening's special City Council 2021 final budget/budget cut session – the eight consecutive city council meeting she has missed. Some of the cuts failed 5-5 and Councilor Coelho would have been the deciding vote.

Councilors Coelho and Dunn did not attend last week's City Council session that **featured a discussion and vote on the City Council going on record to oppose the planned decommissioning of New Bedford Fire Department's Engine 8.** It was the seventh meeting in a row the two councilors have missed to include **all six 2021 budget meetings leading up to the budget cuts.** Councilor Dunn did attend the budget cut session.

Due to COVID-19, New Bedford City Council meetings are held on Zoom which makes attendance very easy. Councilor Dunn has stated, **"My absence has no impact on my ability to effectively represent my constituents as we navigate the budget process."** Councilor Coelho hasn't responded to an email request but **announced her retirement shortly after getting elected.**

The FY2021 budget cuts come during a COVID-19 pandemic, shrinking revenues, and **mayor requested cuts to the police and fire departments.** The budget will determine the need for future property tax increases and fees, so the City Council's role in the budget process is considered the single most important job city councilors have.