

New Bedford Fire Union President disappointed with shut down of Station 11

The following is a statement from the New Bedford Fire Department Union in response to **New Bedford Fire Chief Paul Coderre, Jr. announcing the end to New Bedford's 'rolling blackout' policy:**

"The Mayor's decision to shut down Station 11, thus removing the first line of defense to any emergency south of Cove Street and reducing the chances of timely responding to such an emergency, is disappointing, to say the least. In just the last few months, the City has suffered two fatal fires in situations where the first engine capable of responding, which was station just a few blocks away, was blacked out. Now the Mayor has announced the permanent closure of a fire company responsible for covering the entire peninsula.

This will increase response times and overextend the coverage areas of the Department's remaining apparatus. It also gives the Department less on-the-ground manpower to perform vital operations and spreads thin the Department's manpower when there are multiple ongoing emergencies. The Mayor's continued statements that blackouts, and now the permanent closure of a fire company, are necessary in order for the City to be fiscally responsible are a farce. City workers in every department, as well as retirees, have continually bent over backwards to help the City save money through changes to healthcare and contract negotiations. We even created more ways for the City to create revenue. Yet property taxes and fees still rise annually, while public safety and services are cut and surpluses are left in the budgets. The administration has essentially put a price tag on the safety and well being of its citizens.

The completion of the new public safety building on Brock Avenue, projected to be completed sometime in 2021, will result in moving a two company station, currently located in a densely populated residential neighborhood, and increased response times and reduced coverage for the far West End. It also creates larger areas for fire apparatus to cover while still leaving the Department with less personnel to do our job safely and proficiently. It will add to the call volume of the apparatus in the South End and create a chain reaction when fire companies have to cover other areas, while leaving their own area uncovered. The process and planning of the new building was rushed and completed without input from the public servants who actually provide the services and protect the people of this City every day. This was done in order to present something shiny and new to the public, while failing to inform the public that it will result in cuts to services and added difficulty for first responders trying to do their jobs. Once again our members are forced to do more with less as this administration adds to the burden already on our backs.

“Our mission is accomplished through service to others, dedication and a commitment to providing the highest levels of service to the community possible.” This quote appears under the description of the Fire Department on the City’s website. The current administration apparently has a different view.

Local 841 has long disagreed with this administration’s approach to public safety and the safety of our members and we will continue to do so. We will also continue to protect the people of this City to the best of our ability even when it is made more difficult and dangerous for us to do our jobs.

IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO CHOOSE PROPER STAFFING OR PUBLIC SAFETY. PROPER STAFFING = PUBLIC SAFETY”

In Solidarity,
Billy Sylvia

President

New Bedford Firefighters Local 841