

# **New Bedford's Mayor Jon Mitchell and City Council President Joseph Lopes announce reductions in capital improvements**

As the economy reacts to the disruptions caused by the global pandemic of COVID-19, Mayor Jon Mitchell and City Council President Joseph Lopes together have propose reductions to the City's capital improvement plan for Fiscal Year 2021.

The economic disruptions have caused the City to anticipate a decrease in local and state revenue for at least the next fiscal year, and the City is taking proactive steps to protect its finances. With the exception of public safety and essential positions, Mayor Mitchell has implemented a hiring freeze. New Bedford is also aided by relief measures enacted at the state level to help the City navigate potential deficits. The city is also working with its legislative delegation in anticipation of revenue shortfalls.

Overall, under the Mayor's and City Council President's proposal, pending loan authorizations will be reduced by \$4.8 million, or a nearly 40 percent reduction.

While each of these is important to ongoing City operations, given the circumstances, the Mayor will propose the three urgent capital priorities in the bond namely public safety facility repairs and road repairs and a weakened dam at Buttonwood Park pond that threatens the integrity of a road. Other important repairs to City facilities that can be delayed will be removed from the bond under the Mayor's and City Council President's proposal.

The following projects will remain prioritized:

- Police Headquarters Renovations
- Fire Headquarters Interior Renovations
- Roads & Infrastructure Repairs

This reduces the total bond from \$5,478,000 to \$3,965,000 – a reduction of \$1.5 million, or 27 percent reduction.

Similarly, the Buttonwood Pond and Dam Restoration project, which includes a necessary dam replacement to ensure the integrity of Fuller Memorial Parkway, the road running through Buttonwood Park, has been reduced to its most urgent and essential priorities for this year. This is a reduction of \$3,300,000, or nearly a 50 percent reduction. The project will total \$3,500,000 million instead of \$6,800,000 for this year.

“Although all the projects in the FY 2020 bond support important service needs, the current circumstances require us to make some difficult choices, and to proceed only with those projects that should move forward without delay,” Mayor Jon Mitchell wrote in his letter to the City Council. “When the city’s finances become more certain, I will renew my request for the remaining projects.”

“The New Bedford City Council understands the importance of moving forward with these capital projects, especially as we work collectively to address the economic impact that the coronavirus has had on the City,” said City Council President Joseph Lopes.