

Mayor Mitchell welcomes Foss Maritime Co. to the Port of New Bedford; expected economic growth, job creation

Foss Maritime Co., a Seattle-based company that offers maritime transportation and logistics services internationally will be building a base of operation as well as a logistics facility to support offshore wind projects in the region. This will bring hundreds of jobs as well as regional economic growth to the existing fishing, shipping, and recreational maritime industries.

According to the company's "About" section on their website, for a century Foss Maritime has "...set the standard for marine transportation with leading-edge technology, engineering, and shipbuilding. Foss is recognized for its state-of-the-art fleet, experienced and dedicated crews, knowledgeable customer service staff, and world-class engineers."

In addition to transportation and maritime logistics, Foss also provides engineering and shipbuilding services. Foss Maritime Com. is owned by Saltchuk Resources, a privately owned family investment company that has more than \$2 billion of assets invested in numerous operating companies in several different business groups, including deep water shipping logistics, ship management, tug and barge operations, fuel distribution, and trucking.

With the assistance of investors from New Bedford's Cannon Street Holdings LLC (CSH) Foss will redevelop 30 acres of the former Sprague/Eversource site and rename it the New Bedford Foss Marine Terminal over the course of the next year. The new terminal which is expected to open in March of 2023 will host

crew transfer vessel (CTVs) and service operation vessel (SOVs) support services, provide berth facilities for tug and barge operations, as well as storage and laydown yards for equipment and materials.

In addition, they will create a marine coordination center for technicians involved in offshore wind projects and office space for project teams.

Speaking on the announcement New Bedford's Mayor Mitchell said "Another major development on the waterfront this week – we're excited to welcome Foss Maritime Company to the Port of New Bedford.

In activating a notoriously dormant waterfront site, the new terminal will help solidify the Port's status as the East Coast's leader in offshore wind, complement our fishing industry, and create job opportunities for our residents.

I congratulate Andrew Saunders and Foss's parent, Saltchuk Marine, for their skillful and persistent effort to close this important investment."

State representative Antonio F.D. Cabral (D – New Bedford) said "The announcement of the acquisition for a new marine terminal brings New Bedford another step closer to realizing the economic and environmental benefits of the offshore wind industry and the city's role within it.

This is an exciting day for New Bedford and the SouthCoast region, and the role our city will continue to play in offshore wind development and renewable energy."

New Bedford's Mayor Jon Mitchell tests positive for COVID-19 for the second time

"I want to let everyone know that this weekend I tested positive for Covid-19.

My symptoms are mild, and I am receiving an anti-viral treatment. I am following current CDC protocols, which require five days of isolation from the onset of symptoms, and mask wearing for five days thereafter. My family and the mayor's office staff have all tested negative.

I do not anticipate that my isolation will disrupt municipal services or compromise my ability to lead the city. I will refrain of course from making public appearances this coming week, and my scheduled in-person meetings will become zoom meetings.

I do not know exactly how I contracted the disease. The virus is still ever-present, and even if you've had Covid before, as I have, you can still get it again. With a new strain of the Omicron variant now reported to be taking over in the United States, we need to be alert to the possibility that more booster shots and other precautions may be in order in the not-too-distant future. At a minimum, if you haven't received a booster shot yet, there's no time like the present." -Jon Mitchell.

Mayor Jon Mitchell on the Fairhaven-New Bedford bridge: “I will continue to champion its replacement”

“My statement on this week’s closure of the New Bedford-Fairhaven Bridge – what the public should know:

The sudden closure of the New Bedford-Fairhaven Bridge this week, which my office learned about only through media reports, is yet another visible reminder that the structure should have been replaced long ago. Built in 1905 when New Bedford was still a whaling port and before the universal use of automobiles, the bridge was designed for the needs of a by-gone era, and it has deteriorated into a state of disrepair that makes closures increasingly frequent. This isn’t news to anyone in our region.

Everyone in Greater New Bedford knows what it means to be “stuck on the bridge”, and everyone familiar with Port of New Bedford realizes that the bridge’s narrow passages inhibit investment and job creation in the Norther Harbor by businesses that utilize large vessels. Our region’s residents and businesses deserve a bridge they can rely on.

It is for these and other reasons that throughout my time in office, beginning with my State of the City address in 2014, that I have called upon the state, which owns and operates the bridge, to prioritize its replacement (I’ve been on this issue for much longer. In college, I wrote a term paper for an urban economics course in which I argued for the replacement of this same bridge). The lack of progress has been frustrating to say the least.

I believe it is important for the public to understand the

current state of the project, as the matter has received scant media coverage in the last several years. In 2014, at my urging, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation launched a feasibility study to determine whether the bridge should be replaced, and if so, what should it be replaced with. There were public hearings at the time, and a detailed engineering analysis was performed, resulting in a comprehensive report, which can be found here: <https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/handle/2452/617443>. The report is lengthy, but you can get the gist of it by reading the executive summary in the beginning.

To my mind, the major findings of the report are these:

- The state acknowledges that the current bridge is “functionally obsolete.”
- Refraining from replacing the bridge would itself be an expensive proposition. In 2014 dollars, it would cost \$45 million simply to repair it.
- Replacing the bridge with either a “double bascule” or “vertical lift” style bridge would cost about \$120 million (again in 2014 dollars).
- Either of these replacement scenarios would result in fewer and faster bridge openings, and a wider passage for large commercial vessels.

In short, there is no serious debate that the bridge should be replaced. Nor has there been for decades (take a look at page 20 of the study to see all the major reviews conducted on the bridge since the mid-1960’s). Unfortunately, the state has never moved the project to the next step, which is the design phase.

I will continue to champion the bridge’s replacement. With the recent influx of federal infrastructure funds into the state’s coffers, we have been urging the state again to move the project to a design phase.

Even though the bridge is not owned by the city, it is enormously important to our local economy, and must be replaced with a modern facility. Our region's residents deserve nothing less." -Jon Mitchell.

New Bedford's Mayor Mitchell files bill to reform the selection process for Fire Department leadership

Mayor Jon Mitchell has filed a Home Rule Petition with the City Council that would reform the way New Bedford Fire Department leadership is selected, by removing the positions of Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief from the state's Civil Service System. The measure would not apply to the current holders of the two positions, only to their successors.

The change in the hiring process would allow for the selection of candidates based on their proven leadership capabilities, knowledge, and skills most suited to the needs of the City, rather than a one-time exam or assessment that's administered by the state and attempts to determine in one day the fitness for the Fire Department's top executive management positions.

The exam and related assessment process are based on statewide criteria with no content tailored to the specific challenges or needs of New Bedford.

"By making ascension to the top ranks essentially a function of longevity and exam scores, the cultivation of individual leadership ability within the Fire Department is de-

incentivized,” Mayor Jon Mitchell said. “No executive management positions in the private sector are filled by one-time tests or evaluations—and with very good reason. It takes time and careful attention to determine whether someone has the leadership skills and disposition to serve effectively in a senior executive role.”

The Mayor added, “The New Bedford City Council voted in 1996 to remove the positions of Police Chief and Deputy Police Chief from Civil Service, precisely because the system constrained the City’s ability to select the best candidates for these positions. New Bedford Fire Department is currently under the capable command of Fire Chief Scott Kruger and Deputy Chief Brian Medeiros. We have an effective leadership team despite the Civil Service system, not because of it. It’s time for the City to take a long-overdue step of removing the 19th-century constraints on leadership and development so that New Bedford will, in future decisions, have the best chance at having the leadership necessary for our Fire Department to perform with maximum effectiveness.”

Many Massachusetts municipalities already have taken steps to remove their Chiefs and/or Deputies from the Civil Service System. Cities including Lowell and Lawrence, and towns including neighboring Dartmouth, all have chosen to have non-Civil Service fire chiefs and/or deputies.

The Civil Service system was enacted in the late 19th century when positions in public employment were subject to minimal standards for appointment, and political patronage was rampant. At the system’s core is the requirement that hiring and promotion be based largely on a written examination that is scored by a state agency, which ordinarily has no distinct tie to New Bedford. This method unduly ties the city’s hands when selecting a fire chief.

The exam objectifies hiring and promotion decisions, effectively erecting a barrier to patronage. Nearly 150 years

later, the system still serves that purpose for entry-level employees—but it inhibits the cultivation of leadership necessary to the success of large organizations. Effective organizational leadership requires skills, knowledge, and abilities that cannot be adequately measured on a standardized exam or assessment.

New Bedford's Mayor Mitchell takes action against former acting fire chief Coderre

The following is from New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell's office:

“Earlier today, Mayor Jon Mitchell terminated the City's former Acting Fire Chief Paul Coderre, Jr., for dishonesty and untruthfulness in connection with alleged work-related injuries.

While serving as Acting Fire Chief, Coderre claimed to have sustained several work-related injuries during 2019, which resulted in his being placed on injury leave in August 2020. Since then, Coderre remained out of work receiving full pay, pursuant to state law.

In the fall of 2021, the City ordered Coderre to undergo an independent medical examination in order to determine his continued eligibility for injured-on-duty benefits. The independent medical examination followed an investigation initiated by the City's Personnel Office in the summer of 2021. The Personnel Office investigation yielded video surveillance evidence of Coderre performing activities inconsistent with his alleged injuries, including his

unloading, without assistance, a 176-pound barbeque smoker grill from the bed of his personal pickup truck.

[Click here to view video surveillance evidence.](#)

The independent medical examiner initially accepted Coderre's account of the limitations caused by his alleged injuries. However, when later presented with the video evidence captured on multiple days in June and August 2021, the examiner reassessed Coderre's assertions and the applicable medical record, subsequently concluding that Coderre had been "untruthful" and "putting on an act."

Earlier this month, Mayor Mitchell appointed a Hearing Officer to determine whether there was just cause to discipline Coderre under Massachusetts Civil Service law. The Hearing Officer, Gerard Hayes, a retired municipal human resources professional, held a hearing on January 13, 2022, which Coderre and his attorney declined to attend. Hayes subsequently issued a report which found:

"Coderre's actions reflect discredit, not credit, on the Fire Department and likely will adversely impact good order inside the department. He engaged in an activity that is detrimental to the Fire Department. He engaged in conflict of interest to use his position for personal gain. He abused the department injury leave policy."

Hayes also noted, "It is probable that these actions were known within the typically tight knit firefighter community with adverse impact on member morale and discipline. It would not be a surprise if they lead to very serious disrespect for superior officers by some and attempts at similar dishonest behavior such as exhibited by Deputy Chief Coderre by others."

Mayor Mitchell strongly condemned Coderre's actions, "The former Acting Chief failed to adhere to the policies and procedures of his own Department, in doing so he betrayed the trust of the firefighters that served under his command, and

he took advantage of city taxpayers who paid his injured-on-duty benefits.”

Mitchell added, “New Bedford residents expect and deserve a Fire Department whose every member adheres to the highest professional standards, regardless of rank.”

This past December Coderre applied for an accidental disability pension from the New Bedford Retirement Board. In response to Coderre’s request for a disability retirement the City has submitted information to the Retirement Board concerning the independent medical examiner’s conclusions. Coderre has also applied for a superannuation retirement, but remained an active employee at the time of termination.

Coderre received \$208,574 in injured-on-duty benefits while he was on injury leave during the 16-month period from August 2020 through the end of 2021. In addition, Coderre benefitted from laws which exempted him from paying any state or federal income taxes while on injury leave. Coderre’s annualized salary as Acting Fire Chief was approximately \$150,000.

Coderre served as the City’s Deputy Fire Chief from 2011 to 2018. He was appointed to Acting Fire Chief in December 2018 upon the retirement of the previous fire chief. Coderre was recently returned to Deputy Chief status upon the permanent appointment of current Fire Chief Scott Kruger earlier this month. In New Bedford, both the Fire Chief and Deputy Chief are Massachusetts Civil Service positions; appointments to the two positions are based on candidates’ performance on written examinations.”

New Bedford's Mayor Mitchell: "The city is down about 30 plow drivers because of COVID-19"

Did it take too long to have your street plowed? Your neighborhood? Come across streets that had not been plowed?

Well, you can thank the recent COVID-19 surge for that. According to Mayor Jon Mitchell, the city is down about 30 plow drivers because of COVID-19. When New Bedford is hit by a storm like yesterday was the city has approximately 120 plows taking care of the roads.

Of those 30 missing drivers, two were absent because they had not complied with the city's vaccine mandate put in place in November.

New Bedford is currently experiencing one of the highest 2-week COVID case numbers in Massachusetts and has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the state.

New Bedford's Mayor Mitchell releases statement on Massachusetts wind energy

awards

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell released the following statement today, on the Commonwealth's announcement about the third wave of offshore wind power.

“The Massachusetts offshore wind contracts awarded today will help solidify New Bedford's status as the center of an offshore wind industry cluster. I congratulate Vineyard Wind and Mayflower Wind, and thank the Baker-Polito Administration for its support.

Today is also an occasion to assess the broader offshore wind landscape, and in particular, to acknowledge what has become a fierce competition among Massachusetts and nearby states. Each state is racing to establish itself as a leader in the wind industry. In this competition, New Bedford offers a critical edge for Massachusetts, as the closest industrial port to the wind project sites, and the home of one of America's largest maritime workforces.

That's why it is imperative for Massachusetts, now that we have a solid foundation of awarded projects, to build with all deliberate speed the port infrastructure necessary for wind developers to fulfill the terms of their awards. In doing so, we will ensure not only their success, but also will make the most of a generational opportunity to root an entirely new industry here.”

—New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell

New Bedford's Mayor Mitchell opposes charter school proposal in letter to Massachusetts Gov. Baker

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell and Fall River Mayor Paul Coogan have sent a letter to Gov. Charlie Baker today, detailing their strong opposition to the proposed Innovators Charter School.

The state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is holding a public hearing on the proposal from 4 to 6 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 15, in the Kilburn Event Center at Kilburn Mill, 127 W. Rodney French Boulevard in New Bedford.

Read letter in full here.

New Bedford's Mayor Mitchell outlines investment priorities for City's federal ARPA funds

Elise Rapoza of UMD's Public Policy Center Named ARPA Director.

Mayor Jon Mitchell has outlined investment priorities for more than \$80 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, focusing on transformational projects and programs

that will leverage additional sources of capital, maximize the funding's impacts and improve the lives of city residents for generations.

"The opportunities now before New Bedford are perhaps greater than at any point in the past century," he said. "These investments will be instrumental to launching the city out of the pandemic and promoting long-term growth that is sustainable and equitable."

The outline sets approximate allocations for the \$64.7 million that ARPA directly allocates to New Bedford, plus \$16.7 million the city will receive in ARPA funds through Bristol County. The outline does not include the \$46.5 million received under a separate ARPA provision by the New Bedford School Department, which is finalizing plans for those funds.

Mayor Mitchell shared his outline with New Bedford City Council this week. He emphasized the criteria placed on ARPA spending by the federal Department of the Treasury, which does not allow for direct spending on road construction or the lowering of taxes, for example.

Extensive public input into investment priorities has included hearings, surveys, stakeholder meetings, written submissions and media coverage. In his letter to City Councilors, Mayor Mitchell also emphasized the need to avoid spending the city's ARPA dollars on uses that could be funded from other sources, such as from the \$5.3 billion in ARPA dollars coming to the Commonwealth—which state officials have indicated could fund water and wastewater projects, port infrastructure and cultural facilities—or federal infrastructure spending recently signed into law by President Biden.

Bearing those principles in mind, Mayor Mitchell focused on seven key investment priorities:

- Health, safety and well-being – \$8 million
- Neighborhood stabilization and housing support – \$13 million

- Small business support – \$8 million
- Enhancements to open spaces in qualified census tracts – \$11 million
- Non-state share of water, wastewater and stormwater projects – \$6 million
- Arts, culture, hospitality and tourism – \$18 million
- Matching funds for strategic investments – \$14 million

At least \$1.2 million for revenue replacement – ARPA criteria allows for restoring operating funds lost due to COVID-19 – and \$1.5 million for administration round out the priorities.

Mayor Mitchell said that ultimately, prospective ARPA projects should be evaluated based on their potential return on investment.

“The more matching funding a project receives from private or public sources, the greater the return on the City’s investment will be,” he said. “The most favored projects would be those that confer new benefits to the City; that is, those that grow the pie, as opposed to those that entail the replacement of an existing asset.”

To navigate ARPA criteria and regulations, collaborate with potential funding recipients, track outcomes, document how spending meets ARPA goals, and more, the city has named Elise Rapoza its ARPA Director. Rapoza comes to the role from UMass-Dartmouth, where she spent four years as the senior research associate for the recently closed Public Policy Center and served as the university’s first assistant director of corporate engagement. Both roles were deeply embedded in regional demographics, workforce needs, and opportunities such as maritime industries and offshore wind development.

“I’m very excited about collaborating with all the people in the community who I already know and love, and getting to meet the people who I don’t already know,” she said. “There’s a lot of good things coming.”

“Elise will bring to her new role a wealth of talent, economic development expertise, and knowledge of the City,” Mayor Mitchell said. “She is the right person to activate this infusion of federal resources.”

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell issues statement on redistricting plan

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell responded this evening to the revised Congressional redistricting plan presented Monday by legislative leaders in Boston:

“The redistricting committee’s approach was fundamentally flawed in that it framed the issue narrowly as one of self-determination only for Fall River, whose own elected officials took conflicting positions. The issue rather was about the interests of all the residents of Southeastern Massachusetts, which is an economically and culturally distinct region of the Commonwealth from which no member of Congress has been elected in nearly a century. Given New Bedford’s central role in the region and its extensive federal interests, there is widespread agreement here that a district that excludes our nearest city, as well some of our own suburbs, will inevitably make it harder for the region’s voice to be heard in Washington.” – Mayor Jon Mitchell