

PODCAST: Mayor Mitchell discusses why panhandling isn't consider loitering

Why isn't panhandling considered loitering? New Bedford Mayor Mitchell, who used to be a former federal prosecutor, shares his thoughts.

PODCAST: Mayor Mitchell discusses the street sweeping in New Bedford

Street sweeping started this month in New Bedford and will continue through the summer. We asked Mayor Mitchell to talk about the program.

Mayor Jon Mitchell represents New Bedford at National Mayors' Institute on Opioids

Mayor Jon Mitchell represented the City of New Bedford at the

Mayors' Institute on Opioids hosted by the National League of Cities (NLC) on Wednesday, leading a delegation representing organizations in New Bedford.

New Bedford has taken a leadership role in working to prevent opioid abuse. The Greater New Bedford Opioid Prevention Task Force was formed three years ago to bring together key leaders and organizations to pool their efforts and have a greater impact. Co-Chaired by Dr. Michael Rocha and Police Chief Joe Cordeiro, with support from Reverend David Lima of the Interchurch Council and many other community groups, the Task Force has played an important role in several measures in New Bedford, including a drop-in center operating out of the Pilgrim United Church to provide support services and resources for both those struggling with opioid abuse and their families, as well as a program started in 2015 that brings outreach teams to homes within 24-48 hours of an overdose emergency. The joint teams are comprised of a plain-clothes police officer, a drug counselor, and clergy person, and use the key period following an overdose to persuade those in need to agree to treatment.

New Bedford police are seizing the opportunity to encourage treatment at the very moment when someone is most in need of that message, given that police are often on the scene when someone suffering from opioid abuse is at a moment of acute medical or personal crisis. Also on the public safety front, New Bedford has been at the vanguard of communities deploying Narcan among its first responders.

In order to expand education and prevention early on, New Bedford Public Schools students receive consistent, age-appropriate substance use education from elementary school through high school, to ensure students build awareness in an age-appropriate manner before it is too late to begin to reach them. New Bedford's public schools have also partnered with Physicians to Prevent Opioid Abuse, People Acting Against Chemical Addiction (PAACA), and Seven Hills to hold parent

nights at schools with physicians to share prevention practices.

The Mayors' Institute on Opioids, which took place in Boston, provided an opportunity for local leaders to engage in practical, solutions-oriented discussions and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. The immersive three-day event will be followed by 12 months of ongoing expert assistance tailored to each participating city's needs, with the work building on local efforts already underway.

Cities participating in the Mayors' Institute included Huntington, West Virginia; Knoxville, Tennessee; Madison, Wisconsin; Manchester, New Hampshire; New Bedford, Massachusetts; and Tacoma, Washington.

Participating mayors brought teams that included county and state officials. As is well recognized, there are no silver bullets and it will take cities working together and in collaboration with state and other local leaders to turn the tide to effectively address the challenge.

At the intensive three-day meeting, the group looked closely at their respective strengths and weaknesses and discussed key areas ranging from prevention, treatment and recovery to effective harm reduction efforts.

"Our country has struggled with how to respond to major substance abuse and mental health issues in the recent past, but we have an opportunity to learn from mistakes, and ultimately prevent and treat individuals suffering from addiction," said NLC President and CEO Clarence E. Anthony. "We must continue to understand what's working, what's not and build stronger paths forward. Our only chance at confronting and overcoming the opioid epidemic is to work together."

Going forward, NLC will share best practices from the Mayors' Institute, as well as additional lessons learned from the cities during the year of technical assistance that follows.

The goal over the coming months is to create a ripple effect and provide information and insights that help every city leader who is grappling with this crisis.

For more information on NLC's longstanding work on the opioid crisis, including recommendations from our Opioid Task Force, [click here](#).

To read the NLC Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) backgrounder on the Mayors' Institute on Opioids [click here](#).

The National League of Cities is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans. The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, a special entity within the National League of Cities, helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities.

PODCAST: Mayor Mitchell discusses his frustration with local judges

Mayor Mitchell discusses the case of a 23-year old New Bedford man with 40 adult arraignments being arrested for selling Fentanyl three days after being released on \$350 bail for an assault with a dangerous weapon charge.

PODCAST: Mayor Mitchell responds to the “spiked” cobblestones story

Three New Bedford City Councilors have sent a strongly worded letter to Mayor Jon Mitchell regarding the “dangerous and malicious placement of spiked cobblestones median at the entry of our City is wrong.”

The mayor’s office responded that “the improved median strip is intended to address an increasingly dangerous situation where people walking along the median have put both themselves and motorists at risk.”

PODCAST: Mayor Mitchell on South Coast Rail coming to New Bedford in 2022

We asked New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell if he feels confident that South Coast Rail will be operating in New Bedford in 2022.

PODCAST: Mayor Mitchell discusses the New Bedford Fire Department brownouts

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell provides an update on the New Bedford Fire Department brownouts.

Councilors call out Mayor Mitchell for “dangerous and malicious spiked cobblestones”

New Bedford City Councilors Hugh Dunn, Ian Abreu, and Maria Giesta have sent a strongly worded letter to Mayor Jon Mitchell regarding the “dangerous and malicious placement of spiked cobblestones median at the entry of our City is wrong.”

Here is the full letter:

Letter to the Mayor

In response, the mayor’s office put out the following statement:

A new cobblestone median strip was recently installed at the busy intersection that leads to the New Bedford-Fairhaven Bridge on Route 6, which replaces bushes that have been trampled by foot traffic. The median strip separates one side

of the five-lane, state highway intersection and provides a safety buffer for vehicles using the east and west lanes. Foot traffic along the lanes of this highway intersection, which has a history of vehicle accidents, has become a public safety hazard. The improved median strip is intended to address an increasingly dangerous situation where people walking along the median have put both themselves and motorists at risk.

The Federal Highway Administration published this on the safety benefits of raised medians – you can see some examples in St. Petersburg and elsewhere and how they reduce crashes (as you can see some include raised grass beds support by walls, fences, etc.) https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/medians_trifold/.

It is a very dangerous intersection that has had dozens of crashes, including a fatality several years back; here are a few recent articles pedestrian accidents:

When redesign began, the newspaper noted, “from 2009-11, there were 32 crashes in the intersection, resulting in one fatality and nine injuries,” see this article: <http://www.southcoasttoday.com/article/20120202/NEWS/202020337>

<http://wbsm.com/homeless-new-bedford-woman-hit-by-car-at-octopus-intersection/>

<http://www.southcoasttoday.com/article/20150501/news/150509934>

Improvements to the intersection over the last couple years started here –

<http://www.southcoasttoday.com/article/20140911/news/409110403>

<http://www.southcoasttoday.com/article/20141219/NEWS/141219426>

PODCAST: Mayor Mitchell on the rise of overdose deaths in New Bedford

We asked New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell if the six overdose deaths in New Bedford in the month of April is an indication of concerning trend in the wrong direction.

PODCAST: Mayor Mitchell on impact of Sean Gannon's death on Justice System

Yarmouth police officer Sean Gannon was shot and killed serving a warrant this month. We asked New Bedford Mayor and former prosecutor Jon Mitchell if the death of officer Gannon will have an impact on judges and legislators getting tougher on career criminals.