

## NEW BEDFORD POLICE UNION



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Mayor Jon Mitchell,

In March, 2016 you announced to the residents of New Bedford that after a lengthy and thorough search process you had chosen Captain Joseph Cordeiro to be the new Chief of Police. At that announcement only one other New Bedford Police Officer was there in full uniform, myself. I was there representing the New Bedford Police Union as the Union's President and I was there to show my support for then Captain Joseph Cordeiro because of not only our friendship lasting 25 years, but hopeful that the two of us would be able to bring this Department to a level of excellence and cooperation that had never been experienced before. A cooperative effort between this new administration and the Union would no doubt bring policing to our community that they expect and deserve, to have police officers working our City's neighborhoods with pride and dignity knowing that our leaders were fully behind us, that they trust us and that they understood the climate that we work in every day.

The Union's hopes (and my hopes) were quickly crushed when the Chief, just in his first year leading this department, had 10 grievances filed against him. The significance of that number is that in the prior 4 years under Chief Provencher we had fewer than 10 grievances. From the date of his appointment to current, we have had to file 39 grievances and 3 unfair labor practices. In the past, when there were disagreements, both sides tried to resolve them. Filing a grievance was always the last resort. More problematic is that we now have members that have either been named in a grievance or used as a witness in a grievance hearing that feel targeted afterwards as a result of the City losing a grievance. Indeed, out of fear of future retribution, many members have chosen not to file grievances.

As you may know, Chief Cordeiro was instrumental in trying to divide our Union by pressuring ranking officers to get them to divide the Union. Numerous ranking officers, both current and recently retired, have told the Union of public scrutiny, shaming and micromanaging by the Chief at Staff meetings.

We have seen firsthand that his inability to hire enough police officers to properly staff our department has led to a lower morale. We have seen record numbers of police officers fleeing this department by way of lateral transfers as well as 16 members retiring in 2019 and we now anticipate another 15 members leaving in the beginning of 2020. These numbers are astronomical and extremely dangerous to the public's safety. Why hasn't the Chief instituted measures to correct this? We also call your attention to the lack of officers from other departments requesting to be employed by the City of New Bedford. As a result of the loss of manpower, officers are being forced to work extra patrol shifts on a regular basis while being forced to work road construction details when deemed a public emergency. Our low staffing levels are forcing members to be overworked causing them to put their personal safety at risk.

Sadly, the Chief's programs are failing miserably. Obviously, his inability to lead and poor decision making added to the recent growth of the vicious criminal gang, the Latin Kings. The Latin Kings expanded their operations in the north end of our City as our Officers were assigned timed fixed positions like Community Outreach Initiatives, COI's, and Designated Patrols which led to the FBI having to intercede and conduct a major sweep. These programs might have a place in a well-staffed department but due to our staffing levels being so low these programs have diminished a mobile police presence in some of our higher crime areas.

You said in a recent WBSM interview that you asked the FBI to work hand in hand with our department, but it was Chief Cordeiro who pulled our task force officer out of their FBI Task Force in his first year as Chief. For some reason, he has failed or refused to replace that officer, essentially cutting ties with the FBI that resulted in his office being notified the night before the raid.

We have told you that the crimes being committed in our City are reported to the public through the Chief and the civilian Public Information Officer, PIO, and they were not accurately depicting the issues that our Officers were dealing with, but that did not change. The FBI Latin King raids showed our statements to be true; we have a gang war going on in our City. We have a drug epidemic that has our Officers responding to overdoses on a daily basis administering Narcan in attempts to save lives, but the overdose death rates skyrocket.

For some time, we have been complaining about lack of training, vehicles in need of repair and unsafe buildings to include the booking area. Only after our numerous complaints and the articles where we called out the lack of truth in the Public Strategies "Independent Report" did Chief Cordeiro move on these issues. Why has the Chief traveled to Israel, Mexico & Florida for "training"? The union would like to know what he brought back to the department from this training. While the Chief received a renewed contract 11 months before his contract expired

(with an approximate \$25,000 raise) and despite the City's obligations in the CBA the Chief failed to obtain grants to purchase ballistic vests while 181 other jurisdictions in Massachusetts received \$997,723.34 for ballistic vests. The City claims it has no resources while at the bargaining table, yet the Chief purchased two new Chevy Tahoe's for himself and the Deputy from a "grant". While this is going on, the City should be embarrassed that the Union had to solicit South Coast Hospital Group to donate tourniquets to be made available to our members. In addition, the Union and the City Council Safety Committee have been demanding active shooter training for our Department and 3 years later a shortened overview version of what we had proposed is possibly about to begin.

Again, exhibiting the Chief's poor decision-making, following a grievance against the Chief when he weaponized the City's Employment Assistant Program, EAP, and the City's Solicitor's quick response to our grievance guaranteeing that it would never happen again, the Chief's decision was quickly rescinded. This happened at a time where our Union is trying to ensure our members seek help with all of their emotional well-being issues and at a time where Police suicide is at an all-time high, surpassing Police Officers being murdered.

As you know, our Union conducted the following survey in April of 2019 to show you that the Public Strategies report in regards to the department's morale was wrong:

1. Are you happy with the direction that the Chief and Deputy are taking this department?

Yes (15) or No (206)

2. Are you happy with the working conditions of this department?

Yes (13) or No (216)

3. Do you feel that this department's morale is lower under this administration than it has been under past administrations?

Yes (201) or No (21)

4. If you had an opportunity to leave this police department and be employed by another police department would you go?

Yes (178) or No (48)

Instead of calling the Union to discuss the issues demonstrated by the survey, you went to the media and insinuated that the survey was false or a lie. In part, for that reason, morale continued to spiral downward in our department resulting in our members conducting a ballot vote in September 2019 on whether we author this letter to demand the Chief's resignation. Only 11% of our voting members voted against demanding the Chief's resignation with almost 90% demanding his resignation. and again, you issued public statements that you fully support the Chief. That public statement only added to deterioration of our already low morale.

For all of the reasons outlined in this letter, the membership of the New Bedford Police Union formally demands the immediate resignation of Chief Joseph Cordeiro. If both you and he should ignore this request, we call your attention to the Chief's contract:

“The Mayor may terminate the Chief's employment hereunder upon ten (10) calendar days' prior written notice for just cause. For purposes of this Agreement “just cause” shall mean any ground that is put forward by the Mayor in good faith that is not arbitrary or irrelevant to maintaining an effective Police Department and may include, but is not limited to, incompetence, inefficiency, incapacity, conduct unbecoming a Police Chief, personal dishonesty, insubordination, and willful violation of a law, rule or regulation.”

It is perfectly clear to the members of the New Bedford Police Union that Chief Joseph Cordeiro's incompetence, inefficiency (as well as his selfish actions as demonstrated by his international and domestic travel and new vehicles paid for with both local and federal taxpayer's funds), his lack of priorities in Officer's safety should all, without a doubt, give you just cause to remove Chief Joseph Cordeiro. Once he is removed you should then open up the search for an appropriate and capable Police Chief for the City of New Bedford. Only then can we begin the process of improving overall morale, retaining our current police officers and providing confidence to the City of New Bedford that both you and the members of the New Bedford Police Union are working to satisfy their needs to be safe and secure.

Thank you for your anticipated attention to this matter.

Respectfully,  
Off. Hank Turgeon  
President, New Bedford Police Union