



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD
JONATHAN F. MITCHELL, MAYOR

February 18, 2020

By Certified Mail

John Oliveira
345 Brownell Avenue
New Bedford, MA 02740

Dear Mr. Oliveira:

I write in my capacity as Chairman of the New Bedford School Committee concerning your conduct at school committee meetings. On multiple occasions over the last year, you have engaged in profanity-laced outbursts during public committee meetings that were often directed at members of the Committee or the school administration, and sometimes punctuated by your storming out of the meeting before it was over.

You have been warned repeatedly that your behavior violates generally accepted notions of decorum by public officials. It has been especially disturbing that your tirades often have taken place in the presence of school children whose education the Committee is charged with overseeing. It should go without saying that committee members have a duty to the district's students to be models of civility in the discharge of our public duty. The New Bedford School Committee should stand for nothing less.

You, yourself, have acknowledged that your behavior has been inappropriate. In a March 12, 2019 email to the school committee, you apologized for your behavior and assured us that it would not happen again. You stated: "Just wanted to say I am sorry for (sic) behavior last night. I have determined what happened and have taken steps to prevent any such outburst in the future." In reliance on your commitment, the Committee refrained from taking action to address your conduct.

The last several school committee meetings have revealed, however, that you have no intention of living up to your commitment. Most notably, at the July 15, 2019 meeting, you swore angrily and repeatedly in public session, and made an obscene gesture to another committee member. The Standard-Times reported that when asked to account for your conduct, you responded, "I'm not making excuses; those outbursts are meant for a reason." Nevertheless, we hoped that after the newspaper article, in which every committee member voiced their objection to your behavior, perhaps you would again commit to participating within the bounds of acceptable conduct. However, this month, at a school committee workshop, you used the f-word in reference to a school department employee, and at last week's meeting, you swore again in the Committee's public session meeting.

The Committee has demonstrated ample, if not excessive, patience with your behavior, giving you multiple opportunities to follow through on your commitment to observe basic decorum. We have reached a point where it is clear that you won't. Accordingly, as measures to remedy this persistent problem, I am hereby informing you that I will remove you from your current sub-committee assignments, and will not recognize you during committee deliberations and hearings until further notice. The Committee will not permit your conduct to undermine its institutional reputation, or to distract from the important work taking place in our schools.

Sincerely,



Jon Mitchell

cc: Thomas Anderson, Superintendent