



City of New Bedford

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Linda M. Morad

Councillor at Large

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT LINDA M. MORAD
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Councillor Morad Responds to Mayor Mitchell's Veto of the City Council's Motion regarding the Community Preservation Act Ballot Question

Listening to the will of the residents of New Bedford is a fundamental role of any elected leader; and is the reason why I support the effort to place a non-binding question on the 2023 City of New Bedford ballot regarding the Community Preservation Act.

In 2013 a group of local activists joined several New Bedford based non-profit organizations to begin a campaign to place the Community Preservation Act, (CPA) question on the November 2014 ballot. The first order of business of those organizations promoting the campaign was to convince the New Bedford City Council to advance the CPA onto the local ballot. As is being proposed with the 2023 ballot question the City Council understood its' role as elected leaders and unanimously agreed to move the item forward to listen to the residents of the City on this important issue.

The question appeared on the November 2014 ballot and despite an organized outreach program that was funded by many of the organizations that now benefit from CPA funding and the formal endorsement of this Administration, the ballot item narrowly passed 49% in favor, 41% opposed, with 10% of those that cast ballots leaving the question blank. With such a small voter turnout the unknown will of the 10% of residents casting blank ballots leaves the overall results in question.

When proposed in 2013 there was no "sign of public demand for action" on the CPA, nor was there "a review of relevant policy literature" or "a robust public debate of alternatives". Just the New Bedford City Council doing the fundamental job of listening to the will of the residents and placing the CPA question on the ballot for consideration of the residents.

I do not recall a four-page VETO document being issued by this Mayor on that vote. In fact, the Mayor strongly endorsed placing of the CPA question on the ballot without "being informed of public sentiment" or "making any effort to understand the public interest". Fast forward 10 years and I find it interesting that this Administration is now so strongly opposed to listening to the voice of the residents once again regarding the future of the CPA. Why would an elected representative be so vehemently opposed to a non-binding ballot question that seeks public input on a specific issue? Does this Mayor think he knows better than the people that elected him to represent them?

The CPA surcharge is calculated at 1.5% of the annual property tax assessments. Under this Administration's continual budget increases the average property tax bill in New Bedford has increased 61% since 2013 resulting in the corresponding increase in the annual CPA surcharge. The dramatic increase in property tax coupled with the increasing water and sewer rates in New Bedford and the overall increases in inflation affecting the basic cost of living has resulted in our residents looking for relief and raising concerns about the CPA assessment. We as elected leaders, despite our personal opinions, have a responsibility to give the people a chance once again to have their voices heard regarding the annual CPA surcharge.

Listening to the will of the residents of New Bedford is a fundamental role of any elected leader; and is the reason why I support the effort to place a non-binding question on the 2023 City of New Bedford ballot regarding the Community Preservation Act.

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