



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD

JONATHAN F. MITCHELL, MAYOR

February 17, 2026

Lisa Lemieux
President, New Bedford Democratic City Committee
560 Pleasant Street
New Bedford, MA 02740

Re: New Bedford Board of Election Commissioners

Dear President Lemieux:

I write in response to the Democratic City Committee's letter last week demanding the resignation of Election Commissioner Donald R. Gaudette, Jr. Although the letter does not indicate its authorship, I address my response to you, as president of the committee.

As the letter correctly notes, last year Mr. Gaudette switched his party affiliation from Democrat to Republican. This left one Democrat on the Elections Commission, whose four-person membership is ordinarily required to be evenly split between the two main political parties. As the letter also notes, state law provides that a member who switches parties is not automatically disqualified from service, even if it results in an imbalance of party membership. Nor does the City have the authority to remove a member of the Commission based solely on that person's decision to switch parties or by virtue of the imbalance in party affiliation.

I am sure you would agree that at a time when elsewhere in America the results of elections have been questioned on dubious grounds, it is important for the public to have confidence that the people overseeing elections are trustworthy. With that in mind, I appreciate your acknowledgement that since his appointment in 2017, Mr. Gaudette has faithfully served the residents of New Bedford on the Commission. As a lifelong New Bedford resident, retired state court officer, and a veteran, Mr. Gaudette's tenure on the Commission has represented another chapter in a life committed to public service. It is also an extension of his family's exemplary service to New Bedford, which began decades ago.

As a Democrat, I have no reason to believe that Mr. Gaudette's decision to become a Republican would cause him to perform his duties as commissioner with less

integrity or impartiality. Indeed, I am unaware of any suggestion of partisan bias on his part. I also believe that imploring a widely respected resident to resign because he has switched parties – which has become an increasingly common occurrence in our region – would itself stir up allegations about the Commission’s impartiality. These days, we should seek every opportunity to lower the temperature of public discourse concerning elections.

Although not referenced in the letter, I nevertheless have interpreted the letter to constitute a written “complaint” under Massachusetts General Laws, c. 51, § 19 that Mr. Gaudette has ceased to act with the political party that he was appointed to represent on the Commission. Such a complaint triggers the City’s obligation to conduct a hearing into the matter. Having been informed of this determination last week, Mr. Gaudette tendered his resignation from the Commission effective immediately. I appreciate Mr. Gaudette’s understanding of the current situation, and I respect that he placed the need to avoid controversy concerning elections above any legal claim to the seat he may have had.

I intend to nominate a Democrat to fill the seat. The committee’s letter indicates that it wishes to offer me a list of possible nominees. Although state law requires only that the nominee is a Democrat registered to vote in New Bedford, I would be pleased to consider your suggestions.

Sincerely,



Jon Mitchell