

Good Afternoon Councilors Baptiste, Gomes and Abreu: I am forwarding the letter I sent to Mayor Mitchell's office in hopes that my voice, as a resident of, and business owner in New Bedford, will be heard. Thank you all in advance for your time. (Letter copied/pasted below)

Good Afternoon Mayor-

My hope is that you or someone in your office will take the time to read this as this is not something I think should be taken lightly.

Let me briefly tell you about my space on Union St. (In Touch Therapeutic Services). In 2019 me and my business partner decided to rent a space for a Wellness Center to provide both psychotherapy and massage therapy. We also wanted enough space to offer classes like yoga and support groups for survivors of domestic violence. We decided to rent the bottom floor of the old LeBaron Beauty School. We spent months gutting the space, replacing the floors, walls and ceiling among so many other things. We finally completed renovations and could not get an occupancy permit due to Covid, then we couldn't open to the public for the same reason, post permit.

Finally, after a year of demolition, renovations, marketing and moving in, we were open. Fast forward to April 30, 2021 when we experienced our first break-in. Then, on Sunday, May 2nd our second one. Since then, we have had multiple New Bedford Police officers and detectives come into our space to help us figure out who may have done this; who may be targeting our space? We have purchased security cameras, added the internet to our monthly overhead and have subsequently had two more attempts of people trying to break into our space.

Why should you care about this? Well, in the grand scheme of things, maybe you shouldn't. However, one of the main reasons we chose to open a female-run business on Union St in New Bedford was because there was a police station a block from us. Even with these break ins I at least feel comfortable when I'm in my office alone or with just a client at night because I know they are just a quick call away. It has been an adjustment to feel safe in our space again since the first break in, where both of our offices were "trashed" and items stolen, but we know that the police are doing what they can to assist us in catching the people who have done this and we know they, again, are only a quick call away.

I know we are not the only business dealing with these issues. I am asking you to reconsider closing Station 1. My clients should feel safe when coming to therapy, my colleague's clients should be able to relax knowing they are in a calm, safe and stable environment. As business owners, all of us in the downtown area should be able to know that if something were to ever happen we can have faith that our police are only a quick call away. It may seem like something small, but there is a huge level of safety we feel knowing that station is there. As two females owning our own business, this is very important to us.

The downtown businesses, as with so many other businesses, have suffered enough due to the pandemic; it would really be to the detriment of these businesses, if people did not feel safe (again) walking around downtown after the sun goes down. Please reconsider this decision; please speak with other business owners and those living in the immediate area. It should be about the safety of the community.

Thank you for your time. I'd be more than happy to discuss this further.

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Cheri Crossley Petitpas, LICSW