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**CITY OF NEW BEDFORD**  
**Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor**

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For Immediate Release

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

# Mayor Mitchell Takes Action Against Former Acting Fire Chief Coderre

**New Bedford, Massachusetts**—Earlier today, Mayor Jon Mitchell terminated the City's former Acting Fire Chief Paul Coderre, Jr., for dishonesty and untruthfulness in connection with alleged work-related injuries.

While serving as Acting Fire Chief, Coderre claimed to have sustained several work-related injuries during 2019, which resulted in his being placed on injury leave in August 2020. Since then, Coderre remained out of work receiving full pay, pursuant to state law.

In the fall of 2021, the City ordered Coderre to undergo an independent medical examination in order to determine his continued eligibility for injured-on-duty benefits. The independent medical examination followed an investigation initiated by the City's Personnel Office in the summer of 2021. The Personnel Office investigation yielded video surveillance evidence of Coderre performing activities inconsistent with his alleged injuries, including his unloading, without assistance, a 176-pound barbecue smoker grill from the bed of his personal pickup truck.

[Click here to view video surveillance evidence.](#)

The independent medical examiner initially accepted Coderre's account of the limitations caused by his alleged injuries. However, when later presented with the video evidence captured on multiple days in June and August 2021, the examiner reassessed Coderre's assertions and the applicable medical record, subsequently concluding that Coderre had been "untruthful" and "putting on an act."

Earlier this month, Mayor Mitchell appointed a Hearing Officer to determine whether there was just cause to discipline Coderre under Massachusetts Civil Service law. The Hearing Officer, Gerard Hayes, a retired municipal human resources professional, held a hearing on January 13, 2022, which Coderre and his attorney declined to attend. Hayes subsequently issued a report which found:

“Coderre’s actions reflect discredit, not credit, on the Fire Department and likely will adversely impact good order inside the department. He engaged in an activity that is detrimental to the Fire Department. He engaged in conflict of interest to use his position for personal gain. He abused the department injury leave policy.”

Hayes also noted, “It is probable that these actions were known within the typically tight knit firefighter community with adverse impact on member morale and discipline. It would not be a surprise if they lead to very serious disrespect for superior officers by some and attempts at similar dishonest behavior such as exhibited by Deputy Chief Coderre by others.”

Mayor Mitchell strongly condemned Coderre’s actions, “The former Acting Chief failed to adhere to the policies and procedures of his own Department, in doing so he betrayed the trust of the firefighters that served under his command, and he took advantage of city taxpayers who paid his injured-on-duty benefits.”

Mitchell added, “New Bedford residents expect and deserve a Fire Department whose every member adheres to the highest professional standards, regardless of rank.”

This past December Coderre applied for an accidental disability pension from the New Bedford Retirement Board. In response to Coderre’s request for a disability retirement the City has submitted information to the Retirement Board concerning the independent medical examiner’s conclusions. Coderre has also applied for a superannuation retirement, but remained an active employee at the time of termination.

Coderre received \$208,574 in injured-on-duty benefits while he was on injury leave during the 16-month period from August 2020 through the end of 2021. In addition, Coderre benefitted from laws which exempted him from paying any state or federal income taxes while on injury leave. Coderre’s annualized salary as Acting Fire Chief was approximately \$150,000.

Coderre served as the City’s Deputy Fire Chief from 2011 to 2018. He was appointed to Acting Fire Chief in December 2018 upon the retirement of the previous fire chief. Coderre was recently returned to Deputy Chief status upon the permanent appointment of current Fire Chief Scott Kruger earlier this month. In New Bedford, both the Fire Chief and Deputy Chief are Massachusetts Civil Service positions; appointments to the two positions are based on candidates’ performance on written examinations.

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