

Bylaws of the Wards 4 & 7 Neighborhood Planning Assemblies

(TAKE 7 **DRAFT** as edited 3/6/24)

Neighborhood Planning Assemblies (NPAs) are diverse and inclusive grassroots neighborhood organizations established to represent each of Burlington's eight Wards in order to encourage resident participation in city government. Working as neighborhood advocacy groups, NPAs work to improve communication between the residents of Burlington and city government through regular meetings.

The Ward 4 and Ward 7 NPAs meet together as a single group but retain the right to meet separately on issues pertaining solely to their Ward as members deem necessary and appropriate.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As organizations, the Ward 4 and 7 NPAs value diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. We adhere to the following principles:

1. We recognize diversity as both a strength and opportunity;
2. We cultivate involvement by a diverse spectrum of community members through active outreach and by eliminating barriers to participation;
3. We operate by democratic principles and procedures and do not engage in partisan politics when conducting business related to the assembly;
4. We provide a safe and welcoming forum where residents can share their voices about issues that matter to them and learn from others, and where diversity of thought is encouraged;
5. We operate in a manner that models respectful, inclusive, and culturally and economically aware practices;
6. We acknowledge the barriers to accessing decision-making and work to include those who have been previously excluded from decision-making roles and processes; and
7. We strive to create a fun, creative and vital organization that provides value through the diverse perspectives shared.

ARTICLE I: PURPOSE

As set forth by resolutions of the City Council establishing the Burlington Neighborhood Planning Assemblies, the purposes of Wards 4 and 7 NPAs are to:

1. Provide advice to appropriate commissions, boards, city departments, and the City Council on topics including but not limited to community development, housing programs, the city's municipal development plan, its waterfront planning activities, and the city's budget.
2. Make recommendations for the consideration of appointed and elected officials charged with the responsibility of implementing city policy, including the allocation of revenues.
3. Provide a forum for the purpose of information sharing concerning city programs and activities of concern to the members.
4. Bring to the Assembly city officials, elected representatives, commission members, and private citizens to report to citizens of Ward 4 and Ward 7 regarding issues and concerns.
5. Increase the level of citizen participation with respect to the Community Development Block Grant program and other state, federal and city programs.

ARTICLE II: MEMBERSHIP

All Ward 4 and Ward 7 residents who are 14 years or older shall be voting members. To facilitate participation in meetings, both in-person and online meeting venues shall be offered and accessible to all.

1. PARTICIPATION

At the start of each meeting, the Steering Committee shall provide a sign-in sheet for all attendees to complete with their name, Ward number and contact information. For those attending online, attendance will be documented by the participant list. The meeting agenda shall allocate time for all attendees, whether attending remotely or in person, to introduce themselves and speak.

Every NPA member is entitled to:

- A. Participate in NPA meeting
- B. Propose topics and discussion items to include in the monthly agendas
- C. Cast one vote on all matters properly presented for consideration
- D. Nominate members and participate in the election of the Steering Committee
- E. Serve on the Steering Committee upon election
- F. Access minutes and recordings of all meetings

2. PARTICIPATION BY NON-MEMBERS

Non-members who adhere to the Guiding Principles of the Wards 4 & Ward 7 NPAs are welcome to attend and actively participate in meetings but are not eligible to vote.

ARTICLE III: MEETINGS

Regular NPA meetings will be conducted as scheduled. In addition, the Steering Committee may convene extra meetings beyond the established monthly meeting or cancel a meeting by a simple majority vote, subject to quorum requirements.

1. CADENCE

At a minimum, the assembly shall meet not less than four times, beginning in March, with the last meeting being held no later than December of each year. Other meetings may be scheduled as desired

2. NOTICE

The Steering Committee is responsible for providing advance notice of meeting dates, times, locations and agendas. This notice should be disseminated at least six days before the meetings, with final agendas distributed no later than two days before the meetings.

The Steering Committee will forward this information to the Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) for submission on CivicClerk, the city's website. The Steering Committee will also use a variety of platforms to advertise and promote meeting attendance.

3. QUORUM

A quorum for NPA meetings consists of 10 members. In the case of the Steering Committee, a quorum is established when a majority (more than half) of its members are present.

4. AGENDA

The Steering Committee assumes the responsibility of setting the agenda for all meetings. These agendas will be distributed along with the meeting notifications. During meetings, there will be a designated period of at least five minutes allotted for open-forum discussions. Any member may propose topics for future meetings, and the Steering Committee will consider adding these to the agenda of an upcoming meeting. Items may be included in the agenda of a regular meeting through a majority vote of the attending members, provided that a quorum is present; however, a vote has to be warned in advance and cannot be added as an agenda item during the meeting. Any agenda item not covered at a meeting may be deferred to the next regular meeting.

All NPA meeting agendas will be posted by CEDO, making them publicly accessible in City Hall and on the city website.

5. CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

The moderator will oversee, open, and close all meetings. Members are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

- A. Meetings shall feature clearly defined agendas and role assignments
- B. Adhere to time limits. Follow the established agenda, and begin and end meetings as scheduled.
- C. Commit to actively listening to others as a means to foster an open-minded approach within the group.
- D. Respect the agenda by following the established meeting process in order to ensure a focus on the topic(s) at hand.
- E. Express personal opinions in a respectful manner and allow others to voice their comments without interruption.
- F. Treat *all* others with respect and as *they* would like to be treated.

6. VOTING

All decisions made by the NPA will be determined by a simple majority vote of the members present and comprising the established quorum at a meeting. For the election of Steering Committee members, this will be determined by a simple majority vote of the members from the nominee's respective Ward who are present.

ARTICLE IV: STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Wards 4 and 7 NPAs shall elect a minimum of three and a maximum of nine Steering Committee members (from each Ward) to serve simultaneously.

1. TERMS

Steering Committee members will be elected in March of each calendar year and serve a term of no more than one year per election. Positions filled at other times throughout the year will be subject to renewal during the regularly scheduled March NPA meeting.

2. VACANCIES

If a Steering Committee member resigns or is removed before their term expires, the remaining members of the Steering Committee may appoint an individual to fill the vacancy temporarily, pending an election at the next regular NPA meeting.

3. ATTENDANCE

Steering Committee members are expected to attend all regularly scheduled meetings and Steering Committee sessions. If a member is unable to attend either type of meeting, it is their responsibility to promptly inform the Steering Committee. If a member fails to provide notice and misses three consecutive Steering Committee or NPA meetings, they will be deemed removed from the Steering Committee; however, they may stand for election at a future NPA meeting.

4. REMOVAL

A Steering Committee member may be removed **for any reason** by a simple majority vote of the members present at a NPA meeting, provided a quorum is present. This is contingent upon the inclusion of the matter of removal on the properly warned agenda for the meeting.

5. CENSURE

In the event that an NPA Steering Committee member is found to be engaged in “abuse of power” or demonstrate a “repeated and willful violation of published norms,” the Steering Committee holds the authority to issue a censure. The censure is a formal expression of disapproval, reflecting the committee’s commitment to upholding ethical standards and maintaining a respectful and inclusive environment. The censure process will involve a thorough review of the alleged misconduct, allowing the accused member an opportunity to present their perspective. Upon careful consideration, if the Steering Committee determines that censure is warranted, the member will be formally censured, and this decision will be documented in the committee’s records.

6. DISPUTES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Any party involved in a dispute within the NPAs may initiate the conflict resolution process by submitting a written complaint to REIB. The complaint should include a detailed description of the issue, the parties involved, and any relevant evidence or documentation. If the complaint notes a violation of the law, it should be immediately reported to the police for appropriate legal action.

7. VOTING

All decisions made by the Steering Committee will be determined by a simple majority vote of the members present during the Steering Committee meeting.

8. INELIGIBLE TO SERVE

The Mayor, sitting City Councilors, School Commission members, and Mayor-appointed city department heads, being closely connected to the governance and administration of the City, are not eligible to serve on the Steering Committee.

9. DUTIES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee is responsible for managing the affairs of the Wards 4 and Ward 7 NPAs in accordance with these bylaws, which includes the following tasks:

- A. *Meeting Management*: Organizing, warning, publicizing, convening, coordinating and overseeing regular and special NPA meetings. This encompasses setting meeting agendas, securing meeting venues and scheduling guest speakers and participants.
- B. *Neighborhood Outreach & Inclusion*: Disseminating information; sharing meeting schedules; and communicating NPA activities with members, Ward residents, and the wider community; ensuring that meetings and associated information are accessible and that all community members are welcome.
- C. *Community & Municipal Monitoring*: Ongoing monitoring of community developments and city policy for the purpose of identifying issues relevant to the neighborhood and inviting speakers to present at meetings.
- D. *Proper Recording*: Taking detailed meeting minutes, recording all votes and resolutions, ensuring the appropriate distribution of all resolutions, and coordinating with CEDO for the recording of meeting minutes, as well as with Town Meeting Television for the recording of meeting video.
- E. *Funding Allocation*: Overseeing funds granted from the city to the Wards 4 and 7 NPAs. This includes reviewing annual funding guidelines, soliciting and vetting community proposals, and presenting-proposals to members for voting. The Steering Committee may allocate up to \$2,500 annually for operational expenses and may allocate undesignated funding within the last month of the fiscal year.
- F. *Budget Management*: Maintaining records and reporting on all NPA income and expenses.

10. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Members of the Steering Committee are responsible for objectively evaluating and voting on matters that directly impact their respective Wards, free from any prejudice or bias. If a Steering Committee member perceives the potential for a conflict of interest with regard to any agenda item or voting matter, it is their duty to promptly disclose this potential conflict and engage with the NPA to address the issue at hand.

Following disclosure, should a quorum decide to involve this member in the discussion and/or voting process, it shall signify that the NPA has determined the absence of a conflict of interest. Failure by a member to disclose a potential conflict of interest could result in rendering a vote null and void or necessitate further deliberation or a re-vote on the affected issue.

ARTICLE V: MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

1. AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

Members have the authority to amend their NPA bylaws. An amendment may be proposed, discussed, and voted on during a meeting provided it is listed on the properly warned meeting agenda. Approval of the proposed amendment requires a two-thirds majority vote of the NPA members attending the meeting.

2. NON-DISCRIMINATION

As stated in the Guiding Principles of these bylaws, the Ward 4 and Ward 7 NPAs are dedicated to fostering and upholding an inclusive, participatory environment that vehemently opposes discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, or socioeconomic status.

Additionally, our NPAs adhere to the City of Burlington's "Declaration of Inclusion," which states the following:

The City of Burlington unequivocally condemns racism and extends a warm welcome to all individuals, regardless of their race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, age, or disability. Our aim is to ensure that every member of our community feels safe, valued, and embraced. As a municipality, we categorically denounce all forms of discrimination and pledge to uphold the principles of fairness and equal treatment for all residents in our community. We are committed to ensuring that all our actions, policies, and operating procedures reflect this unwavering commitment. The City of Burlington stands and will continue to stand as a haven where individuals can freely live their lives and express their opinions.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY:

The City of Burlington unequivocally denounces unlawful harassment or discrimination on the basis of political or religious affiliation, race, color, national origin, place of birth, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, veteran status, disability, HIV positive status, crime victim status, or genetic information.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC MEETING REQUIREMENTS

All NPAs must operate in compliance with all applicable public meeting requirements. Specific details and guidance regarding these requirements are available from the City Attorney's office at <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/Attorney/Vermonts-Open-Meeting-Law>.

TO ADD:

Grievance Procedure

Sexual/Gender Discrimination