

Staff: Holli Bushnell, Office Assistant
Lakeview Cemetery
hbushnell@burlingtonvt.gov

Minutes

Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting

Wednesday, December 13, 2023, 5:00pm

MEETING CONDUCTED IN PERSON AT 645 PINE ST, FRONT CONFERENCE ROOM, AND VIA ZOOM

Attendance:

Committee Members: Chair Joe Magee, Councilor Ali Dieng, Councilor Mark Barlow

City Staff: Cindi Wight – BPRW, Zach Williamson – Burlington City Arts, Holli Bushnell – BPRW

Meeting called to order at 5:02 pm by Chair Joe Magee

Approval of Agenda

Mark Barlow moved to approve the agenda, Magee seconded, and all were in favor.

Approval of Draft Minutes from 11/29/2023

Barlow moved to approve the minutes, Magee seconded, all were in favor

Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 5:04pm. As no one present wished to speak public forum was closed at 5:04pm.

Solar Eclipse 2024 Update –

Zach Williamson provided one last update to PACC concerning planning for the Solar Eclipse. At the time of the meeting the eclipse was on 11 days away. As Burlington is the largest city in the region that will experience totality, we are leading the way in terms of planning and preparation. A detailed informational session was held in in Contois Auditorium with Ellen Brennan, the NASA scientist on staff at UVM. This was the first time science was integrated into the conversation. What makes this particular eclipse unique is the that of totality is over a heavily populated area. 31.5 million American will be able to view event making it the largest viewed cosmic event in the world.

The organizational team continues to receive reports that visitors are coming by the bus load. Both individuals and organizations are coming, and it's going to be a massive event. Williamson noted that the response from all city departments has been amazing, gathering steam in the last 2 weeks with DPW, BCA, and BPRW working hard. An additional 30-40 BPRW staff have signed up to help with set up set up and the DPW team is working to be ready for response during event. BPD and BFD are fully staffed and up to date on plans, and HR has been working to place employees who are not able to do their standard jobs the day of the eclipse at merchandise booths.

Because this is such a big event happening across the entire region, the city has been able to interface with businesses and organizations in a way that we never have been able to before. The team is working to make sure businesses are staffed properly, providing restrooms, helping make things work to

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welcome visitors and make it a great weekend all over. While there will be many street closures the day of and there are still lots of logistics and movie pieces, the whole community has really come together to make this a great experience. 1500 t-shirts are available on site at the BCA center and more will be available with on demand printing through New Dubs (based in Colchester) so there won't be a glut of overstock.

Ali Dieng began by sharing his appreciation of the work the city team has done for this event. The planning has been ongoing for months and it really shows. He was, however, a little concerned that the New North End has been left out of plans. There are no programs there when initially there was a plan to have activities there. Seems that the planned events for visitors is forcing NNE residents to stay in place with no programs. Williamson shared that the team struggled to be able to invest in all the sites they wanted to. The plan is also to not program Oakledge or Leddy, encouraging visitors to have a quiet experience at those locations. Ultimately, the team ran out of capacity to program the whole city. Williamson did concede that closing RT 127 leaves North Ave as the New North End's only connection to the rest of the city. Williamson would have loved to figure out a place to do things in the NNE, but it's a tricky place to coalesce events around. Williamson apologized that they were unable to develop programming for the neighborhood.

Dieng shared that he appreciated Williamson and the teams' work as well as his frustration that BCA director Doreen Kraft was not present at the meeting to answer his questions in regards to a lack of NNE programming.

Barlow asked if events happening in the downtown area could be broadcast or streamed to other parts of the city. Williamson shared that WCAX will be broadcasting live at waterfront park starting at 3pm as well as from other spaces all over the state. Their broadcast will continue through the evening news. The team is also talking with Hula about sharing their content as they have a large screen and a NASA scientist. Unfortunately, there isn't a lot to stream because it isn't a concert or typical big waterfront event that's happening. Barlow felt that securing a stream or broadcast of Hula's science content might be nice for community members and that he would encourage furthering that if possible. Williamson shared that there will also be a NASA scientist, a citizen scientist who runs space institute in RI, presenting at Waterfront Park and that they could stream his content.

Barlow asked how many of the city's restaurants will be open on the 8th as most are closed on Mondays. Williamson shared that getting staffing for that day has been a struggle for some, and that many are concerned about staff not being able to travel into the city that day, let alone find parking. City Market will be closed on the 8th, and their parking lot has been offered for downtown service industry staff along with spots at the defunct Walgreens and Edmunds Middle School which will be closed for the day. Ultimately, most restaurants are offering full service for 3 meals on the 8th. Additionally, the team did work with ordinance committee to have the downtown food truck prohibition lifted for the day so that an after party with food trucks can take place on St Paul St Monday night.

Magee shared his encouragement that some of the bus groups have reached out to let the city know they're coming. He asked where the team is planning to park busses as the beltline will be closed for car

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parking. Williamson shared that there will be a loading and unloading zone blocked off at Battery and Main for getting people from various lots to the waterfront area. BED will be hosting bus parking in their lot. The city has also worked out plans with Dealer.com and will have parking at 345 Pine and up at UVM lot with 180 spots. There will be no shuttles from these lots.

Williamson shared that one of the biggest complaints the city might get is that we are unable to turn off all the streetlights. Lights in parks are easy enough to turn off, and BPRW electrician Ian is already prepared for this. Streetlights, on the other hand, are much harder, as they all have their own breaker. Originally, the plan was to turn off around 100 lights in the downtown area, however that would have cost \$34,000. The city now plans to just turn off lights in the Southwest, the direction of the eclipse. It won't be totally dark, but it will be dark-ish. This is a risk as they city will be liable if anyone gets injured in the darkness.

Magee asked about the city's cell coverage as even large concerts that the Waterfront tend to cause problems. Williamson shared that initially Verizon planned to add 2 mobile towers to area, then they checked and discovered we have upgraded enough and they are no longer bringing the towers. Verizon believes they are ready and that's all we can do. It is a real concern.

Barlow suggested using AM/FM radio to broadcast the science presentations and Williamson was encouraged by the idea. He shared that 3 networks broadcasting from the waterfront plan to be hardwired in, preventing the usual streaming issues.

Barlow asked about the Great Streets work taking place at the intersection of Main St and Pine St and Williamson confirmed it will be completed by next week and work on the Main and St Paul intersection won't start until the 9th

Dieng asked what lead BSD to close schools for the day. Williamson confirmed that, as more schools across the state announced their closures and the number of potential visitors grew, it became apparent that for the safety of children, staff, and visitors it would be best to close fort the day. Dieng asked if all NPAs had received their glasses, and Williamson confirmed that they had. Dieng asked if there is anything still outstanding and Williamson confirmed that they are still looking for around 12 staffers for the event. ADA may be pulled in for traffic control. There are volunteers from BHS, as BSD has a community service component to their curriculum. BPRW has a bunch of temp/seasonals who may be able to jump in as they are already in our payroll system but not activated as employees yet. Williamson is not thrilled with street light situation as well as the total unknown of attendance numbers, but those will just have to remain questions. The city is ready for up to 50,000 visitors, at least as ready as we can be. Over 50,000 visitors will be a challenge and there will likely be some issues. An estimated 165,000 people are planning to attend the eclipse on the 8th. This is the same number that come for the entirety of the fall foliage season. We just have to wait and see.

Dieng asked if Champlain College has been involved at all along with UVM, and Williamson confirmed that, while they're not holding their own events they have been good partners, providing transportation and mobile radios, as well as helping with safety planning.

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Ordinance Change –

Cindi Wight explained that, in combing through the ordinances, BPRW discovered an 80 year old error that they would like to. Details were provided in a memo sent before the meeting, but Wight shared a brief summary. In 1928 the city received land from American Woolen Mill. This parcel was included in parks enumerated which lists all the parks in the city. In order to secure funding, the city needs to know where all the parks are, and after searching they wouldn't find #10 (The AWM donated land).

Ultimately, they found the deed showing that the parcel was donated in 1928 (the library did a deep dive into newspaper archives and found article from 1929 sharing the intention of turning the land into a park). Ultimately, this parcel isn't really a park. Lisa Jones at the City Attorney's Office sorted through it, but it looks like the city gave the land back in the 1940s. Then when American Woolen Mill went out of business, the Winooski Valley Park District took the land over as part of Salmon Hole. Water Treatment has also made use of the land. The fact remains, however, that it is not part of Parks Enumerated and it needs to be removed. This examination and removal is similar to the fees for Leddy arena that we removed a while ago. Wight asked PACC to do a vote of support to remove parcel #10 from Parks Enumerated so it could put added to her memo.

Barlow asked for confirmation that this is just a clerical clean-up and Wight was able to confirm. Her guess is that back in the 40s no one thought to remove it. Unfortunately, the city attorney's office can't just strike it out, the removal has to go through the motions. That process starts by coming to PACC, and if they agree it goes to the ordinance committee's consent agenda and then can make the change.

Magee confirmed that they would be happy to note that the former PACC committee supports change (as this was one of their last actions as a committee). Barlow and Dieng were also in support of the correction.

Request for C funds –

Holli Bushnell explained that the cemetery replaces the American flags on veteran's graves once a year before Memorial Day. The funds for the purchase of the flags was previously part of the budget, however through several leadership changes and budget crunches the funds are no longer available this year. Bushnell priced out 4 different vendors and the second lowest is both local and a long term vendor for the cemetery. The lowest bidder was based in Pennsylvania. Bushnell requested \$2327.50 in councilor initiative funds to purchase 1330 American flags from Vermont Stove and Flag Works.

Magee was supportive of allocating the funds, but felt the request needed to go to Board of Finance. The memo Bushnell provided was what was needed to push the item through. Barlow was also supportive of the use of funds, but cautioned that, as the city's ability to pay for things gets more difficult more people are turning to Councilor Initiative funds for financing. This should not be the case. Bushnell confirmed that, had she known of the issue with a larger span of time remaining she would have planned different. Barlow requested that language be added to the memo to include a proposed action. Bushnell confirmed that she will do so.

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Barlow moved that \$2327.50 of councilor funds be allocated to purchase American flags to place on veterans graves in Burlington City Cemeteries. Dieng seconded and all in favor.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:55pm. The next meeting will be held at a date to be determined following the reorganization of the city council.