

Burlington, Vermont
Ward Six Neighborhood Planning Assembly
Bylaws, adopted April 4th, 2024

Statement of Purpose:

The purpose of the Ward 6 NPA was set forth in a Resolution adopted by the Burlington City Council in 1982, which stated in part: "...the Neighborhood Planning Assemblies shall, among other things, help provide citizens with information concerning city programs and activities; help obtain citizen views of city needs; help provide citizens with information concerning city programs and activities; help obtain citizen views of city needs; help provide citizens with and opportunity to participate in making recommendations with respect to governmental decisions including allocation of revenues."

Guiding Principles:

1. Operate through democratic principles and procedures.
2. Foster a safe and welcoming forum where residents actively share their voices on issues that matter to them and learn from the perspectives of others.
3. Cultivate involvement from a diverse spectrum of community members by actively reaching out and eliminating barriers to participation.
4. Conduct operations in a manner that exemplifies respect, inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and economic awareness.
5. Be a vibrant, creative, and essential organization that derives value and benefit from the multitude of perspectives shared by its participants.

ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP

All Ward Six residents who are 14 years or older are granted voting membership in our Neighborhood Planning Assembly (NPA). To facilitate participation in NPA meetings, both physical and online meeting venues must be accessible to all. Whenever feasible, the meeting agenda shall allocate time for attendees to introduce themselves to the NPA.

PARTICIPATION

During each meeting, the Steering Committee shall provide a sign-in sheet where all attendees will be required to provide their names and addresses. For virtual meetings, attendance will be documented through the participant list, with attendance records included in the meeting notes. Whenever feasible, the meeting agenda shall allocate time for attendees to introduce themselves to the NPA.

Every eligible member is entitled to:

1. Participate in NPA meetings.
2. Propose topics and discussion items for inclusion in the monthly agendas.

3. Cast one vote on all matters properly presented for consideration.
4. Nominate members and participate in the election of the Steering Committee.
5. Serve on the Steering Committee if elected.
6. Access minutes and recordings of all meetings.

PARTICIPATION BY NON-MEMBERS

Non-members are welcome to attend and actively participate in NPA meetings but must adhere to the organization's ground rules and are not eligible to participate in any voting processes.

ARTICLE II: MEETINGS

Regular meetings of the NPA will be conducted as scheduled. Additionally, the NPA Steering Committee retains the authority to convene extra meetings beyond the established monthly meeting or cancel a meeting through a simple majority vote, subject to quorum requirements.

NOTIFICATION

The Steering Committee is responsible for providing advance notice of NPA meeting dates, times, locations, and agendas. This notice should be disseminated at least six (6) days before the meetings, with final agendas distributed no later than two (2) days before the meetings.

The Steering Committee is also responsible for forwarding this information to the Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) for submission on Civic Clerk on the city website. Meeting notifications will be handled by the Steering Committee through various channels, including the NPA's website, Front Porch Forum, and other social media platforms. Additional forms of communication and advertising may be employed to enhance meeting attendance.

QUORUM

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

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 (5) minutes allotted for open forum discussions. Steering Committee members will actively solicit suggestions for future agenda items during these meetings. All NPA meeting agendas will be correctly posted by the Community and Economic Development Office, making them publicly accessible in City Hall and/or on the City website. Furthermore, 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.

CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

Meetings will be overseen, opened, and closed by the Moderator. Members are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Meetings should feature clearly defined agendas and role assignments.
2. Adherence to time limits is essential, with a concerted effort to begin and end meetings as scheduled, following the established agenda.
3. A commitment to active listening to others, fostering an open-minded approach within the group.
4. Respect for the agenda and adherence to the established meeting process, ensuring a focus on the topic at hand.
5. The expression of personal opinions in a respectful manner, allowing others to voice their comments without interruption.
6. The practice of treating all individuals with respect, including guests, in a manner consistent with how one would like to be treated.

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.

ARTICLE III: STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The NPA shall elect a minimum of three (3) and a maximum of six (6) Steering Committee members to serve simultaneously.

TERMS:

Steering Committee members will serve one-year terms, commencing on September 1 and concluding on August 31 of the subsequent year. Positions filled at other times throughout the year will be subject to renewal during the regularly scheduled September NPA meeting. After serving four (4) consecutive one-year terms, a Steering Committee member must step down from their position for a full year before becoming eligible to seek reappointment, unless otherwise specified in Article III regarding the filling of vacancies.

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.

ATTENDANCE:

Steering Committee members are expected to attend all regularly scheduled NPA meetings and Steering Committee sessions. In case a Steering Committee member is unable to attend either type of meeting, it is their responsibility to promptly inform the Steering Committee. If a Steering Committee 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.

REMOVAL:

A Steering Committee member may be removed from their position for any reason through a vote by the members present at an NPA meeting. This is contingent upon the inclusion of the matter of removal on the properly warned agenda for the meeting.

VOTING:

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

DUTIES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE:

The Steering Committee holds the responsibility for managing the affairs of the NPA in accordance with these by-laws, which includes executing the following tasks:

- Meeting Management: Organizing, publicizing, convening, coordinating, and overseeing regular and special NPA meetings. This encompasses setting meeting agendas, securing meeting venues, and scheduling guest speakers and participants.
- Neighborhood Outreach & Inclusion: Disseminating information, sharing meeting schedules, and communicating NPA activities with NPA members, Ward residents, and the wider community. Ensuring that meetings and associated information are accessible, and that all members of the community are welcome.
- Community and Municipal Monitoring: Monitoring community developments and City policy on an ongoing basis. This includes paying attention to municipal departments and commissions, public meetings, and more, for the purpose of identifying issues relevant to the neighborhood and inviting speakers to present at the NPA.
- Proper Recording: Taking meeting minutes, recording all Votes and Resolutions, ensuring the appropriate distribution of all Resolutions, and coordinating with the Community and Economic Development Office for the recording of meeting minutes, as well as with Town Meeting Television for the recording of meeting video.
- Funding Allocation: Overseeing the allocation of funding granted to the NPAs from the city. This involves determining annual funding guidelines, soliciting and vetting community proposals, and presenting a slate of proposals to the NPA for voting. The Steering Committee may allocate up to \$2,500.00 annually for operational expenses. The Steering Committee may allocate undesignated funding within the last month of the fiscal year.
- Budget Management: Maintaining records and reporting on all Ward income and expenses.

ARTICLE IV: MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS**Section 1: AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS**

The NPA retains the authority to amend its Bylaws. An amendment may be proposed and discussed during a meeting if it is formally listed on the meeting agenda. Approval of the proposed amendment requires a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the NPA.

Section 2: NON-DISCRIMINATION

In alignment with the guiding principles articulated in these NPA Bylaws, the NPA is 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, the NPA shall adhere to the City of Burlington's DECLARATION OF INCLUSION:

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.

Section 3: COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC MEETING REQUIREMENTS

The NPA is obligated to operate in compliance with all applicable public meeting requirements. For specific details and guidance regarding these requirements, please consult the City Attorney's Office.

Section 4: CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Members of the Steering Committee bear the responsibility of 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 the quorum decide to involve this member in the discussion and/or voting process, it signifies 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.