

Bylaws of the Wards 4 & 7 Neighborhood Planning Assemblies

(FINAL DRAFT as edited 4/3/24)

Neighborhood Planning Assemblies (NPAs) seek to be 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 Wards 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 NPA;
4. We provide a safe and welcoming forum where residents can share their voices about issues that matter to them and learn from others;
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 or underrepresented in 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 implementing city policy, including the allocation of revenues.
3. Provide a forum for sharing information about city programs, activities, and issues.
4. Bring to the NPA city officials, elected representatives, commission members, and residents to report to residents 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. Meeting agendas are available in alternative formats upon request. For more information on access, call the Licensing, Voting and Records Coordinator (802-865-7136)(TTY 802-865-7142). Persons with disabilities who require assistance or special arrangements to participate are encouraged to contact 802-865-7000 (voice) or 802-865-7142 (TTY) at least 72 hours in advance so that proper arrangements can be made. The aforementioned language shall be included on the NPAs' meeting agendas.

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 online 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 meetings;
- 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; and
- 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 and 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. FREQUENCY

At a minimum, the Wards 4 and 7 NPAs shall meet at least four times in a calendar year, with the last meeting 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 the city's website. The Steering

Committee also will 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. AGENDAS

The Steering Committee is responsible for establishing role assignments and setting the agenda for all meetings, and agendas shall be included with all meeting notifications. Each agenda shall include a designated period of at least five minutes for open-forum discussions. Any member may propose topics for future meetings, and the Steering Committee shall consider adding these to an upcoming meeting agenda. In addition, members may directly add topics to a future agenda of a regular meeting by majority vote of members in attendance provided that 1) a quorum is present, and 2) the vote has been warned in advance — in other words, it 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 shall facilitate, open, and close all meetings. All in attendance are expected to abide by the following:

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

6. VOTING

All decisions made by the NPAs 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 shall 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. 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.

3. CENSURE

In the event that an NPA Steering Committee member is found to be abusing power or violating the guiding principles, the Steering Committee may issue a censure. The censure is a formal expression of disapproval, reflecting the committee's commitment to uphold ethical standards and maintain a respectful and inclusive environment. After careful consideration, if the Steering Committee determines that censure is warranted by a majority vote, the member will be formally censured, and the decision will be documented in the committee's records.

4. REMOVAL

A Steering Committee member may be removed for abuse of power, prejudicial or discriminatory conduct, or repeated acts that violate the guiding principles of the NPAs by a simple majority vote of the members present at an 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 and after consulting with the City Attorney's Office.

5. DISPUTES & CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Any party involved in a dispute within the NPAs may initiate the conflict-resolution process as defined by the City Council Resolution on Maintaining Open and Accessible NPAs (October 23, 2023).

6. 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.

7. INELIGIBLE TO SERVE

The Mayor, City Councilors, School Commissioners, 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.

8. DUTIES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee is responsible for managing the affairs of the Ward 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; and 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 TV for the recording of meeting video.
 - E. *Funding Allocation*: Overseeing funds granted from the city or privately donated 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 operating 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. CONFLICTS 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 issue at hand.

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, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic protected by law.

Additionally, our NPAs shall adhere to the City of Burlington's "Declaration of Inclusion," which includes the State of Vermont's declaration and 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.

Meeting attendees who violate these policies may be called out of order, and NPA members may vote to call a recess or adjourn the meeting.

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> .