

Wards 4 & 7 Neighborhood Planning Assembly (NPA):

Draft Agenda

Wednesday, May 22nd, 2024

6:30 – 8pm



Community Dinner from 6-6:30pm

Join in person: Robert E. Miller Community Center, 130 Gosse Ct.

Join virtually: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85494151752>

Facilitator: Sarah Diaz

Note Taker: Annie Lawson

6:35pm Intros

6:40pm Public Forum

- Andrew Kranichfeld: Mentioning his interest in convening a sub-committee to plan block parties this summer. Would like to know what is needed to get that started. Ellie and Sequoia are expressing interest. An official proposal for a subcommittee? Andrew formally proposes forming this sub-committee. Ellie seconds this. Group votes verbally. Any opposing votes? None.
- Ellie: Has previously shared that she can't join the FB forums. She hasn't planned anything yet, but is curious about whether others have interest in starting a new platform for sharing information digitally in the NNE, since FB collects our data. She is considering such platforms as self-hosting a mascot to make a local social media for NNE folks to use. It would not connect to any other networks, but would provide a place for folks to get to know each other better. Come find her later if you want to chat more about what she's thinking of or share your ideas.
- Abbey Duke, state rep of Ward 7: has had a group each week at The Bagel on Wednesdays at 8am: Becca Balint will be there next at 8:30; the following week, Emma Mulvaney-Stanak will be there on that following Thursday (June 6). It's an open forum for community issues for folks to share. Emma has committed to being there once a month.
- Mark Montalban: not speaking as a rep as a beekeeper association, but wants to speak to the fact that environmental regulations have changed over time. The importance of the beekeepers association goes beyond bees: they have also lobbied hard for environmental regulation that bans neurotoxins and other substances. Yesterday was World Bee Day, but Gov Scott vetoed some legislature that would have increased regulations for neurotoxins. Quebec banned this in 2019 and there is data that shows a difference between some DNA data between us and them, attributed to this difference in legislation around banned substances. Mark is inviting folks to contact their legislators, urging them to override this veto and lead to phasing out the use of these neurotoxins by 2029.

- Gordon Dragoon: shares that Jason van Dreise is making an effort in BTV who is trying to make an effort to make it easier to close down the street. Making the threshold to gather signatures to close a street easier.
- Amy (Village Green) announcing the Village Green Yard Sale: June 1, 9-3.
- Gordon Dragoon: as a rep of the BTV Walk and Bike Council, they will have their meeting (1st Wed of every month), to discuss trying to reduce the speed limit in downtown core to 20mph. (Trying to reduce it from 25mph.) Also going to be covering DPW trying to make it easier to do things to street infrastructure to do such things as limit car traffic. This meeting is also available as a zoom meeting. Meeting is at 645 Pine St.
- Evan Litwin: REIB office and City Council are looking for Juneteenth festival volunteers. There's a link to sign up at (he believes) btvreib.com (but you can google it to find the link). The event is on June 15, even though the actual holiday is June 19.

6:55pm DPW Water Resources Dept. Presentation on Water Service Line Inventory, from Martin Lee

- Water Service Line Inventory Project: a big part of this is to make sure that we are drumming up the support to get folks involved in the project. They are looking to residents to really help out with this project.
- History of lead exposure in drinking water: 1980s, national awareness about lead was increasing. Safe Water Act was amended to ban lead in pipes, but it did not retroactively require removing lead pipes at this time. In 1991, a rule established max levels in pipes for lead and copper. In BTV, we reacted at this time and we were at or ahead of the curve in reacting to concerns about drinking water: 1982, we began sampling for lead or other contaminants. 6 sites were found to have lead. In 1984, BTV began treating water to neutralize the water. In 1990, we moved on to using a different common nation-wide corrosion-inhibited treatment to prevent lead leaking into pipes. Since then, BTV has been in compliance with national standards.
- Currently, the EPA is taking additional steps to help protect nation's drinking water systems. The amendment calling for this includes a requirement that all water systems develop and submit inventories for their water systems. They need to identify and plan to replace pipes that require replacing.
- BTV lacks any record of lead pipes in their system. Even so, they want to do a good job of doing a good inventory check to make sure we have no lead pipes.
- Need to work with 11,000 water service lines in our community. Of those, DPW has 72,000 that have been reviewed with materials identified. Over 2000 unknown lines that still need to be identified. Around 1700 unreviewed service lines. This process involves DPW going through paper records, sending out a survey (you may have gotten one in your mail), and they encourage folks to fill the survey out: you get 2 \$50 gift-cards per month, for folks who enter on a monthly basis. Also, they are determining whether they need to go door-to-door. Hoping to not have to go to every single house.

- Began working on this in November 2023. The inventory is due Oct 16. DPW needs to get it to the state, and to have a map compiled by this date so that they can share results with the public.
- Some outreach that they are doing:
 - Inform public via newsletter
 - Mail postcards to all addresses in BTV
 - Utilize social media
 - Survey form instructions and FAQs, accessible in multiple languages.
 - Partnering with other programs
 - Partnering with large community organizations (such as UVM)
- So far, close to 1000 people city-wide have responded. So far, results show many pipes are copper and many others are galvanized (don't need to be replaced even though they are old, brittle, and break), plastic, still many unknown addresses
- For inventory: they want a photo that is well-lit, shows a good angle with visibility of the pipe, and shows the pipe on the street-side of the meter. That's what they need to see.
- Questions:
 - If folks don't respond, does DPW send them another postcard? How does DPW follow up? DPW rep says that community outreach is a main form of follow-up. He is uncertain about whether another mailer is in the plans. They may prioritize follow-up based on what paper records show about most recent construction, or whether there have not been any records of more recent infrastructure work.
 - What if English is not the first language of parents? What is the language access? Is DPW reaching out to AALV and partners who have relationships with New Americans? Also a request that this survey include properties where there are known issues with pipes, to ensure that every single household is established and marked off as lead-free. Rep says: language resources on the postcard, so folks would be able to access interpretation resources. As far as the second question: part of this project does require BTV to keep track and follow up later on about seeking more information for unknown addresses.
 - Is there a specific cut-off date that DPW can use, and then focus on the dwellings that are older and focus on contacting them, vs contacting folks who live in newer buildings that are not likely to have lead pipes? Also encourages DPW to contact landlords, since mailers sometimes get lost in the shuffle. Answer: staffing up with some interns for the summer, and will be strategizing with them to find a way to prioritize older properties.
 - Fliers are in the room and will be passed out.
 - Ellie wonders: is this problem related to whether the tap water undrinkable? She notes the high taste of chlorination in her water at her house. Is there a correlation between chlorination and the pipe material? Drinking water is treated with something to stop corrosion of pipes, as well as fluoride and chlorine. Chlorine keeps water safe from viruses and can sometimes be tasted.
 - Please clarify name of chemical they use to stop corrosion: zinc orthofosphate.

- Charlie from CCTV notes that it is difficult to hear in this space: someone suggests turning off the fan. Charlie suggests that more people take turns running the mics around so that everyone can use a mic and be heard. Other suggestions for improving the sound: they demonstrate that you have to hold it much closer to your mouth but not too close. Put it to the side or straight ahead, but as close as you can. Mic position awareness. Maybe we will make a point of practicing when we do intros next month.

7:15pm Updates from State Reps:

- Abby Duke: she was appointed to seat in the legislature formerly held by Emma Mulvaney-Stanak, and was present only for the last week of the legislative session. She was sworn in on Monday morning, then legislature adjourned at 2am Friday night/Saturday morning. It was an incredible experience to be dropped in on this final wild week, and was impressed by the staff at the legislature in their ability to run the show and support the legislators. It is not easy to be there, doesn't pay well, and it is difficult for folks to serve in the legislature without significant time and resources. Observed that democracy is messy. Many people were very generous in filling her in. Lots of going back and forth between floor and committee (commerce and economic development committee). She got to know the Data Privacy bill, which would require companies to design with online safety of children in mind. It passed unanimously in the House, and the Committee was very proud. This was a tripartisan effort. This bill has been covered in Politico and is arguably the strongest digital safety bill, around data privacy, in the country. This bill is on its way to the governor where he will either sign it, let it become law by inaction, or veto it. There is a link to urge Governor to sign the bill. Abby is unsure about the number but will work on providing this information.
- Ellie: wonders about how this varies from CA laws. In our state, the right of an individual to sue a company is enshrined, and is getting national recognition.
- Mark: says that the Governor is charging this kind of idea undermines the free market. Mark strongly suggests that folks contact the Governor to push back on the idea that this bill impacts small businesses.
- Abby says: there were Vermont businesses testifying and using similar talking points, and were using strong lobbying powers.
- Abby stresses how accessible the Legislature is, in the ability to walk in and sit down in witness committee meetings in progress.
- The next step is waiting to see what other vetoes are coming from the Governor, and notes that many legislators are frustrated with a lack of coordination from the Governor, and the impression that he is using the veto as the main way of impacting bills.
- Ongoing work around how to fund education, and in particular, how to change the current education funding system. Disagreement about how to address this.
- Abby notes that there's no direct connection between how a town votes for its school budget, and what happens to its tax rate: the legislature sets the tax rate.

- Some introduction of bills that would raise taxes of higher asset holders, and folks with much higher incomes.
- H121 is the bill that requires higher safety standards for online kids' safety.
- Abby believes that there is enough support in the House to override a veto; unsure about whether there's the support in the Senate to do this. She would guess that there is this support there.
- Was there any talk about whether municipalities being able to have more of a say in how to design their tax policy? Abby is not able to answer this.
- How to ensure that folks holding assets in pensions and home ownership do not get priced out, since their income is fixed? Abby responds that the asset limit before the tax kicks in is pretty high. A resident shares their concern that tax reform will disincentive folks to stay in Vermont full-time. Another resident shares that the Homestead Exception applies in Vermont, which is different from other states. Others share other ideas about how our tax policy is broken.
- Discussion at the end of the session about how BTV legislators will be working together to create more coordination between legislators, city councilors, and Mayors office. There is a very strong rural caucus, and Abby feels Governor is very sympathetic to this caucus.
- A resident shares the idea of school choice: folks in towns that don't have a high school can choose to go to a school of their choice.
- Another resident points out the way that a housing shortage contributes to high property values/costs/tax rates. AARP has some resources on how to consider building a dwelling on their property.
- Another resident: wary of expanding school choice to communities that have their own school, because of the danger that folks would not support their community schools, which would open up the possibility of public money going to private schools. Some taxpayer money is already going to private schools due to a recent bill passed several years ago.
- This was a very active community conversation!

~7:53pm Motion to Adjourn, and seconded.