

**BURLINGTON BOARD OF FINANCE
FY25 BUDGET PRESENTATIONS
BUSHOR CONF. ROOM, FIRST FLOOR, CITY HALL *OR*
REMOTE MEETING WITH CALL-IN NUMBER
BURLINGTON, VERMONT
MINUTES OF MEETING
DRAFT
MAY 29, 2024**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ben Traverse
Mark Barlow
Sarah E Carpenter
Joe Kane
Emma Mulvaney-Stanak

OTHERS PRESENT:

Brad Kukenberger
Michael LaChance
Kerin Durfee
Cindi Wight
Erin Moreau
Doreen Kraft
Sara Katz
Brian Pine
Todd Rawlings
Joe Turner
Jon Murad
Shannon Trammell
Melo Grant
Evan Litwin
Joan Shannon

1.0 CALL TO ORDER and AGENDA

1.1 Motion to amend/adopt the agenda

Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak called the Board of Finance meeting to order at HH:MM PM

MOTION by Councilor Barlow, SECOND by Councilor Kane, to amend and adopt the agenda as follows:

- **Move the Fire Department Agenda item (#7) up to follow Public Forum (Agenda item #2).**

VOTING: unanimous; motion carries.

2.0 PUBLIC FORUM

2.1 Verbal Comments

Kenneth Nosek spoke as both an employee of the City Assessor's Office and as a Burlington resident. He spoke about concerns with the City budget and noted that his department hasn't been adequately staffed and that it has a heavy workload. He spoke about the valuable skills that employees in the City Assessor's Office have and spoke about the direct services they provide to Burlington residents. He asked that any proposed budget includes 4 staff positions for the City Assessor's Office.

Sharon Bushor spoke about the Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB) presentation, saying that it had a thoughtful approach and she supports it. She also spoke about Burlington City Arts, noting that the amount of funding for that department that comes from the General Fund has grown over time. She said that growing this department in the future needs to be weighed with other needs downtown. She spoke about the Community Economic Development Office (CEDO), saying that she hopes that CEDO's agenda for the coming year reflects what the new Mayor has learned about peoples' priorities while she was campaigning.

7.0 FIRE DEPARTMENT

7.1 Fire Department

Chief LaChance began by providing an overview of the Fire Department. He said that the department has 96 personnel, which staffs 3 engines, 2 ladders, 1 tower, 3 ambulances, and 1 shift commander, and that it operates from 5 stations in Burlington. He described each division (Administrative, Training, Fire Prevention, and EMS), and noted how many personnel each division has. He spoke about incident numbers in 2023, which included 114 fires, 7 rupture, explosions, or overheatings, 7,114 rescue and EMS calls, 930 service calls, 1,273 good intent calls, 1298 false alarm and falls calls, 4 severe weather calls, and 36 special incidents. He provided an overview of the organizational chart for the department.

Chief LaChance then spoke about the Fire Department's proposed budget allocation for FY25. This includes salaries and benefits at 93% of the budget, 1% for utilities, and 6% for operational costs. He provided a visual of budget history and projections since FY21, noting that it has increased year-over-year. He spoke about efforts to continue to increase revenues to lessen the draw on the General Fund. He noted that FY25's revenue increase will include \$305,000 for ambulance revenues (due in part to increases in Medicaid reimbursement rates). He spoke about the increase in the public safety tax and spoke about where that increase went in the budget, which included increases to staffing allocations and to operational increases. The operational increase covers EMS programs and supplies, funding for the Community Response Team (CRT) program, fire training, mental health services and supports for responders, fire station building maintenance, safety gear and equipment, fire hoses, fire marshal programs, uniforms, and maintenance contracts (largely for EMS).

Chief LaChance spoke about the Fire Department's accomplishments in FY24 and looking forward to FY25. Accomplishments in FY24 include the creation and implementation of the Community Response Team (CRT) program, successful completion of recruit class 23-1, supporting 3 employees' attendance at paramedic school, the installation of a new public safety radio system and new station alerting system, updates to Fire Station #2, a new Ladder 4, and anticipation of a new ambulance by June 30. Activities in FY25 include new fire trucks being delivered in July 2024, station upgrades to Station #3, repairing and replacing critical infrastructure in Stations #1-2, recruiting and retaining firefighters, continuing to focus on the workforce as a priority, recruiting a new class, promoting line and staff positions, and promotional processes for lieutenant and captain designations.

Councilor Grant said that she would like to see as a goal for FY25 a robust discussion about leading a regional dispatch, as though there would be an initial investment, other cities and towns would become part of it and would pay Burlington for that service, which could end up being a revenue generator.

Councilor Barlow asked whether the increase in ambulance revenue is solely due to reimbursement for dry runs or whether that increase includes fees from the user fee study as well. Chief LaChance replied that there are some increases as a result of the user fee study, though many of the fees from that study were not realistic or feasible. He said that other increases are the result of natural growth. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak noted that there were assumptions made in the user fee study that would require legislation at the federal level, which can't be implemented quickly.

Councilor Carpenter asked if there is more that the City can influence on the Medicaid side of ambulance reimbursement. Chief LaChance replied that he has reviewed both Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates over time and noted that Medicaid reimbursement rates have gone up considerably, which is where these increases are occurring.

Councilor Grant noted that being able to bill Medicaid for a small amount of non-transport is significant, given that that's where a lot of lost revenue is occurring. Chief LaChance agreed.

3.0 RACIAL EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

3.1 Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB)

Interim Director Durfee began by noting that the new Mayoral administration is going to be re-envisioning the department's purpose, goals, and funding sources, and she deferred to the Mayor for more information on that and said that she would focus more on the budget component. She spoke about the creation of the REIB office in 2020, the goal of which is to safeguard accessibility, equity, and belonging using the tools of government. She said that REIB has provided racial equity training, partnered with BCA to make public art more inclusive of Black subject matter, created the Juneteenth event in the City, and distributed "empowerment funds" to further the work of racial equity in the community. She noted that the department was created with one-time funding and that this Administration is focusing on securing more reliable fund sources for the department.

Interim Director Durfee spoke about the proposed organization of the department for FY25, rethinking sustainability for the department, the vision for equity and inclusion, and the FY25 proposed budget itself. In terms of organization, she said that there will be an interim director for a period of time, supported by two program managers and an administrative coordinator. Regarding sustainability, she said that the department will work to connect with community, review internal and external programs and partnerships, and prioritize what equity and inclusion initiatives will be sustainable and transformative. She spoke briefly about a number of initiatives and partnerships the REIB department has ongoing. She noted that the largest piece of the budget is salaries and benefits, with smaller line items including trainings, supplies, utilities, consulting, celebrations, empowerment funds, and racism as a public health emergency. She said that the vision for equity needs to go beyond City Hall, and that the City is growing its BIPOC community and diversifying.

Councilor Carpenter asked where other problematic issues (such as transphobia) are housed or dealt with by the City. Interim Director Durfee spoke about the REIB's Accessibility Committee, as well as the work that one of the program managers has been doing in the LGBTQ community. She said that there needs to be an investment in all individuals in a community, including those with different abilities and backgrounds. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak spoke about how REIB helped remove transphobic stickers in some of Burlington's neighborhoods. She said that her administration is focusing on how to embed equity work throughout the City's structure and engage some of the parts of the community that have not been as formally engaged as they should be. She spoke about wanting the community to help set the priorities for the REIB department.

Councilor Carpenter spoke about how the benefits line items for smaller departmental budgets can look quite large, and said that some institutions will give an overhead number rather than tying the benefit dollar amount to each position, so as not to skew the numbers for smaller departments.

Councilor Shannon also noted that in addition to transphobia, there have been instances of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiments, and said that she hopes that these issues are considered by the REIB department.

Councilor Kane said that he does not think there should be a parking subsidy offered, as the City should be encouraging other modes of transportation for its employees.

4.0 BURLINGTON PARKS, RECREATION, AND WATERFRONT

4.1 Burlington Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront (BPRW)

Director Wight began by speaking about the mission of BPRW, which is to connect diverse and dynamic public spaces and programs which grow, inspire and create inclusive social interactions through land, water and people. She then spoke about the BPRW's departmental values, which are reassessed and reevaluated every year during a tabletop exercise. She said that these values include accessibility, integrity, dependability, health and wellness, teamwork and partnership, inclusivity, and stewardship.

Director Wight provided an overview of BPRW's departmental revenue from FY20 through FY25, for parks, recreation, and waterfront. She said that they are trying to stay on top of inflation by increasing fees, but that they are working with the new Administration to raise rates fairly and equitably, while covering the department's costs. She provided more detail on waterfront revenue, which was broken out into campground, marina, and parking revenue.

Director Wight then provided an overview of BPRW's departmental expenses. She noted that the vast majority of expenses for the department are for personnel, with smaller proportions allocated to operations and other costs. She said that within the operational expenses, the two main contributors are expenses for utilities and contracts, which make up 67% of the operational expenses.

Director Wight then spoke about the FY25 budget gap and BPRW's role in helping to close that gap. She noted areas identified for efficiencies and savings (composting at the waterfront, savings for central facilities, cellular communications, prioritizing in-house expertise for certain work) and opportunities to find more revenue (such as a surcharge on credit cards and adding impact fees for all external events). She noted that 80% of the increase in the department's budget from FY24 to FY25 is related to personnel.

She then noted challenges and concerns for the department. These include hiring seasonal staff (particularly lifeguards), deferred maintenance and upgrades to parks and buildings, sustaining the Recreation & Nutrition Program into FY26, supporting staff growth on a tight budget, and concerns about beach closures and access to the water during the warmer months. She also spoke about a wish list of items on the department's mind, were funding not an issue. These include increasing the grounds team to support a higher level of care for the City's parks, having dedicated GIS mapping support, having grade increases with multiple positions to support a higher level of responsibility and skill, more dedicated administrative support for the Parks and Waterfront teams, having a social media manager, ensuring that parks and facilities meet a baseline accessibility standard, and upgrading seasonal restrooms to be gender-neutral and have a family option. She also briefly noted the Bike Path Maintenance and Improvement Fund and what it covers.

Councilor Carpenter asked how many full-time employees the department has, and Director Wight replied that the department has about 67 full time employees. Councilor Carpenter asked about the urban park ranger program, and Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak replied that this is a piece of the larger community safety discussion and that the urban park ranger positions may move depending on where it is best to house them.

Councilor Barlow said that there is a certain amount of resource budgeted for the urban park ranger program, and asked what the level of funding is in the FY25 budget. Director Wight replied that the funding for the positions is included in the FY25 budget. She also spoke about shifting some of the seasonal funding into more training for the urban park rangers. Councilor Barlow noted that the user fee study noted that it may be possible to recover an additional \$450,000 in Parks revenue, and asked if this is realistic. Director Wight replied that it is a high number and that BPRW has already increased its fees to increase revenue this year. She also noted that they need to review the department in its entirety, as the fee study only looked at certain parts of the department. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak added that user fee study recommendations will be implemented over several years, given the timing of the recommendations and the budget development process for FY25.

Councilor Grant spoke about how the urban park ranger program was originally envisioned to help educate people about how to properly use the City's parks and help out with some of the issues in them (such as fires on the beaches), and that how much of their jobs now are dealing with encampments. She asked whether they want to continue thinking about it like this, or whether another position type is created. She also asked about having a budget item for revenue and expenses related to downed trees and damage done at Kieslich Park, given the importance of tracking this item and ensuring that the City isn't responsible for paying for it. Director Wight replied that they will likely still be working on this in July, so it will not come through in the FY25 budget.

Councilor Shannon expressed support for doing something different with the park ranger program, but that they need to better articulate what that is. She noted that the park ranger program was much more effective last year than the prior year, and that it's always been the intention of BPRW to educate people and make sure that people in the parks are adhering to the rules. She said she would like to hear more about what is being done to address the people who are camping in the parks, which is prohibited, and what the plan is going forward once the budget is passed. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak agreed, saying that she has convened a group to come up with a more organized response to handling people camping on public lands. She said that while they need to enforce the parks ordinances, they also need to develop a more dignified and organized response, given that the individuals in question are likely not unhoused by choice and are caught in the middle of the housing crisis. She said that BPRW and CEDO have been bringing their resources to bear to look into the legality, placement, sites, and the City's limited resources to develop an alternative to camping on public land.

Councilor Litwin asked if BPRW tracks the costs of dismantling and remediating damage and cleanup after encampments are abandoned. Director Wight replied that there is not separate tracking for the costs related to the encampments. Councilor Litwin asked about the security expenses within the contracted services, and Director Wight replied that seasonal employees used to provide overnight security services, but that they have had to contract that out in more recent years, given that they could no longer find staff to fill security positions. Councilor Litwin noted that the revenue for the North Beach campground has plateaued over the last several years and asked why. Director Wight replied that the campground is hitting its maximum capacity, and that the revenue used to include parking but now the parking revenue flows directly into the General Fund. Harbormaster Moreau noted that BPRW did raise its rates, but parking was subtracted from the campground budget, so those two things netted each other out.

Councilor Carpenter noted that in terms of priorities, there are more people in Burlington who are over the age of 60 than people under 19, and advised that this demographic be taken into consideration when designing parks programming.

Councilor Kane said that it would be helpful in future budget discussions to have a better set of instructions for how to interpret budgets and find various line items. He also note that trash cans and bathrooms are seasonal and tend not to be available from October until May. He said he was hoping to see more funding for year-round facilities to become more available. Director Wight agreed, noting that there are certain sites that would be suitable to have restrooms available year round.

5.0 BURLINGTON CITY ARTS

5.1 Burlington City Arts (BCA)

Director Kraft began by speaking about BCA's mission, which is to nurture a dynamic environment through the arts that makes quality experiences accessible regardless of economic, social, or physical constraints. She said that they do this by supporting Vermont artists, offering a wide spectrum of arts education, presenting exhibitions that promote critical dialogue and encourage local participation, and by serving as the City's cultural planner. She noted that BCA has shifted to be more dependent on the General Fund than prior to Covid. She said that this year, they are trying to decrease their dependence on the General Fund and develop new methods of raising revenue.

Assistant Director Katz spoke about FY24 highlights. These included producing the Obscura BTV event for the solar eclipse, school tours at the BCA Center, distributing grants to Burlington-based artists and organizations, collaborating with numerous other departments on the public art sculpture ("Embrace & Belonging") that is being unveiled at Dewey Park, developing a Trans Pride campaign, and numerous festivals and events.

Director Kraft then spoke about FY25 priorities for the department. These include working with the administration to understand and respond to the results of the efficiency study, develop strategies to increase fundraised dollars to offset the increasing scholarship subsidy (and rising program costs), implement fee study increases and refine the scholarship and subsidy messaging and policy, deliver high-quality arts programs, support artist, and advance the capital campaign at 405 Pine Street.

Assistant Director Katz provided an overview of the department's expenses in FY24 compared to FY25, and Director Kraft provided an overview of the department's revenues in FY24 compared to FY25. Assistant Director Katz said that in their efforts to reduce their impact on the General Fund, they are trying to reduce program expenses, marketing, and operating expenses. She noted that most of the reductions in programming has been around events. Director Kraft noted that they have increased the proportion of the revenue that comes from fees for programs and services by \$200,000, and said that they are looking at this as a test run to see how the community responds. She highlighted revenue and expense changes from FY24 to FY25. She said that above all, they are presenting a budget that reduces the impact on the General Fund by \$255,000. She also provided an overview of the FY25 organizational chart.

Councilor Carpenter asked if fees are different between residents and non-residents, and Director Kraft replied that they track residential status in some programs (such as educational programs that have spaces reserved), but that there aren't separate fees for Burlington/non-Burlington residents. Councilor Carpenter asked if there are certain programs or events that cover their costs better than others. Assistant Director Katz replied that most of BCA's programming is designed to be accessible and that by nature they don't cover their costs, though they are working to adjust this for certain areas. She spoke about fundraising that goes toward subsidizing the programs that don't cover their costs.

Councilor Grant said that she would like to see some consideration for music programs within BCA.

Councilor Kane asked about the line item for employee parking benefits, noting that certain departments are asking for this and certain departments aren't. Director Kraft noted that there are certain requirements around parking in the union contract for employees, and Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak confirmed this.

Councilor Barlow asked about the loss of program sponsorship from a larger sponsor. He asked how the conditions in and around Burlington have impacted BCA's ability to raise private funds. Director Kraft replied that BCA works hard to try and get back sponsors who they have lost (primarily due to Covid), and that the issue with security and public safety in the downtown is a very big issue for a number of BCA's underwriters and sponsors.

Councilor Shannon noted the value that BCA brings to Burlington and that it represents an investment in the community in so many ways. She said that she appreciates the measured approach the Administration is taking to looking at the entirety of the budget picture. She also pointed out that as the City becomes more reliant on the gross receipts tax, it will make the free programming offered by BCA even more essential, especially downtown. She spoke about how important BCA is for the vibrancy of the downtown area.

Councilor Grant spoke about retaining sponsorship and reinforcing the positive impact that that sponsorship has on Burlington, and said she would reach out to Director Kraft and her team offline to discuss further.

City Council President Traverse asked for an update on the 405 Pine Street capital project. Director Kraft replied that they raised close to \$7 million in a \$12 million capital fundraising campaign. She said that they have completed sitework and facility work, and are looking to finish the final phase of the project, which includes working on the studio space, community room, and kitchen. She also spoke about the need for value engineering and phasing, given the sharp increase in construction costs over the last two years.

6.0 COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

6.1 Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO)

Director Pine began by noting that CEDO was created in 1983 and was originally fully funded by federal sources, but that dwindling support from the federal government has led to the contraction of the department by two thirds since 1990. He noted that the department has a component of its budget in the General Fund but that that proportion is relatively small. He noted CEDO's mission, which is to engage the community to build a vibrant, healthy, and equitably city. He briefly summarized the divisions/teams in CEDO, which include housing, grants, and finance, the Community Justice Center, community works, community engagement, neighborhoods, and workforce development, and the Initiative to End Homelessness. He then summarized CEDO's highlights for FY24, noting the breadth of the work that the department does, and providing a snapshot of each team's accomplishments for the year.

Director Pine then summarized the proposed FY25 CEDO budget of \$10.9 million. He noted that the department has 24 different funding sources across local, state, and federal levels. He noted that the major components of expenses for the department are its project and program delivery, with about a quarter of the expenses related to salaries and benefits. He noted that overall, the General Fund contribution to CEDO's budget is about 10% of the budget. He provided a further summary of the revenue and expenses for the General Fund portion of the budget as well. He noted that the department's General Fund ask is approximately \$20,000 more than FY24.

He then provided a summary of the reductions to CEDO's budget to assist with addressing the overall FY25 budget gap. Reductions include leaving a community development manager position vacant for the year, pausing Language Access Program funding from the City for FY25 (as it will pursue state funding for this program), eliminating funding for a grant writer (as the work will now be done in-house), and the use of other outside counsel funding to support an opinion on the BIPOC homebuyer programming. He said that these reductions resulted in

savings to the General Fund of \$196,151. He spoke about actions taken to reallocate ARPA dollars to close the budget gap. These include replacing certain APRA funds for Cambrian Rise with Housing Trust Fund dollars, repurposing the ARPA/RRC funds for the Language Access Program, and reducing ARPA funding for the Expanded Waterworks Park project. He noted that this resulted in a total savings of \$662,727.

Director Pine spoke about CEDO's fiscal priorities for FY24, FY25, and FY26. He noted that the operational efficiency study conducted by the City was funded with CEDO General Funds that was originally for updating the Jobs & People study. He noted that in FY24 CEDO eliminated two positions and left one position vacant to help with the budget shortfall. He spoke about working with a consultant team to develop options for ensuring a sustainably funded department. He said that in FY25, CEDO will undertake a reorganization to implement the findings of that study, in addition to implementing recommendations from the operational efficiency study, both in order to ensure long-term financial viability for the department. He said that in FY26, there are 2.5 FTEs at risk as they are currently funded through one-time grants, and that the Trusted Community Voices program is also funded by ARPA and will need replacement funding secured for it.

Councilor Carpenter noted continued frustration that the unhoused situation is a county-wide (and statewide) issue, but that Burlington continues to shoulder the burden of dealing with it. She said that the City should try and pursue more resources from other municipalities for issues faced by the county.

Councilor Barlow asked when ARPA funding will be exhausted for the Elmwood Shelter, given that it has some ongoing operational expenses. Director Pine replied that the operating costs of Elmwood are largely covered by a state funding source, but that the City does cover about \$170,000 into the operations of Elmwood, which will be exhausted by the end of FY25. He said that at that point, they plan to ask the state to increase its contribution to cover the full cost. Councilor Barlow asked about plans to redevelop the Elmwood Shelter in future, and Director Pine replied that the overall goal is to secure housing for the residents of the Elmwood Shelter, but that there still needs to be shelter capacity in the City. Councilor Barlow asked about some of the performance metrics related to the Elmwood Shelter. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak said that as the City is coming into the third year of operating this shelter, it needs to have a robust communications process and community engagement with the surrounding community.

Councilor Kane asked about the use of Housing Trust Fund dollars and new sources of revenue for it. Director Pine replied that they haven't had the opportunity to revisit the way Trust Fund dollars are used, but in general, it is intended to develop permanently affordable housing (and has also more recently been expanded to allow funding for shelters). He noted that revenue has gone up due to the fees associated with the short-term rental ordinance. He said that in terms of other sources of revenue, one that might make sense is a surcharge on the property transfer tax. Councilor Kane asked about any plans to expand language accessibility. Director Pine replied that the City has a Language Access Policy that was adopted in 2020 that is robust. He noted that CEDO provides significant translation and interpretation services, and that the State also has funding available for language access.

Councilor Grant spoke about the Elmwood Shelter and how it is impacting quality of life for surrounding residents, and said that she will reach out to Director Pine and his office to discuss further, as the situation will only worsen as the weather gets warmer.

Councilor Litwin noted that importance of the Community Justice Center in the City's wider public safety improvement work. He noted that one of the vacancies in the CJC is under the deferred adjudication area, and asked whether there is capacity to build out a budget to leverage the deferred adjudication program to clean graffiti, pick up trash, and deal with other types of litter as part of restorative justice practices. Director Pine replied that it is a pre-trial service position and that they are in the process of filling it (hopefully). Councilor Litwin expressed concern about cutting the CEDO budget, given the breadth of its work for the City.

8.0 CITY ASSESSOR

8.1 City Assessor

City Assessor Turner began by speaking about the City Assessor's functions and charge. He said that the Office is tasked with the equitable distribution of the property tax burden through accurate property value, that it maintains Burlington's property database, that it holds property value appeal hearings, applies/removes property tax exemptions per statute, works with taxpayers in understanding their property tax value and responsibility, as well as works with the State on Burlington's Education Fund responsibility. He said that the Office has a small staff that consists of the City Assessor, the Associate Assessor, and the Assistant Residential Assessor. He noted that the Office has an operational budget of \$22,000 for general office items and systems maintenance (and it had this same operational budget for FY24). He noted that the remainder of the budget is primarily staffing costs, which have decreased from FY24 to FY25 with the loss of the Deputy Assessor. He noted that there is also a \$7,000 line item for professional and consulting services, which is used for software system conversions and general software maintenance. He noted that revenue consists of funding from Act 60 of \$103,066, which is used for revaluation projects and grand list maintenance.

City Assessor Turner also noted goals for the City Assessor's Office for FY25. These include increasing transparency through the creation of tools that can be used by taxpayers to allow for a broader understanding of tax assessment, creating efficiencies within tax assessment, and increasing the accuracy of property data through continual audits.

Councilor Carpenter encouraged the City Assessor's Office to proactively look at the recommendations that came out of the study that assessed the City's reappraisal processes, one of the suggestions of which was for rolling appraisals. City Assessor Turner replied that this was one of the efficiencies he was referring to. Councilor Carpenter encouraged them to revisit the recommendations, given that some of them will require charter or ordinance changes or changes to statute, which take a number of months to do. Councilor Carpenter also spoke about the importance of receiving data around who receives the homestead credit from state.

Councilor Kane noted the resolution from November 2021 that called on the City to hire a consultant to look at equity in the system in the context of property tax assessment, and said that this has not yet been done. He said it would also be important to incorporate some of the information from a January 2024 Board of Finance Presentation from Joe Minicozzi. He expressed concern that not enough work has been done to accomplish the goals of the resolution from November 2021. City Assessor Turner replied that the Minicozzi presentation brought many good things to light but that these proposals are larger, more systemic changes that cannot be addressed without statutory or charter changes. Councilor Kane said that the Minicozzi presentation showed that there were inequities in the way that assessments have occurred every year, and that it would be appropriate for the City Assessor's Office to determine under what conditions it could have used data to improve those. He also expressed concern that this office has lost staff. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak cautioned that her administration put in a lot of effort to fill a \$13.1 million budget gap while maintaining existing services, and that adding additional expenses right now may not be feasible. She noted the shared interest in this topic and said that they will work in this direction to gear up for the next reassessment.

Councilor Barlow asked about the removal of the Deputy Assessor position. City Assessor Turner replied that this position was removed from the FY25 budget and that they are still working on what responsibilities will shift to where within the team. Councilor Barlow acknowledged the challenges with the Assessor Office's workload, given the lack of adequate staff and limited bandwidth. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak said that she would be supportive of reviewing the City Assessor Office's budget to determine whether adding another FTE is feasible.

Councilor Grant agreed with Councilor Kane's points about inequity in the City related to the reappraisal process and results, especially for the Central District. She also expressed concern with lack of bandwidth in the Assessor Office, and recommended that the findings from the Ad Hoc Committee on Reappraisal be reviewed.

City Council President Traverse requested that for ease of review and future budget work, the Mayor's Office provide the Council with a copy of the City budget in Excel. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak noted that her Administration plans to provide the full proposed budget to either the Board of Finance on June 3 or the full City Council on June 10.

9.0 POLICE DEPARTMENT

9.1 Burlington Police Department (BPD)

Chief Murad began by providing statistics on incident volume by year for the Police Department for 2018-2023, as well as providing an update on sworn officer levels and other staffing levels. He noted that incidents had increased 22% from 2022 to 2023, and had increased 43% when comparing 2023 to 2021. He also provided statistics on year-to-date incidents in 2024, noting that the number of incidents is 6% higher than it was at this time in 2023. He then provided a summary of BPD sworn officer headcount from 2015-2024. He said that as of July 1, 2024, he is projecting a sworn officer count of 67. He also provided a summary of actual versus effective headcount. He noted that there has been some improvement in headcount from its low point in August of 2022, but said that it is not growing as fast as would be preferred. He noted that Burlington is the only major city in the country that has fewer police officers than firefighters. He also spoke about the number of officers on patrol (26), and the number of Community Service Officers (CSOs, 6) and the number of Community Support Liaisons (CSLs, 5) as of July 1, 2024.

Chief Murad then provided an overview of BPD's FY24 organizational chart. He highlighted the CAIP division, which is where the CSOs and CSLs are housed. He also noted that the CAIP program houses the domestic violence victim's advocate and prevention officer positions, CARES supervisor, 2 CARES clinicians, and the community support supervisor. He described the patrol division, which includes area lieutenants, airport, the community service officers who are unsworn and unarmed, patrol sergeants and patrol officers, and field training positions. He spoke about BPD's administrative section, which includes an executive manager, public information officer, a redaction specialist, business manager, inventory control, and an accountant. He then spoke about the detective division, which includes various detective positions and dispatch.

Chief Murad spoke about BPD's budget. He outlined the operating expenses, noting that they largely consists of staffing costs, but also includes utility, training, specialized equipment, and building maintenance. He spoke about revenue projections for FY25, which include funds from Airport services, ARPA dollars, a grant from the State's Department of Mental Health (DMH), fees for service, motor vehicle fines, and fees for public safety. He said that these additionally include vacancies for 22 sworn officers and 14 other positions. He spoke about budget considerations for FY25, which include an assumption of 76 sworn officers, overtime, COLA and contractual increases, increasing in operating expenses, reduction in CSO staffing to align with shifts, and restructuring the CARES program with EMTs rather than nurses from the University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMCC).

Chief Murad then spoke about overtime statistics. He noted that with the smaller number of sworn officers in the department, they have had to rely on both voluntary and compulsory overtime, resulting in overtime significantly over the number of budgeted hours since 2022. He also noted a significant amount of overtime for the dispatch center, given that the center has been short-staffed (partly due to the threat of regionalizing dispatch).

Chief Murad spoke about rebuilding the BPD. He noted that it hired 15 sworn officers in 2023, which is the most it's hired in a single year in more than three decades. He spoke about work to rebuild the ranks of the dispatch center as well, saying that they have hired 7 since 2023. He also spoke about efforts to grow the Community Service Officer ranks, including creating and hiring the CSL positions. He said that the

goal is to hire 20 more sworn officers by FY27, to bring the department up to the authorized number of sworn officers for the City. He said that they will do this using a three-part strategy of retention, recruiting, and strengthening the CAIP division.

He spoke briefly about both the aging physical plant of the Police Department, as well as the generous compensation package that BPD offers to officers.

Councilor Carpenter expressed disappointment at the proposal not to fund 3 CSO positions for FY25, given that she hears numerous complaints from constituents about the City's lack of ability to respond. She said that this is a role that a CSO can play. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak said that the department's number of budgeted FTEs for CSOs was 11, but that it hasn't ever managed to fill those 11 positions. She said that the BPD recommended having 8 positions rather than 11, and emphasized that this was eliminating vacancies. She said that if they manage to find additional CSOs, they can open up the budget and adjust it to accommodate additional positions. Councilor Carpenter said that the City should continue its recruitment efforts for these positions. Chief Murad spoke about BPD's recruitment efforts for a variety of positions, including hiring a videographer to produce recruitment videos.

Councilor Grant asked for details on the videographer and associated cost, and Chief Murad replied that they are budgeting around \$30,000 for this, and that they are looking out of state. Councilor Grant said that the City should be looking at in-state options for these videography services, and strongly suggested looking into MediaFactory or TownMeetingTV's services as local contractors. She said that she would also like to see more funding for both recruitment and retention in the budget, particularly around social media. She also said that in terms of the CSOs, it doesn't make sense to include them all in the budget if the positions are vacant, but that if they find additional candidates, they can be hired and a budget amendment can be executed. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak said that the City is not placing a cap on the number of CSOs, but is being fiscally conservative and realistic in the number of positions they think they can hire and retain.

Councilor Kane spoke about the community support line in the budget for the last several years, saying that it does not appear as though the department and City are investing more in community supports this year, even though the budget is slated to increase. He said it looks as though the City is investing more in traditional policing than in newer community supports positions and services. He also said that he thinks the graph showing the decline in sworn officers is misleading, given that the City also put efforts and funding into increasing non-sworn officers during the time of steepest declines. He asked what the City's requirement is for staffing sworn officers at the Airport, and Chief Murad replied that the requirement for the Airport is determined by the number of gates and hours of operation at the Airport, and this is dictated by federal requirements through the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Transportation Security Administration (TSA). He said that this currently requires 8 local sworn officers at the Airport. He said that they currently have 7 officers at the Airport and 2 officers doing half shifts there, and that is as pared back as the City can be. He said that the police contract currently requires 4 officers permanently assigned at the Airport. Councilor Kane asked for more detail about traffic stops, and Chief Murad provided more information about the number of traffic stops in 2022, 2023, and 2024. He noted that they are still issuing about 80% warnings and 20% tickets for traffic stops. He said that he will be auditing traffic stops to determine that they meet federal requirements and guidelines. He noted that the City has focused less on enforcing traffic stops through the BPD and more about traffic regulation through engineering.

Councilor Barlow said that he is not sure that the City has enough money in the budget to conduct the recruitment activities it needs to build the level of sworn officers back to what is required. He also noted that the budgeted overtime line is less than it was in FY24, and wondered if that is too low. Executive Manager Trammell replied that in FY24, uniformed services were budgeted for \$850,000 in overtime and in FY25 they are budgeting \$950,000 for overtime. She noted that the department is significantly over that number in terms of actual overtime hours, as they were directed by the prior administration to perform targeted enforcement in certain areas of the City (such as parking garage details). Chief Murad also noted that some of that overtime is due to transport, as there is no jail in Chittenden County and offenders must be

driven to St. Albans. Executive Manager Trammell noted that BPD will meet with the Mayor's office quarterly to determine if budget adjustments are needed to increase overtime lines, as the City assesses its public safety needs. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak said that they are looking at alternative approaches to overtime, such as trying to hire more officers or other solutions to leverage other partners, rather than relying on overtime.

Councilor Carpenter asked for clarification about posting positions without approval and securing funding through the budget. Executive Manager Trammell said that the department is authorized for 87 officers and that they are budgeting for 10 more than they currently have (which does not exceed that 87 officer cap). Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak agreed, but said that she would double check with the City Attorney's Office on this point.

City Council President Traverse said that his main concern is that by not budgeting for additional positions, the City is not allowing for the flexibility it needs in FY25 to think creatively about public safety and implement solutions. He expressed concern about not reaching 87 sworn officers until FY27. He said that they should be thinking about what they can do to get as many officers as they can as expeditiously as possible.

Councilor Grant spoke about the Public Information Officer, saying that she would like to see that position do some social media advertising and campaigning, given that there were expectations for those areas when this position was created. She also spoke about traffic stops, given concerns about racial disparities, but also concerns from the police union in 2019 that the City would not protect them in a lawsuit as opposed to having a full understanding of the issues at hand around the disparities in traffic stops. She said that the City should keep this in mind.

10.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY INVESTMENTS

10.1 Community Safety Investments

Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak began by speaking about collaborative conversations across City departments that generated many ideas and thoughts about what the City should be doing in terms of short-term resources for public safety. She said that they are limited in what they can do in the short term given the \$13.1 million budget gap that needed to be closed, but said that they found about \$525,000 of additional funding, and that she is proposing 4 items to put into the FY25 with that funding. She said that these include \$200,000 for continuing to fund the Fire Department's Community Response Team program, which would be funded through the Opioid Settlement Fund. It also includes \$125,000 for a Senior Advisor on Community Safety in the Mayor's Office, and she noted that they have reached out to Representative Balint's office to ask for Congressionally-directed spending for this position. She noted that this position is proposed to be a temporary 2-year position. She said that the third item is \$150,000 for more security and a social worker to be embedded in the Fletcher Free Library, given that it is such a community hub. Lastly, she said that the City needs a more organized approach to address individuals who are camping on public land, and she is proposing to allocate \$50,000 for services and supports for unhoused people on public lands, such as bathrooms, dumpsters, and water. She said that the City is also working on a proposal for a more comprehensive approach to the camping issue, but that this modest allocation helps the City grapple with the fact that the state's system for the unhoused is broken and not responsive. She said that she will continue to communicate to the legislature next session about the disproportionate amount of burden that Burlington is holding for both the county and the state in this area.

Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak then noted that while these are new investments, there is a significant amount of funding in the City's operational budgets across departments for public safety. She said that her administration is not asking the Council to cap or limit resources but to continue to support them to ensure that they keep the community safe. She said that these include budgeting for 10 new sworn officers and having an 87 officer cap, fully staffing the City's firefighters, funding the BTV CARES program, funding for continued private security services, and continued funding for City partners and programs for public safety.

Councilor Carpenter said that the City needs to ensure that it has the resources it needs throughout the year and that part of this will come through the conversations around the operational study. She said that she suspects that the study will show that the City will not be able to guarantee that all of its current employees remain in place.

Councilor Grant said that the operational study was not begun in a timely fashion to be effective or to use the results of it to inform this budget. She expressed concern about the reliance on Opioid Settlement Fund money, given that there has been a lack of leadership at the state level in the City receiving this funding in a timely fashion. She said she would like to have periodic updates on the fund and the amount distributed to the City. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak said that there is funding that goes directly to the City through this fund that isn't passed through the state first, but that there is also state-level funding that could be used by the City if the state level oversight committee approves it. She also spoke about H.72 and setting up an overdose prevention site in the City. She said that she will follow up with Councilor Grant with more clarification on authority and funding through the settlement fund.

Councilor Litwin agreed with Councilor Carpenter about the operational study and potentially cutting positions. He also expressed concern about staff capacity and ability to keep additional bathrooms clean and maintained and safe, were more to be brought online.

Councilor Shannon said that she remains concerned about the implementation of sanctioned camping areas. She asked where the dumpsters and portalets would go. She said that as someone who lived next to Sears Lane and experienced the violence and lawlessness within that encampment, she has real concerns about this approach and would like more information about where these areas would be. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak said that staff are working on a proposal.

Councilor Barlow agreed with Councilors Shannon and Litwin, saying that \$50,000 isn't enough to provide the staff and resources needed for encampments. He also spoke about the line item relating to resources within the Fletcher Free Library, and suggested that the City research what it is that makes the library so attractive to nefarious activity, and perhaps relocate some of those attractions. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak noted that when the City Hall bathroom was shut down, it caused an influx of people to go to the Library, which has a public bathroom, and said that the acute issue of not having public bathrooms downtown has negatively impacted the Library.

Councilor Grant said that the Library is an attractive space because it's a form of shelter and has bathrooms. She also appreciated the Mayor's approach to the issue around camping on public land, noting that the prior administration and state-level leadership have had reactive approaches to the unhoused situation up until this point. She said that the City has been incurring significant costs in cleaning up camping areas already, though it has no way of tracking it.

Councilor Kane reiterated creative approaches to the issues downtown that other cities have taken that merit further consideration.

11.0 ADJOURNMENT

11.1 Motion to Adjourn

With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 10:02 PM.

RScty: AACoonradt