

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

## **Minutes**

### **Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting**

Thursday, July 11, 2024, 1:00pm

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

#### **Attendance:**

Committee Members: Chair Becca Brown-McKnight, Councilor Mark Barlow, Councilor Carter Neubieser

City Staff: Cindi Wight – BPRW, Holli Bushnell – BPRW

Others Present – Councilor Evan Litwin

Meeting called to order at 1:01 pm by Chair Becca Brown-McKnight

#### **Approval of Agenda**

Mark Barlow moved to adopt the agenda with the following modifications – move 4.2 Encampment policies to 4.1 so both executive sessions can be back to back, Brown-McKnight seconded, all were in favor

#### **Approval of Draft Minutes from 5/23/2024**

Barlow moved to approve the minutes, Brown-McKnight seconded, all were in favor

#### **Public Forum**

Public forum was opened at 1:05pm. As no one present wished to speak public forum was closed at 1:05pm.

#### **Encampment Policies –**

Brown-McKnight began by sharing the list of questions she provided to BPRW director Cindi Wight ahead of the meeting. Wight then proceeded to repeat each question before providing her answers.

On average, the city team is usually aware of an encampment's existence before notification comes through see-click-fix. Staff in the field will alert Ranger Neil Preston when someone sees a tent. It's still helpful for see-click-fix reports to come in for tracking purposes. All items that come into see-click-fix move into viewworks (the city's asset management system). The change from previous years is that BPRW doesn't have a seasonal ranger program this year (the program is being rebuilt), so there are fewer eyes out in the field.

Barlow asked what the correct category is in see-click-fix to report illegal camping issue as there is no encampment option. Wight agreed that figuring out where to report is not very obvious and stated that the correct replace to report is under "parks department issue." Brown-McKnight added that a lot of people stop at the step when they don't see a clear option to pick and suggested updating the language to make it easier. She suggested "illegal tent" or "encampment" as parks department issue doesn't

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really make it clear. Wight stated that she would look into it with “illegal camping” as the clearest option to use.

The next question was what happen to encampment reports on the weekend? Wight explained that those reports hold until Monday as the city does not have rangers on weekends. People can always call BPD dispatch and ask for a CSL to go check it out. Should CSLs visit the encampment over the weekend a report will be provided so Preston can see what’s been done on Monday. For removal, an attempt needs to be made to reach someone, CSLs visiting would check that box and move the process along. Noticing doesn’t happen on the weekends as BPD doesn’t do that. If there was a safety concern BPRW would ask BPD to join the team to notice.

Continuing on, the next question was how long does it take to notice from start to finish and how long to supervise a removal. Wight explained that if Preston has everything with him he will notice on his first visit to the site. It doesn’t always happen that way for various reasons, but Preston tries to notice as quickly as possible. The timeframe depends on the location of the encampment, the campers need for services, when the CSLs can visit, and the number of items that need to be removed. For example – tents were recently noticed at Blodgett Park for removal. The removal was scheduled for Monday and staff will need BPD support, a truck, and extra physical support to remove items. Sites can be noticed with as short a time as 30 minutes to remove items.

Brown-McKnight asked Wight to confirm a rough timeframe, and Wight shared that it can take between 30 minutes to a week. Sometimes weather changes things, sometimes there are other reasons why it would take more time. Wight lauded Preston for continually refining the notice and removal process. Barlow asked if, with the city now trying to provide basic services at specific locations in city, can staff tell campers that they can’t stay and have to go somewhere else. Wight explained that that is what staff has been doing. By following this process we’re able to say no camping in parks and really enforce it. While staff continually works hard at it, it’s going to get harder because we’re moving people around 5 or 6 times which leaves them frustrated. Barlow lauded the work BPRW is doing with their current policy but continued to seek clarity. When it’s a different unpermitted activity, staff is able to tell people they can’t continue doing that activity. In the case of encampments there are sanitary issues, trash removal issues, and safety issues; does staff still have to follow these policies? Wight explained that the policy we use was approved by the ACLU. If we wanted to do things differently, we would have to go back and renegotiate with them.

The next question was how long does clean up take after a site is noticed and removed. Wight explained that, again, it depends on location and time of year. Bringing in heavy machinery is a challenge, and large sites take more time but usually clean up can be completed within 24 to 48 hours. Sometimes when we don’t have the capacity to do the clean-up in a timely manner, we leave it until it clean-up becomes more tenable. There are a number of community members who have reached out wanting to volunteer, but it’s a complicated work to have volunteers do safely. The city could hire contract support for clean up if we didn’t have the capacity for staff to do the work, but this would require a RFP. For example, it would have been great to have contractors for last year’s Battery Park

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clean up after that long encampment was removed. Brown-McKnight suggested a city-wide volunteer corps, admitting that it would be a big program but a good idea. Wight suggested a non-profit could take that on.

The next question asked how many tent sites noticed per week, the total tents noticed this year to date, and encampment tracking compared to last year. Wight shared that we see around 3 to 5 tents a week, and that it feels like we're seeing less than last year (Preston feels like it's about the same but Wight isn't hearing about it as much). Wight speculated that perhaps it feels like less because Preston is doing a great job. We're tracking every step, notice, removal, time, and equipment used in viewworks. We're using viewworks to get better data and ranger reports come out every week.

Which parks are visited and with what frequency? Preston visits daily or two times daily – Pomeroy Park is a particular hot spot right now. Brown-McKnight asked if there is support visiting Pomeroy all weekend long. Wight suggested residents call dispatch and they can send a CSO or CSL over.

The next question was if the Urban Reserve has been noticed. Wight explained that no one has been noticed in the Urban Reserve and due to its liminal status BPRW will not be noticing individuals in that area. Any questions in regards to reserve should go to the mayor's office.

Is there a phone number to call besides see-click-fix? Yes, residents can call the main BPRW line or BPD dispatch.

Can the city provide transparent updates on see-click-fix requests? Wight is now the one who sees these. She can provide small updates in see-click-fix and share her email address so that more contact can be made. Brown-McKnight asked if there are other circumstances where notes are added. It would be great to have that with encampments as well. She suggested an action item to look into see-click-fix communication and set policies around whether communication can be done and if it has been done.

Is BPD in enforcing tent removal? If humans don't move when staff comes in for removal, BPD provides supports. They don't do tent removal so much as human removal.

Finally, the question of what barriers exist to removing tents faster was asked. Wight shared that limit staffing is a hindrance as staff handles discovery, contact, noticing, CSL visit, packing, and storage, and also complex medical and social service needs. Staff has to be cautious so we don't trigger a crisis. Resources that would be helpful include an additional truck. Staff can get access to a truck, but it would be great to have a dedicated one. The issuance of a contractual support RFP will bring additional support. We will get a better sense of how that works this year (needs, costs, etc...). Further training and implementing procedures from other cities would be helpful. Large removals have been dangerous operations and we need to work on collaboration when working on those large sites.

Barlow stated that the specific finding that premature general public knowledge of the terms of a potential agreement with SDI Ireland regarding the Kieslich Park restoration would clearly place the City at a substantial disadvantage; and, Based upon that finding, move to enter executive session pursuant to 1 VSA 313(a)(1)(A) to discuss proposed terms of such agreement.

**CITY OF BURLINGTON  
PARKS, ARTS & CULTURE COMMITTEE**

**Councilor Becca Brown-McKnight, Chair, Ward 6  
Councilor Mark Barlow, North District  
Councilor Carter Neubieser, Ward 1**

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Barlow also stated that the specific finding that premature general public knowledge of the terms of a potential agreement with Larkin regarding the 0 North Ave property would clearly place the City at a substantial disadvantage; and, Based upon that finding, move to enter executive session pursuant to 1 VSA 313(a)(1)(A) to discuss proposed terms of such agreement.

Brown-McKnight seconded, all were in favor.

**Executive session Kieslich Park Update –**

The committee voted support the Keislich park agreement and send to the city council

**Executive session on 0 North Ave –**

The committee Voted to support continuation of the 0 north avenue agreement.

**Adjournment –**

The meeting was adjourned at 2pm. The next meeting will be held on August 22, 2024 at noon at 645 Pine St in the front conference room.