



Ward 3 Neighborhood Planning Assembly

Wednesday, July 31, 2024, 6:30 - 8:30pm

First Unitarian Universalist Society

Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Mark Barlow, Michelle Borbas, Bernie Carver, Tim Doherty, James DuFour, Charlie Giannoni, Melo Grant, Chris Haessly, Bill Jones, Bob Kiernan, Dennis McCarthy, Sharon McCarthy, Charlie Messing, Sally Millichamp, Jon Murad, Liam Murphy, Zach Nersinger, Amy Prenowitz, Trudy Richmond, Laura Solomon, Gail Welch

Meeting was called to order 6:40pm.

Bob Kiernan moved to amend the agenda as the first order of business to include a vote to dissolve the joint operation of the Wards 2/3 NPA. The motion was seconded by Trudy Richmond and passed unanimously.

Public Forum

We heard from a number of attendees about the Shelter Pod community on Elmwood Avenue. The shelter pod community is a low barrier shelter that does not require residents to maintain sobriety. Neighborhood residents would like to see changes including a requirement that residents have to maintain sobriety in order to provide support for those trying to become clean. The shelter pod community is slated to stay open until June 2025 and they have funding for the current year. Residents are allowed stay unless their behavior gets them kicked out. Only a small number of shelter pod residents have transitioned to permanent housing. Residents aren't required to attend treatment but these are folks who weren't functioning in other programs. Although the program does encourage participants to seek treatment, few have chosen to do so.

The NPA: History and Purpose

Chris provided a brief history of the NPAs and explained that the NPAs are grassroots neighborhood organizations established in each of the city's wards by the City Council in 1982 to encourage resident participation in city government.

Downtown Public Safety Update

Chief Murad provided an update about recruitment, the situation in the city, and the positives/negatives outlooks in place and took questions from neighborhood residents. He also invited folks to review his most recent presentation to the Police Commission which includes additional details and information about public safety challenges facing folks who live and work in downtown.

- 1) Questions about the current encampment on Buell Street: Drug bust done, warrant for arrest done, tents on green belts for past two weeks. City has no city policy but has agreement with ACLU on homeless. As long as homeless don't obstruct in a way that another can't move around, it's not technically disorderly conduct. These behaviors used to be considered loitering but Vermont doesn't have a loitering law. Some of the behaviors described would be considered disorderly conduct but there are limits due to changes in society. One participant suggested Battery Park as a designated location for the homeless because it has facilities and it is close to the Police where they can be monitored.
- 2) Questions about Trespassing Ordinance: The City of Burlington requires Trespass Notices to be issued by the property owner and not tenants (renters). Changes in the law have resulted from unlawful police behavior (bias) and renters not liking the behavior of a neighbor. Property Manager is considered an authorized agent with authority to act and issue trespass notices on behalf of property owner. Trespass notices remain in effect for up to a year.
- 3) Question about MOU with Decker Towers: Would it be possible to setup a similar arrangement with the two churches on Buell Street? The Churches are concerned about property damage and they've already incurred significant damages so far this year. The Chief will follow up to see if it's possible to trespass anyone found on the property between specific hours.
- 4) Follow up Comments regarding Trespass Notices: Ordinance needs to be changed so that tenants can issue Trespass Notices because owners are not available outside of normal business hours and won't come into town to issue a Trespass Notice. Criminal trespass notices are issued for violations on private property and offenders will face consequences but are unlikely to serve jail time.
- 5) Question about Officer Morale: Burlington's newest officers are working the toughest hours resulting in significant amount of overtime. Community officers count is up along with call volume. Patrol Officers will respond to the initial incident before referring the incident to the Detective Bureau for follow-up.
- 6) Observation about Office Behavior: Officers are being more responsive in a positive way towards the community. Twenty-two (22) new officers in the past two years. Additional training around crisis prevention and improved knowledge sharing between officers.
- 7) Questions about Theft and Larceny: Difficult to charge someone with theft unless they're caught in the act. Most of the time, suspects are cited or arrested for possession of stolen property. BPD is lucky to have tech savvy officer who has taken the initiative

to monitor Facebook Marketplace for stolen goods. Hoping to get dedicated officer to focus on retail theft and larceny.

Wards 2/3 Joint Operation Discussion

Wards have changed considerably in needs and personalities. Several folks expressed concerns about accessibility and expressed the desire for a more central meeting location with better acoustics. There was concern that Ward 3 had lost its voice in the political process and that there simply wasn't enough time to adequately address the concerns of two very different wards during a single two-hour meeting. The Steering Committee spends most of its time responding to requests from various city department and community organizations and there simply isn't enough time to have in depth discussions about the issues that really matter to neighborhood residents.

- 1) Councilor Grant expressed concern that the vote should be postponed due to concerns that residents may not be aware of the meeting.

Chris explained that the meeting was warned in accordance with the Open Meeting Law and that the vote was being conducted consistent with the bylaws.

Bob Kiernan moved to dissolve the joint operation of the Wards 2/3 NPA. The motion was seconded by Trudy Richmond and passed unanimously.

Bylaws Discussion

The Steering Committee proposed a number of changes to the bylaws:

- 1) Update the description of Ward 3 to reflect the new ward boundaries established through the redistricting process.
- 2) Update the language governing the use of city provided funds to ensure that the funds are used promote engagement with the NPA and not for the benefit of a private individual, family, or group.
- 3) Remove the language governing joint operations in response to the affirmative vote to discontinue joint operations.

Bob Kiernan moved to adopt the proposed changes to the bylaws. The motion was seconded by Gail Welch and passed unanimously.

Steering Committee Elections

Steering Committee members serve one-year terms from Sept 1 to August 31 and the Steering Committee consists of no less than three members and no more than six members.

The current members of the Steering Committee (Michelle Borbas, Chris Haessly, Charlie Messing, and Amy Prenowitz) would like to continue to serve and were nominated for reelection. Chris asked if there were additional nominations from the floor and there were none.

Chris nominated Darrell Fields in absentia, a resident of the King Maple neighborhood who had expressed interest but was unable to attend due to an unexpected change to his work schedule.

A vote was taken and all five nominees were elected to the Steering Committee for the upcoming term. There is still one vacancy on the Steering Committee.

Follow up items:

Chris to inform the city that the Ward 3 NPA voted dissolve joint operations with Ward 2.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:25pm.