

REIB City Council Committee Meeting
August 28th, 2024
5:30pm – 7:00pm
Sharon Bushor Room, 1st Floor City Hall and Zoom
Minutes

Attendance: Central District Councilor Melo Grant, Ward 2 Councilor Gene Bergman, Ward 6 Councilor Becca Brown McKnight, Phet Keomanyvanh, Jessica Brown, Mark Hughes, Christine Hughes

Meeting Start: 5:36pm

Motion to Approve the 8.28.24 agenda

Councilor Grant motion to approve the agenda. Councilor Bergman moves. Councilor Brown McKnight seconds. Agenda is approved.

Motion to approve the meeting minutes from 7.16.24

Councilor Grant motion to approve the minutes
Councilor Bergman moves.
Councilor Brown McKnight Seconds.

Public Forum

No Public Forum

REIB Updates

- REIB Website update, Interim Director Phet Keomanyvanh

In October, REIB along with other City departments will have a new city website platform that will have updated websites that will be much more user friendly, accessible and new graphics. REIB the department's website, history of the department, past projects and current projects, staff page. This comes in time in rolling out our empowerment fund grants that for the community which will be available in the fall time and springtime.

- Reparations update

The Reparations Task force committee has created a report of the work they have a done and recommendations to share to the full City Council tentatively on September 9th. The Task Force will first meet with each other on September 3rd to discuss the report in full. Some committee members has some questions about it, and the report may likely be delayed to go to full council on Sept. 9th. The Mayor's office is also planning on attending the 9.3.24 Reparations meeting.

- Mission and Vision Engagement

Working with the Mayor's Office, REIB has crafted a new mission and vision. The office will be engaging the community at different community centers over the next 2 months to ask people what they think about the new mission and vision. The will help inform the future work of the city's equity work.

Community Forum

Councilor Grant and Bergman discuss the REIB past Strategic Road map and to be on the agenda for 9.17.24 and there has been a lot of good equity work in the past that shouldn't get lost.

[https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/sites/default/files/Burlington%20Racial%20Equity%20Strategic%20Road map Spread.pdf](https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/sites/default/files/Burlington%20Racial%20Equity%20Strategic%20Road%20map%20Spread.pdf)

Councilor Bergman: For the next agenda. Update on the community empowerment grants and where they are, and just to get into the details and in relationship to the website. An update on the gunfire task force with the Congolese community to have someone from the King Street Center to come to share about their Youth initiative.

Councilor Grant brings up the City's efficiency study and the Mayor's office reviewing the goals for each department to make determinations about how the city moves forward.

Councilor Grant will look into meeting with the Mayor how to strategically support long term REIB going forward and report back at next month's Sept. meeting.

Wards 2 and 3 NPA voted to split last month due to different interest. Redistricting pulled in more people from King St. that used to be Ward 5. Before redistricting Wards 2 and 3 NPA had more attendees that were Ward 2 and much of the focus was on ONE neighborhood. The newly formed Ward 3 are concerned more with the downtown community safety concerns.

There are some concerns and questions how the split's process went down but CEDO and City Attorney's Office shared there were rules that were violated and Open Meeting Law was followed. The Ward. 3 meeting will be in the library which technically Ward so will need to find a meeting spot in Ward 3. Will also need to do better to diversify this Ward so more voices take part in community safety discussions.

Christine Hughes: There's concern in the resolution, in turning in a report to City Council is sun setting, or completion of the work of the task force. In the resolution, a report and recommendations is putting in motion that the task force to shut down. It sets a 90 day clock.

Along the lines of public safety or community safety the Richard Kemp Center is reframing it like community wellness and have regular meetings on this subject.

Rev Mark Hughes (VRJA): Wards 2 and 3 NPAs meetings have been occurring at 20 Allen Street forever. This is the first time just hearing of this. What is problematic with the process is around 8 people decided that that that NPAs was going to divide. This is an objection and further investigation need to looked into and ask the Council to consult internally and find out what actually happened with that particular situation as well.

Councilor Grant: There's been a lot of conversations going on with regards to that process and was at that meeting. The minimum to vote didn't violate anything but people who voted is being looked at. It would have been preferred that it would have been taken up as an agenda item at the regularly scheduled meeting that everyone was used to so the meeting didn't have a lower turnout of actual ward residents.

Rev Mark Hughes (VRJA): This is a disservice to our community and wasn't done in the best spirit, and it wasn't done in the essence of unity. Changes in the demographic that the meeting was done at an alternate location at an alternate time and we want to get away from intent and talk about outcomes and what it has created.

Councilor Grant: The whole process is not good look but the motivation to create a situation where there's more attention on the immediate community safety needs in the downtown area. There's multiple things at play here. The way this was done was meant to create this separation to bring attention to what's going on downtown for the downtown residents were not coming to the Ward 3 weren't coming to 20 Allen Street Wards 2 and 3 NPA. As a City Councilor, whatever attention we continue to get on the issues downtown, we need to be doing that.

Councilor Brown McKnight: In trying to look at the relationship between the City Council and the NPAs and kind of like setting up some guardrails, it may be interesting to sort this recent situation as a discussion point on that committee. If anyone's up for kind of passing that along or flagging, that in their consideration of how things might change in terms of democracy. The NPAs, when it works well, right is a great thing but this type of situation is always a reminder that NPAs are not elected and can not be democratic. This is just a reminder that, we could have a discussion around resources because NPAs is an all-volunteer base and without a great outreach effort can reinforce institutionalized racism. The work that's being done in the CDNR Committee hopefully can be relevant or help improve things in the future.

Rev Mark Hughes (VRJA): The city's commitment was as follows, quote, create a new public health equity, manager position to expand the city's public health capacity, support the efforts of the city and partners who have declared systemic racism a public health emergency and assist in crafting a strategic plan for the city's racial health equity work. The strategic plan will involve the restructuring of the city's operations to support this new capacity.

The second point, it says, is work in partnership with the Racial Justice Alliance to deploy a Million Dollar fund for racial justice created in the city's fiscal year 2021 budget to advance the goals laid out in the Racial Justice Alliance's operation, Phoenix rise, agenda, expanding economic opportunity and creating office of racial equity, inclusion, and belonging. This work will include conducting a full review of the city's existing procurement policies

Rev Mark Hughes (VRJA): and economic opportunity in racial justice programs as well as lay a foundation for securing the substantial additional resources that will be needed in the years to come to achieve the transformative goal of eradicating systemic racism.

The 3rd thing, it says is, create a new all employee training initiative aimed at eradicating systemic racism within the institution of the city of Burlington. This work will include review of the city advertising, recruiting, compensation and retention practices and look at employee demographic data to identify potential barriers to hiring BIPOC individuals. The reason why I wanted to get that on record is, is the process of reviewing its mission as well as taking a closer look at its priorities is if these commitments that we have on record here within the declaration, that we revisit these and that, and that we prioritize them.

Councilor Grant: We can be going back and looking at these things and a lot of them will be part of the conversation, but happy to verify that with director and with the mayor. This department started with ARPA and there was no long-range strategy.

September 17 is the next REIB CC meeting

The community safety forum is on September 5th.

<https://burlingtonvt.portal.civicclerk.com/event/7405/files>

Meeting adjourn 6:59pm

Minutes by Phet Keomanyvanh, Interim Director REIB