



Neighborhood Planning Assembly Draft Minutes

NPA:
(choose one)

Wards 1 & 8	Wards 2 & 3	Wards 4 & 7	Ward 5	Ward 6
----------------	----------------	----------------	-------------------	-------------------

Date of Assembly : 1/16/24 Start Time: (Commence): 7:08

Location: Department of Public Works Finish Time: (Adjourn): 8:30pm

Note taker: Lena Greenebg Please forward these official minutes to: SC

Steering Committee Members in Attendance: Lena Greenberg, FaRied Munarsyah, Maria Mercurio, Jason Van Dreische, Dale Azaria, Nancy Harkins, Cathy Foley

Discussion Topics

- *These can be copied from agenda items*
- *Content of discussion not required*

Actions Taken / Decisions Made

- *Immediately following Agenda Item*
- *Generally includes: electing a new steering committee member, voting as a body to send a formal communication to the City, decisions to spend money.*

Agenda Items and Actions:

Please Remember to Enter Adjournment Time!

- Ward 5+6 Joint NPA to discuss affordability, water bonding, etc held at DPW (645 Pine Street)
- Public Forum
 - Megan Eppler Wood - formed a committee on green infrastructure to promote more green infrastructure and to protect Lake Champlain
 - Nancy - Ward 5 residents welcome to this work, we'll have a meeting in April
 - nancyharkins651@gmail.com
 - Jen Monroe Zakaras - running for South District as a Progressive
 - jenforburlington.com
 - Buddy Singh - running for South District as a Democrat
 - FaRied - People's Kitchen is serving food late at night 3x/week, 50-100 people per night, helping distribute winter survival supplies for unhoused neighbors. 60 shelter beds are about to open, but there are about 300 unhoused people. Donate labor and time to the work - please text 802 491 3491 or email faried@workerscenter.org
 - If you want to cook, we can give you ingredients
 - Alan Mattson - all Ward Clerks are up for election
 - Jak Tiano - new statewide organization called Let's Build Homes, which is focused on increasing housing stock and affordability
 - Looking for coalition sign-ons letsbuildhomes.org

- Melo Grant, Central District councilor - public safety meeting this coming Thursday - links and agenda are on the city's website
 - Also, cats! For outdoor and roaming cats - updated guidelines about leashing cats - meeting about this and opportunity for input on January 23rd
- Dave Foss, Decker Towers resident - traffic danger is increasing on St Paul Street - we really need more enforcement of traffic violations
- Chapin Spencer (DPW) - "Infrastructure is the foundation of a functioning city."
 - Trying to step out of the trend of delayed maintenance
 - 3 proposed bond requests
 - \$20 mil general obligation request for core municipal assets (streets, sidewalks, facilities, fleet)
 - \$152 mill Lake bond addressing wastewater and storm water
 - 3 wastewater plants that haven't been comprehensively renovated in 30 years. Built in 1953 and renovated in 72, then in 94, and now it's been a long time and the plants are in dire need of upgrade
 - \$20 mil for potable water system - lots of that is for renovation of 7 million gallon reservoir (which is where the trauma center gets its water from!)
 - Came in with a lake bond over \$200 mil - chosen to phase the work so the initial request is lower. Inaction is often more expensive; if we don't fix our stuff, if we have to do emergency repairs on nights and weekends, that will cost us a lot. Trying to limit the asks - mayor's office is working to bring forward a budget in 2026 that doesn't require a tax increase.
 - DPW has launched the first affordability program for water utilities in the state; they want to expand the program to support middle income people who live on a benefits cliff as well
 - On the general fund side, there is a new tax fairness committee convened by the mayor - about how the \$20mil for municipal assets
 - Also there is work happening on the state level and with our representatives to address tax fairness
- Discussion of affordability
 - Dale: The impact on each household will be an increase on water and wastewater bills of about \$10/month in the first year, and an additional \$10/month
 - Municipal bond goes on property taxes
 - For a home assessed at \$300k, your tax will go up \$7/month
 - \$500k, \$12/month
 - Much harder to say what this looks like for renters
 - Vermont is about ¾ homeowners and ¼ renters; Burlington is about 70% rentals including students in dorms, 60% without students in dorms
 - A question about Section 8 - unclear what the implication is on S8
 - Average home value assessed in the South End is around \$500k
 - Water affordability program is currently not for renters but it will be in the next round

- Dale: third component related to affordability that we vote on is the school budget
 - This year, school taxes will go down! Our Burlington school board reps worked hard to get the state to reduce pressure on Burlington
- What happens to the water bills after the ramp up?
 - These bonds are long term debt - the increase for the next five years is the steepest increase; one of the ways we have ramped down the ask for the Lake bond (wastewater plants) is by phasing the work, so asking in the next 2-3 years for a second investment
 - Pushing work on East plant (Riverside Avenue) and North plant (up in the NNE)
 - Water plant hasn't been upgraded in 40 years and doing the feasibility work
 - Costs go down when the population goes up
- Discussion
 - It's not going to be the money for the water bill, the property taxes, and as much more as landlords want. We need to tie rents to inflation at the state level - 50% of renters are paying 50% of their income in rent.
 - Clarification on the municipal bond - this is a general allocation so we have a little flexibility to do the maintenance that needs to get done
 - Shared a story of spending \$80,000 on rent over the last 4-5 years; the options are to accept the rent raises as they come, or leave Vermont
 - Can we guess what deferring maintenance will cost?
 - Construction costs go up around 10%/year even if inflation goes down; delaying maintenance makes it hard for city staff to do forward-thinking work
 - Also included in this proposal is up to a 7% increase on municipal property taxes which is still up for some discussion
- Affordability poll
 - Every participant got a card and will give their input on how much they would be comfortable paying in additional taxes per month

\$0	In an ideal world I'm sure lots of people would pay as much as needed, at least I would. Bur with a low fixed income through SSI and SSDI I wouldn't be able to afford anything
\$0	My partner and I both work at UVM and are represented by Staff United We have not received wage increases since 2022. We were only able to afford our downpayment by 52k of inherited money. UVM would never gotten us to home ownership, nor would have been a viable employment to live in Burlington. I feel fine paying but I need more take home pay
\$0	Renter with ~3600 take home monthly and below market rent/expenses
\$10	AS a Sec 8 renter my costs are fixed by US gov through FY2025, however as the overall cost of Burlington's renters goes up my rent will increase as the average ost of living in Burlington is recalculated by fede
\$10	I am extremely concerned about renters and average earners in the city. They are being priced out
\$10	Increases will depend outside pressures -- especially with New Federal administration. What new rules, etc. will be put in place -- soon. Sidewalk repairs #1
\$10	Unless I have to leash my cats (I have 5!)
\$10	
\$20	Concern about parks given a complete redo of Ciyt Hall Park (after Burlingotn Rotary had done over the park just a few years prior. Also a large recent investment into Oakledge Park.
\$40	This gets me thinking about data along the lines could be collected on an ongoing basis across the city . . .
\$40	
\$40	
\$50	My rent goes up so much each year and I get nothing in return. These numbers feel like peanuts for the infrastructure benefits they will bring. I want to see the city invest foremost in infrastructure that allows mo people to live here.
\$50	Living in Burlington is punitive
\$50	
\$50	Just distribute these costs fairly! Lnadlords are profiting like crazy and it isn't reflected in their taxes
\$50	I don't see any alternative. We hae to do this
\$50	Happy to invest \$ in infrastructure for this lovely town I grew up in. NOT happy to throw \$ away on rent to landlords who are over-charging me
\$50	But I'm considering voting against the water and lake bonds anyway, because of cost for others
\$50	Recognizing that deferring the work increases costs and that supporting growth and a healthy lake is essential
\$50	I'd give up a subscription @\$40/month. Question: What % of students, renters or otherw would quality for assistance with increase in utilities and taxes? Is there a concern about cost-shirting having an adverse on desirability of families (typically dual income households) to set up home in BTV?
\$50	
\$60	
\$70	All buildings should have capital reserves. The Ciyt has not done this over the past 10-15 years, so now we are faced with a large increase.
\$200	
NA	It's not possible to vote given the other budget increases in municipal services. I'd like the City to reduce its budget and increase \$ for bonds. I have a budget and make cuts when I can't afford what I used to spi me vote on priorities
NA	I will be able to pay the proposed increases going forward to imprlve water infrastructure. This is critical, and I will find the way (It won't be hard). However, I want to know that our property taxes will not continue increase in what I believe is an unsustainable way.
NA	We need to have clean water for every citizen and a healthy lake
NA	What I can afford depends on what I'm getting and I have no idea what that is
NA	I (and spouse) are among the privileged 30% that own our own home, and an even smaller % who have no mortgage to pay off. My wife handles the tax payments and for that reason I'll pass on providing any number(s) and because our privileged position represents such a small fraction of BVT's population. It would be of no value in this exercise. Priority: 1st water bond; 2nd roads, 3rd lake.
NA	I cannot estimate how much more I can afford. I am primarily concerned about actually projecting my escalating costs to be sure I am prepared via financial planning to pay it.
NA	I'm happy to pay a bit more in taxes for essential upgrades - which all of these are - and we're under a lot of financial pressure as a city. But it isn't that there isn't money in our city - it's that landlords are able to wealth from people at whatever rate they please. Our city needs to tap the people and entities that can afford it.