

NPA Meeting Jan 23 2025
Hunt Middle School
Notes by Annie Lawson, Steering Committee Member

Community Announcements: Evan Litwin:

-initiative by Mark Barlow to look at improving safety on beltline
-Needles in the NNE: Odd Fellows has volunteered to be a spot for picking up kits to safely pick up needles in the community

Mayor Emma:

Gratitude for us being willing to shift in order for emergency cold shelter in the Miller Center: 78 folks used shelter last night so the impact is immediate and thanks us for our flexibility in shifting. Also wants to share that other City employee folks are here to have a team membership representation for the GO fund: (general use fund) to try to make a case for why this is an important investment in our city through infrastructure. Deferred maintenance is coming due. She's here to answer questions after presentations.

Ashley Parker with City Treasurers Office and Ward 4 resident, presenting on General Obligation Bond for City's General Fund Capital Program

-All of the following info can be found in more detail: go to

- City Main Page: BurlingtonVT.gov.
- Then click on Elections Button,
- Then go to BTV Thrives website on the following page.
- This presentation lives there as well. Also consider signing up for Mayor's Email List, which is also on that same page. Households will also receive postcards that will have a QR code, going to households on Voter Checklist. (We also do still mail ballots to all households; look between Feb 10 and 12.) Also Google BTV Thrives.

-Sharing about a request for capital project funds: generally things that involve construction, streets, sidewalks, bridges, fleets, replacements of major assets. These are not annual repairs or maintenance (those are under the umbrella of operating budget). This bond is focused on critical infrastructure needs: not band-aids, but actual things that require replacing. Fleet is at the top of her list: many vehicles and equipment, and 30% of these need to be replaced due to lack of funding in general fund. Many of these 30% are in public safety (fire, police, snow removal). 3M need to get back on track with a more regular replacement schedule. Also sidewalk maintenance: we are estimating 3 miles of 133 miles city-wide needs replacing each year; each mile costs \$1m to replace. We are behind in replacing what has needed replacing each year. 88 miles of streets, and Public Works is charged with maintaining these. 10 miles need to be paved. Estimating 1.2 million a mile for paving. Also better bridges and traffic calming is part of this bond: Winooski Bridge Local Match: BTV is in partnership with VTRANS and Winooski and we got a big grant to cover this, but we need to cover some remaining funds. Also Transportation Planning Team (bike/ped safety work): \$300,000 a year can go into permanent or temporary safety elements: safer intersections, traffic calming: 56 community requests, and this amount of money would help reach 75% of these requests for traffic calming or safety measures.

-City Buildings: 19 buildings owned by city that need attention. Example: Miller Center (HVAC project, energy-efficient), also City Hall, BCA complex, Fire Station 1. There's about \$700,000 per need, and so 2 buildings could get repaired with \$2m.

City Parks: Deferred maintenance of city parks including Perkins Pier, Harbor Marina, Universally Accessible Playground at Oak Ledge was supported with funding like this.

-A live planning map to show projections across several years: also allows for community feedback and start pin-pointing areas where most work is needed. This can be found on webpage along with other info; see directions above.

-What is tax impact?

Affordability and transparency are important to the City. They want to make efficient use of any resources that they gain to try to take burden from taxpayers. If bond passes, it will allow City to have some additional resources to help leverage for additional funding: when 2022 bond passed, they were able to take 5m of that to leverage into 7.2 into grant funding. The hope is to do the same thing and generate more improvements and funding. How does this fit in with city's debt policy? Overlapping debt with school district gets reviewed. Because of changes in the grant list, as well as changes in principal and interest, it gives more wiggle room to ask for a bigger bond.

-Effect on tax bills: It would be spent out over the next 3 years in incremental phases. So max impact is about \$12 a month on a house worth \$500,000. As debt gets paid down, they expect that amount to go down.

-Ongoing efforts to have convos with NPAs to share this information, as well as bringing it to City Council. They encourage folks to take the survey and take questions

Connor Timmons from HomeShare Vermont.

-Wants to reinforce ideas about Homeshare: if you have an extra room and need some extra income, that rent can go towards that. Maybe you have no need for rent but do need help getting to appointments or shoveling the walk. HomeShareVT can match you with someone who can best meet your needs. Connor was a HomeShare host over the summer who helped with child care, and helped with two meals a week. 100% recommendation rate from folks who use their service. (No one has this!) Average rent was \$359. Maximum rate you can charge is \$650 per month. This is a way to stay in your community for longer, be a contributing member, and make more connections within your community. They run 6 background checks and 4 reference checks for everyone: both hosts and guests. They also spent 90 minutes with both, interviewing them to see what they're about and what they're into. You can also request folks who share specific interests or have certain skills: they will take that into account when matching. Then a two-week trial after an introduction that everyone agrees to go forward with. At the end of 2 weeks, either party can call it off. Then, after the 2-week trial, case managers stay on. Some folks have been staying on for 19 years. A question: can they match undocumented folks with hosts? Yes, if the stars align. They can run an international

background check if needed, and would also lean on more references. Alternatively, you can waive these background processes if you want.

Updates from City Councilors: Talking about Charter Changes:

-Councilor Litwin: Authority to change how rental changes are done: municipalities can't do rent control; only Legislature can do this. Litwin wants to start first step of process around notice periods: aka how long landlords are required to give people when rent will go up. This means that in this area where folks need more time to make changes to housing, especially when rent changes go way up. If we vote yes on this, the conversation around notice periods comes back to Ordinance Committee, who would get authority to start writing an ordinance around what rental notice looks like. This works both ways: renters giving notice, plus landlords giving notice. Right now, the Committee doesn't even have the authority to have the conversation. The slightly longer notice period that BTV has used to be enough, but now with changes to housing market, people need more time to find something within their community. He sees this as a stabilization effort. Voting yes on this does not mean that it is coming into effect: first, it has to get through the legislature. It also can go the other way currently: sometimes landlords ask for a rent renewal 11 months before lease is up.

-Councilor Carpenter: Redistricting on the ballot: For example: Election districts have to be in equal proportion to each other: aka North District has to represent same number of folks from Wards 4 and 7. They also have to roughly even throughout the city. This charter changes asks Legislature to give BTV voters to make our own decisions, rather than having to go through Legislature. Reason for this change: city missed a deadline for it getting onto March ballot, so it got kicked back a whole other year. Are there other examples of the need for this/other problems with it going through legislature? Councilor says no, mainly to make city more nimble.

-Another Charter Change: prohibiting guns in places with liquor licences. It passed in 2017, but then it stayed in Legislature. So now we are asking again. There has been a bill introduced that may make this a law statewide, but in the meantime, City wants to bring this again.

"Feedback rule:" These Charter Changes have been through City Council and have been approved by Mayor, and are now in the process of having public hearings around making changes to the language in the proposed legislation. Councilors cannot make changes to the language without a resident coming to propose a change during a public hearing meeting. (Then Council would vote on a change brought by a motion that would be proposed by a resident.)

BSD Budget Presentation by Kendra Sowers: Rep from NNE.

Info about why Ed Spending is increasing even though Budget is decreasing. Why? Wages and benefits are a factor.

Also, there is an estimated reduction in property taxes: roughly 4% lower than last year. One of the things that impact a reduced tax burden are the funding structure (aka how students are weighted). 2 years ago, the Legislature agreed to change those weights, based on UVM study with lots of data. The coalition lobbying for this in the Legislature included participants from all

over the state. So this is now the first year that they new funding formula are being felt here in BTV: even though it was passed 2 years ago, last year's school budget still saw an increase because of new high school cost. More complete info can be found at www.bsdt.org/budget

Updates to Requested Water Bond by Megan Moir:

Full information can be found online in a more complete way:

www.burlingtonvt.gov/2025waterbonds

It can also be found through the website listed above for the General Operating bond page.

Summary: Requesting 20m water bond and 152m Lake Bond on ballot. Because: capital investment is necessary and overdue, and will avoid more costly repairs that are inevitable if this maintenance is deferred.

- Could see a 89% rate increase over next 5 years, but this is consistent with the rates that communities like Montpelier and other New England communities pay. Important to note that we are currently at a much lower rate because we are *so far* behind on repairs and maintenance.
- Looking at ways to reduce the impact that this will have on renters and homeowners:
 - Any way to provide indirect utility assistance? There may be a way to do this via electric department. Looking at a program in Oregon that does this. Also looking at ways to expand eligibility
 - Other affordability measures: seniors and folks on fixed incomes can request assistance

Megan requests and invites questions.