

Meeting Notes

Ward 2 Neighborhood Planning Assembly (NPA)

February 13th, 2025 | 6:30-8:30pm | All are welcome



Join in person:

Richard Kemp Center, 372 N Winooski

Join remotely:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85860854764>

No Community Dinner this month!

Snacks, sweets, and coffee/tea will be available starting at 6:15pm and throughout the meeting.

Facilitator: Marc Stannard **Notetaker:** Kason Hudman

6:30 pm Introduction

5 min Review and adopt/approve the agenda and previous minutes; introductions as time allows.

6:35 pm Public Forum (2 minutes max per person)

10 min Please state your full name, pronouns, street, and ward, and follow the NPA ground rules.

- Lauren Ebersol mentions that ballots for the city elections should be mailed out this week. Please let Lauren know if you have any trouble receiving a ballot.
- Cindy, Ward 7, announces that people should go to the Burlington Sea Caves if people haven't been there yet.
- Ward 2 Resident, mentions that there was a lot of trouble with the Integrated Arts Academy closure, mentions trouble with affordable housing in the Old North End, wants to know what city officials are doing to address the problem
- Ward 2 Resident plugs the Richard Kemp Center, mentions that there are public events at the Richard Kemp Center including field trips to Washington DC and other things. Mentions that there are art events and other events at the center weekly. Jam sessions, conversations, planning sessions, etc.
- Jess Hyman, Ward 2 Resident, mentions that there are hearts on the table for folks to write something they love about the Old North End or their community to be shared publicly. Also plugs the ONE Community Dinner that is typically shared prior to the Ward 2 NPA and all the snacks shared today. Also plugs the CVOEO free tax service for income-eligible residents
- Marc Stannard mentions an email from a resident named Andres about

Town Meeting Day Ballot Deep Dives - Each has a short presentation, then time for questions and discussion.

6:45 pm Bond Votes

50 min Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak, Ashley Parker - Capital Program Director, Clerk/Treasurer's Office, Megan Moir - Division Director for Water Resources, Dept. of Public Works

General Obligation (GO) Bond and Water & Lake Bonds

- Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak, mentions that the ballots for the city election should go out in the mail this week. Elections for Ward 2 will happen at the ONE Community Center due to

the renovations at IAA. All residents are eligible to vote in Burlington City elections regardless of citizenship status

- Mulvaney-Stanak continues talking about the bonds, including the GO Bond, which will be for critical infrastructure maintenance, and the Lake & Water bonds, which will be for the Wastewater treatment plans and water infrastructure. She continues by mentioning that deferring maintenance will only make it more difficult to pay for these things in the future, pointing at the closure of Memorial Auditorium as an example of the consequences of differing maintenance. Mulvaney-Stanak also mentions that the bonds will help us meet our climate change goals and housing goals
- Ashley Parker, City Clerk's Office, goes over the details of the General Obligation Bond. She mentions that the bond will be spread out over three years, to maximize the impact of the bond. This bond will help replace city fleet vehicles that are out of service, including fire trucks and ambulances. It will also help replace about 3 miles of sidewalks that are in poor or serious condition, streets that are in poor or serious condition, etc. It will also help Burlington pay for their share of the money for the Winooski Bridge replacement, as well as other transportation network safety fixes. The bond will also help with doing the deferred maintenance on City Buildings and parks.
- Ward 2 resident, asks how much of the money will go towards needs in the Old North End specifically
- Ashley answers, the city has put together a new Capital Planning Map which should show folks what the city is planning to do in every part of the city. You can also list suggestions on the map: <https://bit.ly/BTVThrivesCapitalMap>
- Ashley Parker continues with the tax impact of the GO Bond. The \$20M bond would be repaid through a small increase in municipal property taxes starting in FY26. The city anticipates the increase to be as much as about \$20/month increase for \$900,000+ properties. It will certainly not be more than that, but it could be less.
- Ward 2 resident asks, what is the specifics of the sidewalk plan? Will this pay for all 17 miles of deferred maintenance? Ashley answers, no, the goal is about 3 miles per year.
- Ward 2 resident asks, if a sidewalk is \$1M per mile, and a road is \$1.2M per mile, why is a road not more expensive? City engineer answers, sidewalk is more precise work, plus when you work on a sidewalk there is more to consider than just the concrete
- Same Ward 2 resident asks, as we get new fleet vehicles, can we get them smaller or electric to fit into the smaller Burlington streets? Ashley Parker answers, yes, the city is always looking at options like that.
- Melo Grant mentions that she has had a lot of conversations with the fire chief about the fleet, and the market has been interesting recently. As it works now, when you place an order for a vehicle, you don't usually receive it for about 4 years, but you do lock in the price. Vehicle prices are going up right now so locking in the lower price would be a good idea. Talk to Melo if you want to talk fleet.
- Megain Moir, Water Department, talks about the Water Bond. 50% of our infrastructure is scoring at a C- grade or worse. Burlington has a legal obligation to reduce our phosphorus impact, and we have an obligation to our workers at the Wastewater treatment plan to make things safer for them. Burlington's emergency drinking water system was built in the

19th century - these pumps are required for supplying water to the UVMCM and the rest of our high service area. Worst case scenario, residents' water bill will increase 89% over a five-year time period. The city already has a ratepayer affordability program to ensure rates don't go up too much for low-income residents.

- Kason Hudman, Ward 2 resident, asks if the current federal grant freeze is impacting the potential grant money for water treatment. Megan answers, not that she has seen yet, but she is keeping an eye on it.
- Melo Grant mentions that it is so important that people support the Water Bond due to the costs of deferring maintenance. Megan mentions that all the support the Water Bond receives will be used as leverage in the state house to apply for more statewide grant funding.
- Ward 2 resident asks if the system fails, will we have to take out expensive loans to pay for it? Is it cheaper to do a bond now? Megan answers, yes, if the system fails it would be very expensive and potentially difficult to fix due to the unavailability of equipment. Doing the bond allows for us to fix things before any failures happen.

7:35 pm Burlington School District Budget

25 min *Polly Vanderputten (Ward 2) and Jean Waltz (Central)*

- Jean reads the actual ballot question. She mentions that although the ballot question mentions an increase, it is actually a 4% property tax decrease. It is, on average, an annual decrease of \$234 in property taxes.
- Ben, Ward 2 resident, asks how the overall amount decreased when the amount per student actually increases. Jean answers, because the amount allocated by the state per student has changed due to advocacy and work from the school board.
- Patrick, Ward 2 resident, asks if the money is going down due to a decrease in enrollment. Jean mentions that a decrease in enrollment would actually mean less money from the state, so that is not the cause. Polly adds that there have been some financial restructuring based on enrollment, but Burlington is also projected to increase enrollment in the coming years.
- Ward 2 resident, asks about the new proposal from the state restructuring education, especially now that the state is giving equitable funding. Jean answers, it is worrying that Act 127 is potentially on the chopping block since that made state funding equitable. She mentions that much of what the state is proposing is bunk.
- Melo Grant mentions that Governor Scott doesn't like Burlington. Burlingtonians should advocate for equity at the statehouse.
- Jean adds that much of what the Governor is proposing is conceptual and is not really an actionable plan at this point. But if it becomes an actionable plan, Jean will reach out to Melo first to ensure advocacy against it.
- Ben, Ward 2 Resident, asks if the Governor's current proposed plan includes a change in the weighting previously mentioned, Jean says yes, it would scrap the new weighting that Burlington has benefitted from.
- Polly mentions that how the current school board relates to the "concepts" coming out from the Governor is in a bit of limbo, but the school board is mostly dedicated to passing the current budget and getting through the current year.

8:00 pm Charter Changes

30 min *Gene Bergman (Ward 2) and Melo Grant (Central)*

Ban guns where alcohol is sold; increasing time required to give rent increase notification; removing language to allow for easier changes in ward and district lines

- Melo talks about the charter change to ban guns where alcohol is sold. It would be helpful to bar-owners since they would have some enforcement mechanism to remove guns from alcohol serving areas. Gene mentions that the ballot item is identical to the question that was asked and passed in 2014, and a reaffirmation from the city will let the legislators know that it is important. Guns and alcohol don't mix.
- Melo talks about the redistricting charter change. This charter change will give the city the power to do their own redistricting without approval from the legislature. Gene adds that this will make the lives of everybody in Burlington easier, since it will give us more autonomy over decisions that affect only ourselves.
- Melo talks about the charter change regarding the rent increase notification. This will give tenants more time before any rent increase. Gene adds that this will again give Burlington more local power.
- Melo again reminds everybody that the ballots have been mailed and should arrive this week. Also reminds everybody that all residents can vote in city elections, regardless of citizenship status.
- Charlie, Ward 2 resident, mentions that mail-in ballots can be corrected. If you vote early enough, city hall might contact you to correct any mistakes on your ballot. If you vote in person, you can correct it right there because they will catch it.
- Patrick, Ward 2 resident, says "meow" (referring to the proposed ordinance regarding cat leashing/licensing)
- Melo laughs, mentions that the ordinance is impractical and Gene mentions that he is not supportive of doing anything that is performative.
- Ward 2 resident, asks about the cat ordinance again, mentions that the solution might be just public education about being a responsible pet owner. Melo agrees.
- Jess Hyman, Ward 2 resident, mentions that if the rental charter change passes, she would like to see incentivized education for landlords to provide them with the information they need to ensure they know what their rights and responsibilities are. She thinks the same thing should be there for tenants as well. She is concerned that the charter change leaves room for different rental notification timelines for "vulnerable populations", which requires more specific education for tenants. She is passionate about increased education for tenants. Melo says that she agrees, and that more educational opportunities in general would be good during this turbulent time. Gene mentions that know-your-rights trainings are things that city councilors can do more of in general, and the charter change would allow city council to look at the city housing code in more depth.

8:30 pm Raffle drawing + Adjourn!

5 min Our next meeting is Thursday, March 13th **and will be back at the ONE Community Center.**

- No raffle this month, but there are to-go containers for all the food!

