



Neighborhood Planning Assembly Draft Minutes

NPA:
(choose one)

Wards 1 & 8	Wards 2 & 3	Wards 4 & 7	Ward 5	Ward 6
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Date of Assembly : 05 / 01 / 25

Start Time: (Commence): 6:30pm

Location: Dept of Public Works

Finish Time: (Adjourn): 8:15pm

Note taker: Dale Azaria

Steering Committee Members in Attendance: Dale Azaria, Mills Forni

Discussion Topics

- 6:00 | Community Dinner
- 6:30 | Call to Order
- 6:45 | Front Porch Forum
- 7:00 | City Council Updates
- 7:30 | NPA Business
- 8:15 | Adjourn

Agenda Items and Highlights:

6:30 | Call to Order, Announcements, Public Forum

- Bob Leidy, Branch Out Burlington (local nonprofit with tree nursery, supply trees to Burlington for parks and along streets). Tree walk at Champlain College June 7, 10-12. Begins at Tower Terrace (which has parking).
- Migrant Justice – please take a look at information, sign up for more information

6:45 | Front Porch Forum – how we connect to each other and build community (Susannah Kerest, director of community engagement)

- Everyone in the room uses FPF
- Susannah is director of community engagement.
- Burlington has neighborhood forums. Across the state every town has a forum. This makes for a different experience.
- 240,000 members. (Compare to 275,000 households)
- Not a non-profit, but a mission driven organization. 30 employees.
- Until recently Burlington had 20 forums. Reduced that to 7 – to ensure that experience is robust and people feel that they can be heard. Some forums were very quiet – didn't have enough content to make it lively. There may be a loss in the neighbor communication (harder to ask to borrow a cup of sugar), but they think it's worth it.
- In addition to e-mails, there's the community calendar – anyone can put any event on there. No charge, viewable across your region.
- Business Directory. Any nonprofit or business in the state can be included in the directory, for free. Have 15,000 entries – would like to have a lot more!
- About to launch a store where you can buy logo merch.
- Question: how do you avoid the hate that permeates social media? Answer: every posting is read by a human before it's posted. No personal attacks, nothing illegal, etc. The guidelines are online. They'll reach out to an author and ask them to take it down a notch or to revise it. Also because it's not immediate.

7:00 | City Council Updates – including the City's response on immigration enforcement issues (Becca Brown McKnight and Buddy Singh, invited)

- Immigration (Becca): overall as citizens of this country, we need to keep our eyes on due process and speaking out whenever we can and as strongly as we can. We are "sanctuary-city-adjacent." Sanctuary city is a legal

designation. We have a lot of the same protections but are just short of that status. Our police do not support ICE. they will not knock on someone's door and assist with a deportation. Also, the Burlington Schools have a robust protocol to protect any kids who might be at risk of action by ICE. Our schools and our educators are passionate and committed to protecting any kids who might be at risk.

- Buddy has spoken to ESL teachers. They Act as liaisons getting the word out to families to make sure they have the information they need. Tom Flanagan spoke to the city-wide PTO and laid out the policy. They are 100% behind all kids and committed to keeping them safe.
- Buddy: likewise, our teachers are on the frontline with DEI efforts. Next week is Teacher Appreciation Week and Buddy encourages us to express our appreciation to any teachers. They are going above and beyond
- Also, Green UP Day is this weekend. City will supply gloves and bags.
- Also, Sunday is Fire Fighter Appreciation Day and there will be barbeques at 3 fire stations.
- Becca: We are in budget season right now. We are hearing presentations from the Mayor/Administration, who lay out their plans and a first draft. Then we'll have lots of conversations. Budget Sessions are every Wednesday and are open to the public.
- Questions about recycling program. At this point it doesn't look like we're going to make changes to it. One thing that Becca heard is that "recycling is one of the few things we get for our taxes." She's troubled by that. Property taxes go to a lot of important things. She wants people to understand where our local taxes go.
- Water Department and Electric Department are not funded by city taxes. They're paid by usage.
- Property Tax: roughly 70% goes to schools and the balance (roughly \$100 million) goes to the city. Police, Fire, Public Works (roads and streets) and Parks.
- Becca wants to know what people value – important to know that as we make decisions of what to fund and what to cut.
- The City is taking applications for various board and commissions. Application is available online. When you submit it, email to your City Council Reps.
- Greg Epler Woods introduced two guests, from Nigeria and Cape Verde. They are interested in learning about the NPA process, and in hearing about immigration policy. Irene from Nigeria is interested in seeing people from the community interacting with their elected leaders. She wants to take this back home. Maria from Cape Verde, where she teaches English.
- Question: South Winooski used to be a no-truck road, but now there are a lot of trucks. Is this because of the construction on Main Street? and will it stop.
 - City Council isn't sure, but will check with DPW.
 - When will Main Street be finished?
 - Full project will be complete in summer 2026, but this year's work (underground work) will wrap in July or August and it will get a lot better then. There's consideration of opening up a one-way, but need to review what that will do to the cost of the project.
 - Becca encourages us all to keep up the drumbeat – if there are concerns, speak up!
- Charlie Gianonni: is concerned that there aren't many people from Ward 8 or Ward 3 on any boards or commissions. And he is concerned that the Fire Fighter Appreciation hasn't been well advertised. Buddy responds that a lot of the information went out today.

7:30 | NPA Business

- Role of NPAs: Jonathan Chapple- Sokol (Ward 1 NPA) and Carter Neubieser (Ward 1 City Council) proposed resolution
 - There's no place in City Ordinance that clearly lays out the relationship between the City Council and NPA. There are various resolutions, but a lack of clear expectations. The goal is to strengthen the relationship by clarifying it.
 - NPAs were created in the 1980's to encourage direct democracy – for City Council to be connected to and hear from their constituents.

- o Many people may not want to speak out in a City Council meeting. NPAs are meant to make it easier to be heard.
- o All NPA Steering Committee voted to send this to City Council, about a year ago, and to set up a committee to work with City Council on this. Working Group includes City Council, NPA Steering Committees, and CEDO
- o They're seeking a vote from the Ward 6 NPA to continue with the process reflected in the document.
- o What the resolution does:
 - [See resolution attached to agenda]
- o Comments:
 - We are different from other wards – no parks, few businesses – we may not have identified problems that are “ours” but we have strong interests and concerns based on what’s happening in the city
 - Importance of being pro-active and facilitating communication
 - Becca: Ward 6 issues: parking, UVM MOU, transportation policies. There is value in choosing key issues, even if they are city-wide issues.
 - Becca: suggests that there should be an annual timeline for identifying priorities, trainings, etc.
 - Mills: really likes the idea of identifying priorities.
 - **Motion: That the NPA Supports the spirit of this resolution. Passed.**
- Report from All Wards NPA on NPA Budgets, discussion about possibility for city-run open primaries (instead of party-run caucuses)
- Ward 6 NPA Budget: **Motion to share excess funds from this year’s budget with Ward 5. Motion passed.**

8:15 | Adjourn