



# Ward 3 Neighborhood Planning Assembly

Wednesday, June 4, 2025

Sharon Bushor Room, Burlington City Hall

## Meeting Minutes

### 1. Welcome & Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:30 PM by Chris Haessly, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee member.

### 2. Attendee Introductions

- **Officials/Steering Committee Members:**

- Melo Grant, City Councilor, Central District (via remote attendance)
- Chris Haessly, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
- Nora Aronds, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
- Zachary Cummings, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
- Darrell Fields, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
- Charlie Messing, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee

- **Staff/Presenters:**

- Shawny Corey, CEDO
- Carter Neubieser, City Councilor, Ward 1
- Jonathan Chapple-Sokol, Ward 1 NPA Steering Committee
- Martine Laroque-Gulick, State Senator (Chittenden Central)
- Kate Logan, State Representative (Chittenden-16)

- **Community Members/Public:**

- George Logan, College Street
- Jill Lesh, College Street
- Brooks Cummings, Cherry Street
- Robert Perry, Clarke Street
- Amy Kimmel, Clarke Street
- Ellie Rochford, Clarke Street
- Lee Morigan, George Street
- Jeffrey Peterson, Clarke Street
- Ryan Dupuis, Clarke Street
- Chester Thompson, College Street (W8)

- Frank Von Turkovich, Clarke Street
- Charlie Giannoni, CCTV

### 3. Public Forum

- **Councilor Melo Grant (Central District):** Announced that Police Chief Burke has created a detailed, three-page strategic recruitment plan. The department is currently processing 16 applications and is budgeted for 73 officers. The next Public Safety Committee meeting on June 26 will feature a discussion on the "situation room," a multi-agency approach to address individuals who are high utilizers of emergency services.
- **Robert Perry (Clarke Street):** Reported that issues continue on Clark Street, citing two recent overdoses and stating that the Howard Center's presence acts as a "magnet for drug abuse" in the neighborhood.
- **Frank Von Turkovich (Clarke Street):** Asked the NPA to support finding a solution for the Howard Center's needle distribution facility on Clark Street. He stated that the program is harming the residential neighborhood and that the Howard Center has been unresponsive to neighbors' attempts to engage in dialogue.
- **Brooks Cummings (Cherry Street):** Argued that the negative neighborhood impacts on streets like Elmwood and Clark are "facts, not fear," and that these facts should be considered when discussing the proposed Overdose Prevention Center (OPC) in downtown Burlington.
- **Chester Thompson (College Street):** Described finding needles near the public library and stated that the needle exchange program does not belong in residential areas and makes the community feel unsafe.
- **Charlie Messing (College Street):** Compared the needle exchange to an adult bookstore, arguing it should be located in a non-residential area like alongside a highway, away from neighborhoods and playgrounds.
- **Lee Morigan (George Street):** Spoke about the need to heal from the "deeply flawed" process that split the former Wards 2/3 NPA. *A motion was made by Lee Morigan and seconded to add a discussion and vote on establishing bylaws for the Ward 3 NPA to the agenda for the next meeting on June 18, 2025\**. After a brief and contentious procedural discussion, the motion was passed by a hand-raise vote.

\*The motion was subsequently reviewed in the context of the state's Open Meeting Law and the NPA Bylaws and was determined to be out-of-order and non-binding.

### 4. Graffiti Discussion

Presented by: Zachary Cummings, Burlington Business Association (BBA)

- Mr. Cummings described the BBA's "Good Clean Fun" initiative, a volunteer program aimed at removing graffiti from private property in the downtown area.
- The program has held two successful cleaning sessions and has received positive feedback.
- Currently, volunteer participation is limited to BBA members, but there are plans to open it to the general public in the future as the program develops. Communication about public sign-ups will be shared via Front Porch Forum and social media.

## 5. Howard Center Safe Recovery Discussion

This portion of the meeting was an open forum for community members to share their perspectives and concerns regarding the Howard Center's Safe Recovery program on Clark Street. The Howard Center was not invited, as the discussion was intended for the community.

- **Solutions & Community Action:** Lee Morgan announced the formation of a new nonprofit aimed at addressing syringe litter, with a long-term goal of creating a 24-hour rapid response team of "peer de-escalators" (individuals with lived experience) to respond to disturbances. Chester Thompson, who runs the Furious Panthers Organization, also volunteered to speak directly with individuals on Clarke Street to de-escalate situations.
- **Neighbor & Property Owner Concerns:** Amy Kimmel and Robert Perry (owners of 54 Clark Street) reiterated that the issue is not the existence of the program, but its location. They described it as a "drug magnet" that brings loitering, litter, and violence to the neighborhood. They have attempted to offer solutions to the Howard Center, including buying the building or funding a mobile unit, but have received no response since January. Frank Von Turkovich stated that Ward 3 should not be a "dumping ground" for the city's most difficult problems.
- **Impact on Public Spaces:** Darrell Fields, caretaker at the nearby UU Church, noted that the church grounds are no longer safe for children to play on due to the prevalence of discarded needles, and that the problem has simply been pushed from one property to another.
- **Institutional Issues:** Charlie Messing opined that the Howard Center has become such a large, consolidated organization that it can ignore reasonable requests from the community while it focuses on its primary mission.

## 6. Legislative Update

Presented by: State Senator Martine Laroque-Gulick & State Representative Kate Logan

- **Housing (S.127):** The legislature's primary housing initiative this year was the creation of "CHIP," a new project-based Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program. This is designed to help fund necessary infrastructure for housing developments, with incentives for including affordable housing units.
- **Homelessness (H.901):** A bill was passed (awaiting the governor's signature) to restructure the state's response to homelessness. The goal is to move away from a heavy reliance on the GA/hotel-motel program and toward a more centralized model run by regional Community Action Programs (like CVOEO). This new "VHARTH" program would provide more comprehensive wraparound services, though it is expected to be more expensive per person than the motel program. The governor's support for the bill is uncertain due to cost and eligibility concerns.
- **Tax Policy:** A proposed tax on second homes was studied but not enacted this year due to its complexity. The legislature will continue to study how to disaggregate the non-homestead property tax rate to apply different rates to different property types (e.g., agricultural land vs. second homes).

- **Education Funding (H.454):** Both legislators expressed significant concern about the education bill, describing it as a rushed and "irresponsible piece of legislation." They believe it has the potential to harm the Burlington School District by lowering education spending, even if it results in lower property taxes.

## 7. CDNR & NPA Working Group Presentation

Presented by: Councilor Carter Neubieser (Ward 1) & Jonathan Chapple-Sokol (Ward 1 NPA)

- **Purpose:** The presenters outlined a resolution drafted by a working group to formalize and improve the relationship between the City of Burlington and its Neighborhood Planning Assemblies (NPAs). The goal is to set clear expectations and build trust.
- **The Resolution:** The document is a non-binding statement of principles. It affirms the essential role of NPAs, directs CEDO to create standardized processes for communication and training, and asks the City Council to acknowledge the value of NPAs and consult with them on key issues like major developments, redistricting, and charter changes.
- **Community Feedback:** While some skepticism was expressed about the impact of a non-binding resolution, the general consensus was supportive. Attendees felt that formalizing the relationship would add legitimacy to the NPAs and encourage the City Council to take their input more seriously. The NPA members present voted by a show of hands to express their general support for the effort.

## 8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:15 PM.