



Ward 3 Neighborhood Planning Assembly

Wednesday, April 2, 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
 - Nora Aronds, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
 - Michelle Borbas, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
 - Zachary Cummings, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
 - Chris Haessly, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
 - Charlie Messing, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
- **Staff/Presenters:**
 - Shawny Corey, CEDO
 - Mark Bouchett, Owner, Homeport
 - Llyndara Harbour, Owner, Harbour Thread
 - Emanuel Thomas, Owner, Frog Spit Security
 - Philip Peterson, Department of Public Works (DPW)
- **Community Members/Public (who spoke):**
 - Amanda Janoo, Park Street
 - Lee Morrigan, George Street
 - Brooks Cummings, Cherry Street
 - John Reinker, Cherry Street (via remote attendance)
 - Nolan Rogers, North Street
 - Charlie Giannoni, CCTV

3. Public Forum

- **Councilor Melo Grant (Central District):** Addressed remarks from the previous month's contentious meeting, reaffirming that her priority for the Central District is a strategic police recruitment and retention plan.

- **Brooks Cummings (Cherry Street):** Expressed concern about low resident participation in the Ward 3 NPA and the need to find ways to draw more people in.
- **Lee Morrigan (George Street):** Voiced upset over a publicly released Democratic group chat that appeared to show a coordinated effort to "troll" Councilor Grant at the NPA meeting, and requested the steering committee address the issue at a future meeting.
- **Charlie Giannoni (Rose Street):** Made a plea for Ward 3 residents to volunteer as election staff (Ward Clerk and Inspectors), noting that most current poll workers for the ward are now Ward 2 residents due to redistricting. He offered to train any interested volunteers.
- **Charlie Messing (College Street):** Shared ongoing safety and security issues at his BHA building, where residents letting people in from the street has led to problems.

4. Retail Theft Panel Discussion

Presented by: Llyndara Harbour (Harbour Thread), Emanuel Thomas (Security), and Mark Bouchett (Homeport)

- **Nature of the Theft:** All three panelists described a dramatic shift in retail theft. It has evolved from occasional, petty shoplifting to aggressive, organized crime driven by the local drug economy. They noted it is a small, known group of individuals committing the vast majority of thefts.
- **Impact on Staff & Businesses:** The panelists spoke of the severe emotional toll on employees, who are now frequently threatened, spit on, and physically assaulted. The environment has become frightening, changing the open and welcoming culture of their stores. The financial losses are significant and ultimately passed on to customers.
- **Organized Crime:** Llyndara Harbour stated clearly that this is organized crime, with stolen goods being collected in U-Hauls and sold out of state.
- **Lack of Consequences:** A major theme was the lack of legal repercussions. Thieves are aware of the \$900 felony threshold and know that even if arrested, charges are often dropped, and they are quickly released, sometimes returning to steal from a neighboring store the same day.
- **Solutions Discussed:**
 - **Private Security:** Both Homeport and Lulu Lemon have hired private security, which has been effective in deterring theft and improving staff morale, but it is an added expense.
 - **Citizen Intervention:** A discussion arose about citizen intervention. Emanuel Thomas advised that while filming is federally protected, citizens should not physically engage unless physically engaged first. Lee Morrigan cautioned that confronting individuals, especially dealers, is extremely dangerous and could lead to violence.
 - **Taking Back Burlington:** Mark Bouchett suggested that the best way for citizens to "take back Burlington" is to actively use the downtown spaces by visiting cafes, restaurants, and shops to create a positive and vibrant presence.

5. Battery Street Corridor Study

Presented by: Philip Peterson, Department of Public Works

- **Goal:** To enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety, improve connectivity, and reduce vehicle crashes along the high-traffic Battery Street corridor.
- **Preferred Alternative:** The selected plan ("Alternative 2") will create a 12-foot wide, two-way protected bike lane on the west (lake) side of the street. This alternative was chosen because it is the least expensive, preserves the most parking, and had the greatest public support.
- **Impact:** The plan will act as a "road diet," reducing lanes, slowing traffic, and is expected to increase pedestrian and bike activity, which should benefit local businesses.
- **Timeline & Cost:** The full project is estimated to cost **\$30 million** and is likely years away from full construction (2027 at the earliest). However, DPW is motivated to implement an interim project involving paint and signal upgrades, potentially as early as next summer, to begin improving safety sooner. Funding is complex and depends on a mix of local, state, and potentially federal grants.

6. City Council Updates

Presented by: Councilor Melo Grant (Central District)

- **Mayor's Meetups:** Councilor Grant reminded residents of the Mayor's weekly community meetups held in different parts of the city, offering a great opportunity for one-on-one engagement.
- **City Budget:** The city is facing another significant budget gap for the upcoming fiscal year. The Mayor's "Modern Gov" initiative is underway to find efficiencies, including consolidating some city departments (e.g., a new Department of Finance and Administration).
- **Proposed Recycling Changes:** A proposal to end the city's universal recycling pickup and require residents to hire private haulers is being discussed as a cost-saving measure. Councilor Grant expressed strong concern that this would be a step back for the city's climate goals and could lead to more trash on the streets.
- **Arts & Culture Funding:** Due to budget cuts, funding for beloved city events like the Festival of Fools and the Juneteenth community dinner has been significantly reduced, which is a major concern.
- **Anti-Social Media:** Charlie Messing commented on the divisive nature of social media, arguing that it works against building a real sense of community by separating people into different markets and discouraging intergenerational connection.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:45 PM.