



Ward 3 Neighborhood Planning Assembly

Wednesday, January 15, 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:**

- Mark Barlow, City Councilor, North District
- Melo Grant, City Councilor, Central District (via remote attendance)
- Jeannie Waltz, School Commissioner, Central District
- Michelle Borbas, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
- Darrell Fields, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
- Chris Haessly, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
- Charlie Messing, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
- Amy Prenowitz, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee

- **Staff/Presenters:**

- Shawny Corey, NPA Public Engagement Specialist
- Katherine Schad, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
- Ashley Parker, Capital Projects Manager
- Megan Moir, Division Director for Water Resources
- Chief Mike LaChance, Burlington Fire Department

- **Community Members/Public:**

- Ken Gillo, Central Ave (W5)
- Tiki Archambeau, Crombie Street (W2)
- Norman Fisher
- Peter Stissier
- Steven Kaplowitz, Pine Street
- Trudy Richmond, Elmwood Avenue (via remote attendance)
- Christopher-Aaron Felker, Park Street (via remote attendance)
- Nora Aronds, North Union Street

- Dennis McCarthy, Pearl Street
- Charlie Giannoni, CCTV

3. Remembering Bob Kiernan

The meeting began with a remembrance of Bob Kiernan, a dedicated community member and member of the Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee who passed away unexpectedly in late October.

- **Ken Gillo (on behalf of Councilor Joan Shannon):** Shared a heartfelt statement from Councilor Shannon, remembering Bob as a dear friend and practical, optimistic volunteer. He was recalled as a "strong voice of and for our community" who lobbied for middle ground, led with kindness, and was liberal with his gratitude. His passing was described as heartbreaking.
- **Tiki Archambeau:** Recounted meeting Bob during his 2021 City Council campaign, where he became one of his most valuable volunteers. He described him as a kind, personable, and tech-savvy friend who was deeply passionate about Burlington.
- **Norm Fisher:** Spoke of his friendship and collaboration with Bob, beginning with their shared effort in 2018 to prevent the removal of the "Everyone Loves a Parade" mural. He remembered Bob's technical skill in recording meetings and their shared love for the song "The Streets of Laredo."
- **Chris Haessly:** Remembered Bob as a tireless supporter of downtown who lived on Church Street for 25 years. He credited Bob with making the motion that established the independent Ward 3 NPA, stating, "if it weren't for Bob, we would not be here today."

4. City Budget Presentation

Presented by: Councilor Mark Barlow, North District, and CAO Katherine Schad

- **FY26 Budget Gap:** The city is facing a structural budget gap for Fiscal Year 2026, initially estimated at \$8 million to \$12 million. The current working number for the expense gap to be closed is approximately **\$7.5 million**.
- **Key Drivers:**
 - Need to replace **\$3.5 million in one-time funds** used in the FY25 budget.
 - **11% increase in health insurance costs.**
 - Contractual cost-of-living allowances (COLAs) and step increases for city employees.
 - **89% of the budget increase** is from the Police and Fire departments, which have significant fixed costs and are currently in contract negotiations.
- **Proposed Solutions:**
 - **Revenue:** ~\$3 million in additional revenue has been identified, including using the final authorized penny of the Public Safety Tax, a one-cent increase to the Parks splinter tax, and ~\$1.3 million in other one-time funds (last of ARPA funds, final year of business personal property tax).
 - **Efficiencies:** The "Modern Gov" initiative, based on a recent efficiency study, aims to find \$1 million to \$1.5 million in savings.

- **Service Inventory:** A city-wide inventory of services is underway to help prioritize and find further cost savings.
- **Tax Impact:** Based on current modeling, there is no proposed increase to the general fund property tax rate that would require voter approval. However, due to increases in dedicated taxes (Public Safety, Parks, Debt Service, etc.), the overall municipal tax rate is projected to increase by 6-7%.

5. General Obligation Bond Presentation

Presented by: Ashley Parker, Capital Projects Manager

- **Need:** The city has an estimated annual capital need of \$8 million to \$10 million to maintain its infrastructure (fleet, streets, sidewalks, parks, buildings). Without a bond, the city's charter only provides for \$2 million in annual borrowing.
- **Proposed Bond:** A \$20 million General Obligation Bond will be on the Town Meeting Day ballot to address critical infrastructure needs over the next three years.
- **Key Investment Areas:**
 - **Fleet:** ~\$3 million to replace aging public safety vehicles (fire trucks, ambulances), snowplows, and sidewalk tractors. 30% of the city's fleet needs replacement.
 - **Streets & Sidewalks:** Address the backlog of roads and sidewalks in poor condition. The city has 17.2 miles of sidewalks and 10.8 miles of streets that do not meet acceptable standards.
 - **Winooski Bridge:** Fulfill the city's \$4 million local match responsibility for the replacement of the Winooski Bridge, a partnership with VTrans and the City of Winooski.
 - **City Buildings & Parks:** Address significant deferred maintenance. Each of the city's nineteen (19) buildings and thirty-seven (37) parks has an estimated deferred need of at least \$700,000.
- **Tax Impact:** The bond will be spent over three years. The maximum impact is estimated to be \$12 a month on a \$500,000 home.
- **Capital Planning Map:** A new interactive online map has been launched to show the city's capital needs for the next five (5) to six-(6) years and allow for public feedback via a survey.

6. Water Resources Bond Presentation

Presented by: Megan Moyer, Director of Water Resources

- **Need:** Major investments are required to upgrade Burlington's aging drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems to ensure reliability, protect public health and the lake, and accommodate future growth. Many systems have not been upgraded since the 1990s or earlier and are at risk of failure.
- **Proposed Bonds:** Two bonds will be on the Town Meeting Day ballot:
 - **\$20 million Water Bond** (Drinking Water)
 - **\$152 million Lake Bond** (Wastewater & Stormwater)

- **Key Projects:**

- **Reservoir Improvements:** The top priority for the drinking water bond is to replace the failing pump station at the UVM Reservoir, which is critical for providing water pressure to the "high service" area, including the UVM Medical Center.
- **Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades:** The Lake Bond will fund the first stage of a major overhaul of the city's three treatment plants to improve resiliency, increase capacity, reduce phosphorus discharges, and improve worker safety and odor control.
- **Rate Impact:** The combined impact of these investments will result in significant rate increases over a five-year period, estimated at 89%. The city is phasing the projects and pursuing grants and low-interest loans to mitigate the impact. An affordability program is in place to assist low-income households, and the city is exploring ways to extend relief to renters.

7. City Council Updates

Presented by: Councilor Melo Grant, Central District (via remote attendance)

- **Cat Leashing Ordinance:** A public hearing is scheduled for Thursday, January 23rd, at 5:30 PM in Contois Auditorium to discuss a proposed ordinance that would require cats to be on a leash when outdoors.
- **Emergency Shelters:** Councilor Grant expressed strong opposition to a proposal that would prevent new emergency shelters from being located in low- and medium-density residential zones, calling it "nimbyism at its most extreme."
- **Public Safety:** Grant Street has been identified as a drug "hot spot," and an update has been requested on steps being taken to address issues on Center Street.
- **Housing Development:** Councilor Grant is seeking a comprehensive list from the city of all housing projects currently in the development pipeline to provide clarity to the public.

8. Public Forum

- **Nora Aronds (North Union Street):** Announced that a winter warming shelter opened at 58 Pearl Street, run by COTS. Intake is handled at the Daystation on North Avenue.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 PM.