



Ward 3 Neighborhood Planning Assembly

Wednesday, December 4, 2024

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
 - 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:**
 - Ana-Maria Robu, CEDO
 - Owen Milne, Community Sailing Center
 - Andre Clark, Street Cats Burlington
 - Jill Krowinski, State Representative & Speaker of the House
- **Community Members/Public:**
 - Adrien Sabathier
 - Kirsten Kouwenhoven, Maple Street
 - Zachary Cummings, Clarke Street
 - Nora Aronds, North Union Street
 - Charlie Giannoni, CCTV

3. Community Kayak and Paddle Park

Presented by: Owen Milne, Community Sailing Center

- **Proposal:** The Community Sailing Center is proposing to bring back a community kayak, paddleboard, and canoe storage service to the waterfront. This service, last offered in 2019, allows residents to store their personal watercraft by the lake for the season, eliminating the need to transport them by car.
- **Location:** The proposed site is the city-owned land just north of the Sailing Center's current building, an area that formerly housed an oil drum.

- **Project Details:** The project would involve creating a fenced, enclosed yard with a crushed rock surface. It would require a lease expansion with the city and a rezoning process. Ecological and environmental hazard studies are currently underway to assess the land's condition and any necessary remediation.
- **Public Feedback:** Community suggestions have included incorporating seated areas, exploring winter uses for the space, and offering mobile rental units.

4. Clothing & Supply Drive for Unhoused Community

Presented by: Andre Clark, Street Cats Burlington

- **The Crisis:** Mr. Clark highlighted the public health crisis of houselessness, noting that over 350 people are currently living unsheltered in Burlington. He emphasized the severe health impacts of living on the street, especially during winter.
- **Street Cats Burlington:** The volunteer organization provides street-level outreach, bringing clothing, food, and other resources directly to unhoused individuals. They partner with other local organizations to fill gaps in the service system.
- **Winter Supply Drive:** A call to action was made for donations for a winter supply drive. Needed items include blankets, hand warmers, gloves, winter hats, and tents.
- **Discussion:** Councilor Grant added that the scale of the current crisis is unprecedented and that the city has spent approximately \$6 million on related services. Nora Aronds announced that COTS will hold its annual winter solstice candlelight vigil on December 21st for those who have passed away while unhoused.

5. State House Preview

Presented by: Representative Jill Krowinski, Speaker of the House

- **Top Legislative Priorities:** The upcoming session will focus on five key areas:
 1. **Education Funding:** Addressing rising property tax rates while ensuring high-quality education.
 2. **Housing:** Continuing to invest in programs for all levels of housing need, from homelessness to homeownership.
 3. **Healthcare:** Reforming the hospital system and addressing costs.
 4. **Public Safety:** Conducting oversight on recently passed retail and auto theft bills to ensure they are working as intended.
 5. **Flood Recovery & Climate Resiliency:** Providing technical support to impacted communities and continuing to implement climate resiliency measures.
- **Federal Impact:** The legislature is preparing for potential impacts from a new federal administration, including possible funding cuts for healthcare and concerns regarding migrant workers.
- **Discussion:** Questions were raised about the state's approach to shelters vs. motels, the need to update flood maps, and the challenges of workforce shortages in critical sectors like healthcare and social services.

6. City Council Updates

Presented by: Councilor Melo Grant, Central District

- **City's Legislative Priorities:** The city's agenda for the state legislature includes addressing the housing emergency, funding for acute mental health and substance use needs, improving the judicial and pre-trial monitoring system, securing funding for water infrastructure, and gun reform.
- **Town Meeting Day:** Residents can expect several bond questions on the ballot, including a major bond for DPW's water resources infrastructure to address deferred maintenance and increase system capacity for future housing growth.
- **Public Bathrooms:** Councilor Grant highlighted the lack of 24/7 public bathrooms downtown as a critical issue that contributes to public health and order problems.
- **Police Department:** Councilor Grant noted that issues of low morale, internal accountability, and a lack of a strategic recruitment plan continue to be major challenges for the BPD. She believes new leadership is needed to address the department's "toxic" internal culture and rebuild community trust.

7. Public Forum

- **Kirsten Kouwenhoven (Maple Street):** Spoke about the impact of drug dealing on the sense of safety in affordable housing buildings. She announced that her tenants' association is planning a summer block party for the neighborhood to rebuild community connections and a sense of psychological safety. She invited the NPA to be involved.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 PM.