



Ward 3 Neighborhood Planning Assembly

Wednesday, October 2, 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. A motion to amend the agenda to move the Public Forum to the beginning of the meeting was passed.

2. Attendee Introductions

- **Officials/Steering Committee Members:**

- Mark Barlow, City Councilor, North District
- Tim Doherty, City Councilor, East District
- Melo Grant, City Councilor, Central District
- Joe Kane, City Councilor, Ward 3
- Jeannie Waltz, School Commissioner, Central District
- Michelle Borbas, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
- Chris Haessly, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
- Bob Kiernan, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee
- Amy Prenowitz, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee

- **Staff/Presenters:**

- Hannah Brislin, CEDO/Community Justice Center
- Mary Danko, Director, Fletcher Free Library
- Elise Guyette, Burlington History & Cultural Center
- Diana Carlisle, Historian

- **Community Members/Public:**

- Lee Morrigan, George Street
- Patrick Johnson, Greene Street
- Nora Aronds, North Union Street
- Alan Rubin, College Street
- Suki Rubin, College Street
- Trudy Richmond, Elmwood Avenue
- Gail Welch, Elmwood Avenue
- Harold (Bill) Jones, Elmwood Avenue

- Liam Murphy, Buell Street (W8)
- Sal Millichamp, Cambrian Way (W7)
- Bernie Carver, Cambrian Way (W7)
- James Dufour, Orchard Terrace (W8)
- Damon Lane, Peru Street
- Glen Eames, Murray Street
- Malik Mines, South Champlain Street
- Charlie Giannoni, CCTV

3. Public Forum

- **Lee Morrigan (George Street):** Shared positive news about a proposed syringe redemption program for the city, modeled after a successful program in Boston that reduced syringe litter by over 50%. He noted that some city councilors are showing interest in the proposal.
- **Patrick Johnson (Greene Street):** Submitted a petition signed by fifteen Ward 3 residents requesting the reversal of the July 2024 decision to split the Ward 2 and Ward 3 NPA meetings. He argued that the process was flawed, lacked sufficient community input, was a unilateral decision that went against the NPA's guiding principles, and undermined the collaborative power the two wards held for over 20 years. He was given extended time to present his case.

4. Library Updates

Presented by: Mary Danko, Director, Fletcher Free Library

- **Library Card Sign-up Month:** Ms. Danko encouraged all residents to get a library card to access the library's two main manifestations: the physical buildings and the online library.
- **Services:** In addition to books, the library offers a "Library of Things" (laptops, hotspots, cake pans, tools), DVDs, and extensive programming. Online resources include eBooks, audiobooks, the Canopy movie streaming service, and databases for the New York Times, Consumer Reports, and genealogical research (Ancestry.com, in-library use only).
- **Biggest Need:** The library's top priority is reconfiguring its downtown space to better meet community needs, particularly by adding more small meeting rooms and upgrading technology and electrical systems.
- **Current Exhibit:** A photography exhibit by Senator Patrick Leahy is currently on display.

5. Burlington History & Cultural Center

Presented by: Elise Guyette

- **Goal:** A group of residents is working to establish a Burlington History and Cultural Center, with the vision and mission to be built by the community. They are currently in a research and information-gathering phase and have a public survey available online.
- **Untold Stories:** Ms. Guyette shared several historical vignettes to highlight the rich, diverse stories the center would aim to tell, including those of Jewish food cart owner

Samuel Bergman, Black tonsorial artists Abel Anthony and George Williams, and successful Black businessman Harold Holloway, after whom the "Holloway Block" on King Street is named.

- **Potential Location:** The project may find a home in the redeveloped Memorial Auditorium block.
- **Community Input:** The project is actively seeking ideas, themes, and stories from the community. The concepts of a "house history" archive and a digital, publicly-contributed archive were discussed as potential features.

6. The Champlain Glass Company

Presented by: Diana Carlisle

- **Burlington's First Manufacturer:** Ms. Carlisle presented the history of the Champlain Glass Company, Burlington's first manufacturing enterprise, founded in 1827 in the Old North End. The company was a major driver of the neighborhood's development, bringing in immigrant glass blowers from Europe.
- **Legacy of Battery Park:** The company's owners purchased the "commons" (the former military cantonment) and donated it to the city in 1840 with the legal stipulation that it remain a park "forever," which is why Battery Park exists today.
- **Historical Marker:** A new state historical marker commemorating the Champlain Glass Company was installed in Battery Park in June 2024. The full history of the company is published in the Vermont Historical Society's journal.

7. City Councilor Updates

- **Councilor Joe Kane (Ward 3):**
 - **Committee Work:** The Community Development & Neighborhood Revitalization (CDNR) committee is working on a needle reimbursement program, an escalating vacancy tax for empty properties, and potentially increasing the notice period for large rent increases. The Board of Finance is preparing for the next budget cycle, acknowledging the need to address capital projects like wastewater treatment upgrades and bike/pedestrian safety on Battery Street.
- **Councilor Milo Grant (Central District):**
 - **City Website & Communication:** Directed residents to the newly redesigned city website to find the Mayor's updates, sign up for emails, and access recordings of public meetings.
 - **Public Safety:** Highlighted the Fire Department's successful recruitment plan for lateral transfers and their effective use of data (e.g., heat maps) for the Community Response Team. She contrasted this with the Police Department, which she stated still lacks a strategic recruitment plan and needs to improve transparency.
 - **Overdose Prevention Center (OPC):** Clarified that a public process for siting an OPC has not yet begun. She stressed that data shows the need is in the Central District and that OPCs are a tool to get drug use off the streets and connect people to services.

8. School Board Updates

Presented by: Commissioner Jeannie Waltz

- **Major Construction:** The school district is in a period of unprecedented construction, including the new High School/Tech Center (the final beam was placed this week), the nearly-finished track and field, the new Eagle Bay Academy, and a full renovation of the Integrated Arts Academy.
- **Staffing:** The district is actively hiring for approximately 20 paraeducator positions.
- **State Education Finance:** Commissioner Waltz is heavily involved in advocacy at the state level regarding the education funding formula. She urged residents to follow the work of the "Commission on the Future of Public Education," as it will have a major impact on school funding and equity.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM.