

Ordinance Committee
Thursday, July 17, 2025
Bushor Conference Room Conference Room
or Remote via Zoom. Burlington, Vermont
DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: Councilor Bergman (Chair), Councilor Barlow, Councilor Carpenter, Councilor Kane

Staff Present: Jessica Brown (City Attorney) Kim Sturtevant (Assistant City Attorney), Emmett Wood (Assistant City Attorney), Erik Ramakrishnan (Assistant City Attorney)

Public Present: Sharon Bushor, Kelly Devine

Meeting called to order at 4:37 PM.

1. Adopt the Agenda
1.1 Adopt the Agenda

Motion to Adopt Agenda.

Motion by Councilor Barlow, Seconded by Councilor Carpenter.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

2. Adopt Draft Minutes
2.1 Adopt Draft Minutes from June 18

Motion to adopt the draft minutes from June 18 as drafted.

Motion by Councilor Barlow, Seconded by Councilor Carpenter.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

3. Public Forum

Kelly Devine said she is concerned with a higher gross receipts tax due to a decrease in business among Burlington businesses. She said there is competition with neighboring towns for restaurants along with issues with downtown. She said taxing consumption could backfire. There is an expected drop in Canadian tourism as well. The City should not increase consumption taxes.

Sharon Bushor said having the City Circle be automatically criminal is a step up from the current policy. She said other ordinance violations start at civil and then become criminal if ignored and that is how she would like the Circle to work. She said the ordinance could reference which ordinances could be civil or criminal. She said the evaluation of the gross receipts tax should be in December 2025 instead of later. She said all 9% of the STR tax should go to the housing trust fund.

4. Gross Receipts Ordinance Discussion

Attorney Ramakrishnan shared the draft gross receipts ordinance that is posted to the agenda packet on CivicClerk.

Councilor Bergman said he would like to see revenue projections before approving any changes.

Councilor Carpenter said she is fine with making the decision for FY26 but it should be looked at in FY27.

Councilor Barlow said he opposes the increase given the state of business downtown. He said he could support the increase if money was earmarked for business support.

Councilor Kane said he supports making the tax permanent and using that money to provide more services. He said no one has said taxes are the main factor in decreased business downtown it is other issues instead.

Councilor Bergman said he likes the idea of an earlier evaluation and agrees with Councilor Kane that taxes are not the main issue for businesses downtown.

Attorney Ramakrishnan said the draft ordinance needs to be updated to include both a start and end date for FY26. He then gave a brief overview of the historical practices of the STR tax and the proposals to alter it.

Councilor Carpenter said the original intent of the STR tax was to put all 9% toward the Housing Trust Fund (HTF).

Councilor Barlow said that, starting in FY27, the entire 9% should go to the HTF.

Councilor Bergman said he supports referring back the draft ordinance that was drafted by Councilor Traverse.

Councilor Kane said he does not support the 2% going to the General Fund.

Attorney Ramakrishnan gave a brief overview of the inconsistencies with the meals tax and the proposal to align the tax with state statute.

Motion to refer back to the full City Council the draft changes proposed by Councilor Traverse and the draft proposed language that ratifies the current use of 2% of the STR tax and defers the permanent change to the STR tax.

Motion by Councilor Barlow, Seconded by Councilor Carpenter.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

5. City Circle Ordinance Discussion

City Attorney Brown shared the draft City Circle Ordinance that is available in the agenda packet on CivicClerk.

Attorney Brown clarified that someone would know whether the violation was civil or criminal and failure to attend a civil violation Circle would result in a referral to the Judicial Bureau as is the current practice for civil violations.

Councilor Bergman said the recent changes address the issues brought up previously by the public.

Attorney Brown said that BPD Chief Burke said that officers are looking forward to having a piece of paper to give out that will give directions and explains the process.

Councilor Barlow said he is supportive and is looking forward to having this program be successful. He added that he would like data to be collected to continue to improve the processes.

Motion to refer back to the full City Council the draft ordinance with a recommendation for adoption.

Motion by Councilor Carpenter, Seconded by Councilor Barlow.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

6. Any Other Committee Business

The next ordinance committee meeting is scheduled for August 21 at 4:30 PM.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:22 PM.