



# Ward 3 Neighborhood Planning Assembly

Wednesday, September 3, 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 Zachary Cummings, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee member. A brief welcome statement was made. A motion to adopt the agenda was made, seconded, and approved by a voice vote.

### 2. Attendee Introductions

- **NPA Steering Committee Members:**
  - ✓ Michelle Borbas, College Street
  - ✓ Brooks Cummings, Cherry Street
  - ✓ Zachary Cummings, South Champlain Street
  - ✓ Darrell Fields, Church Street
  - ✓ Christopher Haessly, College Street
  - ✓ Charlie Messing, College Street
- **City Officials/Staff:**
  - ✓ Melo Grant, City Councilor, Central District
  - ✓ Ana-Maria Robu, Dept of Finance and Administration
  - ✓ Barbara Turnbull, Dept of Finance and Administration
  - ✓ Charlie Giannoni, Town Meeting TV
- **Community Members/Public:**
  - ✓ Lee Morrigan, George Street
  - ✓ Cynthia Ziskie, Cherry Street
  - ✓ David Ziskie, Cherry Street
  - ✓ Jill Lesh, College Street
  - ✓ Gail Welch, Elmwood Avenue
  - ✓ Trudy Richmond, Elmwood Avenue
  - ✓ Donna Bister, Peru Street
  - ✓ Damon Lane, Peru Street
  - ✓ Ben Smith, Cherry Street
  - ✓ Emily Dreibelbis, Cherry Street
  - ✓ Christopher-Aaron Felker, Park Street

- ✓ Jeffrey Peterson
- ✓ Debbie Krugipudi, North Champlain Street
- ✓ Shannon Riley, Main Street (via remote attendance)

### 3. Adoption of New Bylaws

Presented by: Christopher Haessly, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee member

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the new proposed bylaws as included with the public meeting warnings.

#### Presentation of Proposed Changes

Christopher Haessly read from a prepared memorandum outlining the key differences between the current bylaws (adopted March 10, 2022) and the newly proposed version. The changes aim to create a more formal, structured, and legally grounded framework.

Key changes highlighted include:

- **Structure:** The new bylaws are more concise, with a shortened preamble and a new dedicated "Purpose" article.
- **Membership & Voting:** The voting age is lowered from 17 to 14 years or older to encourage youth participation.
- **Participation by Non-Members:** New rules restrict non-members from participating in general discussion; they may only speak during the public forum after all members have spoken.
- **Meetings:** The requirement is changed from regular monthly meetings to a minimum of four meetings per year.
- **Quorum:** A clear quorum of 10 members is established for general NPA meetings.
- **Conduct:** Meetings will explicitly follow Robert's Rules of Order.
- **Voting Thresholds:** A two-thirds majority vote is now required for bylaw amendments and the removal of a steering committee member.
- **Public Forum:** The minimum time allocated for the public forum is increased from five to 10 minutes.
- **Steering Committee:**
  - The size is adjusted to be between three and seven members.
  - New eligibility restrictions prevent the mayor, city councilors, school commissioners, and mayor-appointed department heads from serving.
  - Term limits are removed. Previously, members had to step down for one year after four consecutive terms.
  - Duties are restructured into clearer categories (Civic Oversight, Meeting Management, Financial Management, Neighborhood Outreach).
  - Removal of a member now requires a two-thirds vote for "just cause," and the removed member is ineligible for reelection for one year.

### Discussion, Debate, and Amendment:

- A point of information was raised by **Lee Morrigan** regarding a change to the agenda-setting process that was not included in the summary memo. The change removes the ability of a member to add an item to a future agenda via a majority vote at a meeting, placing this responsibility solely with the Steering Committee. The committee explained this was done to remove redundancy, as the state's Open Meeting Law already provides a procedure for amending an agenda at the start of a meeting.
- **Donna Bister** spoke in opposition to the new bylaws, expressing concern that removing term limits would lead to a stagnant steering committee and that reducing the meeting frequency to a minimum of four per year would discourage public participation.
- **Ben Smith** spoke in favor, clarifying that the bylaws state a *minimum* of four meetings, not a maximum, and the committee could continue to meet monthly.
- **Motion to Amend:** Lee Morrigan moved to amend Article 2, Section 3 to add the clause: *"Elected officials representing Ward 3 constituents must be allowed to participate in discussion regardless of which ward they live in."* The motion was seconded.
  - During the discussion, Brooks Cummings argued against the amendment, stating the purpose of NPAs is for neighborhood residents to speak.
  - Councilor Melo Grant spoke in favor of the amendment, explaining the nature of the district representation system and the importance of allowing invited speakers and representatives to participate fully.
  - A motion to call the question and end the debate on the amendment was passed with a vote of 16-3.
  - The vote on Lee Morgan's proposed amendment failed with a vote of 7 in favor and 10 opposed.

### Final Vote on Bylaws:

- A motion to call the question and end the debate on the main motion (to adopt the new bylaws) was passed with a vote of 15-2.
- The main motion to adopt the new Ward 3 NPA bylaws was passed with a vote of 14 in favor and 5 opposed.

### 4. Public Forum

Several members of the community came forward to speak on various topics.

- **Brooks Cummings (Cherry Street):** Expressed concerns about the unpermitted food service in City Hall Park, citing issues with food safety and excessive trash. He suggested a permitting process that includes requirements for cleanup.
- **Trudy Richmond (Elmwood Avenue):** Spoke about gaps in the city's mental health and substance abuse treatment systems, highlighting the complete lack of sober living houses in Burlington and the need for a centralized information hub.

- **Lee Murrigan (George Street):** Announced that this would be his final meeting, stating his efforts to make the space feel safe for the majority of the neighborhood had failed. He concluded by reading a quote from Aurora Levins Morales.
- **Christopher Haessly (College Street):** Acknowledged Lee Murrigan's efforts and spoke on the need for accountability and meaningful consequences for individuals whose behavior harms the community, while also recognizing the lack of sufficient treatment beds and the need for options other than jail for those who refuse treatment.
- **Cynthia Ziskie (Cherry Street):** Stated that addiction is not a choice and that prevention is more effective than treatment after the fact. She also raised safety concerns about improperly discarded needles.
- **Charlie Messing (College Street):** Discussed the difficulty of helping those with addiction and suggested that needle exchange programs are helpful, not encouraging, to a population that is already addicted.
- **Christopher-Aaron Felker (Park Street):** Voiced concerns over the lack of sober living and halfway homes. He spoke in strong opposition to the city moving forward with safe injection sites, citing federal law and the risk of minors using the facilities without parental knowledge.
- **Charlie Giannoni (Town Meeting TV):** Suggested a new room layout for future meetings to improve acoustics and make it easier for all attendees to see and hear each other.

## 5. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Brooks Cummings and was seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:26 PM.