

## Ward 6 NPA Meeting Agenda

Thursday, November 5, 2025

Location: Department of Public Works, 645 Pine Street

### 6:30 Announcements:

- Steering Committee Members present: Nancy Harkins, Mills Forni, Dale Azaria;
  - Anita Rapone on zoom
- Not able to broadcast right now, but will add that when we can
- Greg Epler Wood, presented a petition to City Council
  - Got 65 signatures on the petition
  - Appreciation to Becca Brown McKnight, who helped him on the issue of speeding on South Union Street, which has had a significant increase in speeding and traffic over the last few years (since construction projects started). She wrote to Chapin Spencer (DPW)
  - Chapin brought in Traffic Calming people, but there's a long list of projects in the queue.
  - But South Union is soon to be paved, so that may bump them up.
  - If anyone wants to add their name to the petition, and they live on South Union or an adjoining street, they should contact Greg
- Alan Matson, Ward Clerk
  - No election this month
  - Next election will be in March (Town Meeting Day)
  - People who have worked on elections will hear from Alan later this month
  - Elections will likely be in the Elementary School, as the last one was
  - If anyone would like to work, talk to Alan

### 6:45 Samantha McGinnis, Church Street Marketplace Director

- Director since July, working for Church Street Marketplace for 5 years
- Santa Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting, Fri Nov 28
- Festive Fridays, through December, 4-8 pm
- Window Decorating Contest, Dec 5-14
- Santa visiting
- Free Hot Chocolate
- And more!
- Marketing and advertising to remind folks to come downtown and shop
- Question: Can you do anything about all of the vacant storefronts?
  - In the past, have partnered with Fletcher Library, Frog Hollow
  - Looking for a space for Santa to move into, and she's hearing that many of the vacant spaces are leased as of 12/1
- Winter Market at New BCA Space on Pine Street, another one at City Hall (instead of doing it in City Hall Park as last year)
- Celebrate Burlington: First Quarter tends to be very slow for downtown businesses, trying to encourage activities
- New Winter Lights are coming
- Main Street will be open as of noon on Wednesday before Thanksgiving and fully open through April when construction will pick up again. Two way traffic and parking.

- Vacancy Rate is about 10%, which is higher than we'd like, but there's still a lot of interest
- Foliage Season was strong

#### 7:00 Mary Danko, Fletcher Free Library

- Echoes Samatha's comments that thinks seem to be turning around downtown.
- Wants to promote everyone getting library cards. If you don't have one, come to the library with any proof of residency. And talk to your friends and neighbors about the benefits of having a library card.
- There are two parts to the library: the physical space downtown (which is having some important exterior construction work done). We have books, computers, DVDs, book discussion kits, library of things (cake pans, metal detector, and more). And then there's the online library for e-books, audio books, newspapers and magazines, and more. Access to databases, including grant opportunities, old periodicals, and more. Programming: book discussions, language programs, yoga for kids, storyhour,
- We're part of a consortium with other libraries in the state
- Nonfiction Comic Fest is on November 15
- Library is open to all, but people need to meet behavior standards. Talk to people, be clear about expectations.
  - Security. They used to have a contract for security but switched to hiring directly. That allows the security staff to be better connected to the library, the staff, the space, etc. They think it's working much better.
  - Also, Howard Street Liaison is on site 5 days/week. He's plugged in to services
- She hasn't heard about any significant efforts to ban books in Vermont. But there is also a concern about "soft censorship,"
- Moving towards renovations for the interior: more meeting rooms, more bathrooms, a more flexible youth space. They have a capital campaign committee (in silent phase right now). Also looking at grants. City Council signed an MOU for this project earlier this week.

#### 7:20 Chief Sean Burke, Burlington Police Department

- Interim Chief since March.
- We only have 59 sworn officers, but we also have community police officers (traffic, animal control, noise issues), community support liaisons (social service providers in the field), strong connection with Howard Street Outreach Team (which was developed by the Church Street Mktplace). We still need more officers, but we're developing approaches that enable us to use the officers we have more effectively.
- Street Outreach Team is primary responder for mental health issues
- Community Support Liaison is primary responder for overdose issues
- Police will go to these calls, but can leave once it's safe and the non-sworn staff can continue
- Too new of a system to draw conclusions
- When an employee is not occupied elsewhere, they're expected to be downtown (Marketplace, City Hall Park, etc.)
- A lot of things that people see that feel like disorder are not necessarily a violation of the law.
- Some changes at the hospital, where they are holding more people who might be a threat to themselves and others.

- Special Docket to address the criminal court backlog. This is starting to make a difference.
- Also, getting better connection to services for folks who are pre-trial
- Working on recruitment and retention. There's a lack of people who have the experience to be supervisors.
- State Law Enforcement support (Governor offered assistance). State Police will be on Church St Mktplace. They are not responsible for making arrests. Intended to make people feel safe and be able to enjoy themselves. Also getting help from Dept to Liquor Control (downtown) to ensure that bars are following the rule (minors and over-service). And from DMV for safety on 127, where there are too many crashes.
- Data shows violent crime is down, gunfire is down.
- Recruitment and retention: there are generational changes that are affecting this all over the country. We offer good salary and benefits. But we need better relationship with the community (in order to attract candidates). We had some poor marketing choices in the past, need to move past that. Applications are up about 10%, but still not enough.
- We can't arrest our way out of an unhoused crisis. We can't arrest our way out of a mental health crisis.

#### 8:10 City Council Update, Buddy Singh and Becca Brown McKnight

- DPW put out an RFP about recycling (for a contract instead of public works doing it). Only got one bid.
- Syringe Litter Report
- New Director of the Parks Department was voted in last week.
- Potential Charter Change Ballot items (for March)
  - Debt Authorization
  - Enshrining Office of Racial Equity Inclusion and Belonging in the City Charter

#### 8:30 NPA Business

- We need new Steering Committee Members
- And we have an opening for a representative to the City's CDBG Allocation Committee