



Neighborhood Planning Assembly Minutes

NPA:

Ward
5

Date of Assembly : 11/20/2025

Start Time: (*Commence*): 6:59

Location: DPW

Finish Time: (*Adjourn*): 8:31

Note taker: Jak Tiano

Steering Committee Members in Attendance:

Jak Tiano, Primrose VanWolveear, Jason Van Driesche, FaRied Munarsyah, Lena Greenberg

Discussion Topics	Actions Taken / Decisions Made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● OPC Presentation ● School Redistricting ● Apartheid Free Community Pledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>No actions taken</i>

Agenda Items and Actions:

- 6:59PM: Prim calls meeting to order
- 7:00PM: Opens public forum
 - FaRied Explains People's Kitchen
 - Jak pitches an idea about neighborhood development group
 - Andy explains that there's a need for people to help move benches in in Calahan Park
 - Andy also explains that there's a walk through of calahan park and the new paths coming up
 - Jason makes a plug to go out in the mountains, because winter is here (there)
 - There is a question and a brief discussion about the changes downtown with new police patrols and changing shelter bed situation
- 7:15PM: Jess Kirby Director of Client Services from Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform kicks off the presentation on the Overdose Prevention Center
 - City website under the OPC tab there's a survey for people who live or work in BTV to take, live until December 15th: [Survey link](#)
 - There's also a webinar about the OPC on the city website: [Webinar link](#)
 - These two pieces are the main points of the presentation; opens it up for question
 - Question about the timeline:
 - They don't know when things are going to happen yet because it will depend on siting. Currently on Bank street, but don't have a final location sorted out yet and wont stay on Bank street. This is a big part of the service assessment survey.

- Needs to be walking distance to downtown, so that it's in proximity to where overdoses are happening, and to also alleviate impact of public drug use and discarded syringes.
 - Question from Andy: in the most basic form, could you explain what an OPC is?
 - OPC is an "overdose prevention center", used to be called a "safe injection site", but has evolved over time to be more clear about what it is. The goal is for it to be a harm reduction hub, for people to have low-barrier access to supportive services. It's a way to get people what they need, and to make a connection between harm reduction and recovery, and to help people build trust so they can get better. That being said, there will still be services to help people safely take their drugs and be responded to in the event of an overdose.
- 7:35PM: Tiff, Bram, and Lucia kick off the conversation about school redistricting
 - Today, the redistricting task force met to finalize and approve a report to the legislature, which will come to the legislature on December 1st
 - Bram gives overview
 - Act 73 is spurred mostly by high property taxes, and by the fact that we had the highest per-pupil spending in the country, unequal educational outcomes, and yet schools had fewer kids than ever
 - There were a lot of questions about the optimal size of school districts and class sizes, but also a need to change how funding works
 - Instead, every district gets a per-pupil dollar amount, with additional weights for kids who have higher needs (costs)
 - No more Vermont tax dollars going to out of school states
 - Replacing statewide property tax credit with a homestead property tax exemption based on income.
 - Tiff explains where we are in the process
 - Task force wants to be pragmatic, focused, and data driven
 - Research showed that there was no support for the district sizes proposed, and that forced mergers cause problems; new maps don't address real cost drivers, which are health insurance, special ed, and transportation; locally driven voluntary mergers are best
 - The conclusion is that "Vermont should concentrate on instructional improvement and regional shared-service capacity, not on large or rapid district mergers."
 - Instead: 1) regional Cooperative Education Services Areas designed to actually reduce costs, 2) incentivise strategic voluntary mergers, 3) work toward regionally-governed high schools (particularly in rural areas)
 - Jason asks "Can the Governor actually throw out the task force report?"
 - Tiff says she's not sure, but is hopefully that wont need to happen
 - Lucia gives a BTV framing
 - From the start, BTV's school board have been opposed to Act 73, because there's no data to support that this would save costs, improve operations, and would not increase educational outcomes

- The proposed solution is potentially elegant, and the school board has not met yet since the report came out, but Lucia is optimistic about it
 - Last year Burlington's budget went up, but the tax impact went down. Even with the changes, that should continue to fund the district until the new process goes into place for at least a few years.
 - From an operational perspective, it would be very harmful to the workers and students
- 8:07PM: Apartheid Free Community Pledge
 - For the last two years, city council has stopped a ballot initiative from moving forward, and they would like it to move forward
 - Presenters give an overview of what apartheid is, and its presence in the state of Israel
 - The presenters connect this back to Burlington, and how the money we pay in taxes goes to Israel through the federal government
 - Amy gives a brief overview of what the Apartheid Free Community Pledge is
 - In 2025, 9 towns actually voted on this, and 5 passed it
 - Burlington allows ballot items to go on the ballot with enough signatures, and in 2024 and 2025 they got enough signatures, but the Burlington City Council blocked this from going forward
 - A question about why it's important that we vote on this?
 - The presenter explains that the most important thing is that we vote on it, not that it passes. People have made it clear that they want it on the ballot, and it's important to let that democratic voice carry through.
 - Ben Traverse wanted to mention that because Democratic City Councillors were called out, he wanted to speak to it.
 - Ben says that as city council president he does not plan to put this on the ballot.
 - In a statement he explains that he does not believe that the wording of the question does not allow for safe discussion, in the community, and offers his personal experience in the past.
 - He also offers that he believes that the organizers have not been open to evolving the language.
 - Buddy Singh also offers his own thoughts on the topic.
 - His main focus is on the fact that he feels dialogue is not happening, and that we should focus on conversation over a ballot initiative.
- 8:31PM: Prim adjourns the meeting.