

Ward 6 NPA Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 4 2025

Location: Department of Public Works, 645 Pine Street

6:30 Call to Order, Announcements, Public Forum

Steering Committee members: Nancy Harkins, Dale Azaria; Anita Rapone and Romeo von Hermann online

- Alan Matson, Ward 6 Clerk. Town Meeting Day is in March, looking for people to work the polls. Contact Alan through the City Website (Ward 6). There will also be two additional elections (August and November).
- FaRied, from People's Kitchen, provided dinner to us. They serve dinner downtown for anyone looking for a meal 3 days a week at City Hall Park. They're looking for donations of warm clothes to distribute to our unhoused neighbors. Drop off at 44 Ledge mere Street or contact FaRied at 802-272-8339.

6:36 Opiate Prevention Center Information and Survey, Jess Kirby, Director of Client Services at Vermont Criminal Justice Reform.

- Working to make overdose prevention centers a reality in Burlington. VCJR is partnering with the City to open a center in the future.
- There's a survey – they'd like to get community feedback on what ideas are, where people would want to see it.
- There's also a webinar on the City website. And a forum from a similar center in Rhode Island
- They already have 300 clients, in their recovery and reentry center. Primarily for people who are involved with the justice system. There are a lot of barriers for people in this community getting care. We drive them to treatment, treat with buprenorphine, do wound care, connect with medical services and other services.
- Issues: public drug use, discarded syringes, behaviors related to drug use. We think we'll see less of this if we have this center.
- Siting: they do not have a site yet. They want to hear from the community first, and do a neighborhood assessment.
- The purpose of this project is to prevent overdose deaths and serve people who are at risk. We also take very seriously being good neighbors.
- Question about a statement from the US Attorney General that they intend to prosecute people who are using the OPC. Answer: we haven't seen that with the services we're providing, and haven't heard about that from other centers that are already providing consumption services. Also, they have attorneys advising them.
- Question about timeline: Hard to answer, because we don't know how difficult the siting will be. There are limited sites, site has to be approved by City Council, etc. It won't happen in the next 6 months.
- Question about locations they're looking at. It will definitely be in Burlington, don't expect it to be in Church Street but we do want it in the vicinity where people are currently using drugs, having overdoses. It needs to be close to where the need is. Too many people have trouble getting to the Chittenden Clinic, on San Remo. It's challenging to get a bus pass. Question about

locating on a UVM property. They've talked to UVM but they do not have available space in the Burlington area.

7:00 Petition for an Apartheid Free Community, Paul Fleckstein, Duncan Krepps

- Vermont Coalition for Palestinian Liberation, working on similar campaigns around the state
- Open letter to City Council to let the voters consider this issue
- They made a presentation on apartheid, genocide,
- Vermont Coalition for Palestinian Liberation is working to challenge this and change this. They view it as a local issue. Our tax funds go to support Israel.
- Other VT communities have adopted this pledge.
- We want it on the City Ballot. Need 5% of voters signatures. 2 years in a row they've collected sufficient signatures but the City Council has refused to put the issue on the ballot. This is why they are seeking signatures for an open letter to the City Council and Mayor calling for the pledge to be put on the ballot.
- NPA can vote on a resolution to support the initiative
- Individuals can sign the letter, contact their reps, inform the community, and volunteer
- Comments from City Councillor Buddy Singh were read aloud. He is frustrated that this is coming back for a third time, and that the proponents of the petition haven't been willing to talk about amending the language.
- For further details and individual comments, please refer to the meeting recording

7:34 State Legislative Priorities – connect with your representatives to hear from them and let them know what matters to you! Tiff Bluemle, Bram Kleppner, Barbara Rachelson, Mary-Katherine Stone (invited)

- Mary Katherine Stone: Last year we passed significant health care reforms.
 - Directed the Green Mountain Care Board to shift the payment structure so we can stabilize our hospital budgets and strengthen primary care and home-based services. Another bill
 - capped the mark-up on infusion drugs.
 - Medical debt relief
 - Looking forward, considering how Medicaid changes and cuts are going to impact our system, medical services, and our people. We set aside funds knowing something like this was coming, but it will still be a significant threat.
- Barbara Rachelson: Judiciary
 - New pilot court: to look at defendants who have many charges pending against them.
- Bram Kleppner
 - Legislature's attempt to deal with Property Tax led to focus on Education Costs. Highest spending per pupil in the country, highest teacher-student ratio in the country. Governor wants to go from 110 school districts down to 5, and also change how we fund schools. Starting point was to come up with a new map. The Commission charged with doing that concluded that forced consolidation would not reduce costs or improve education quality. What comes next? Not clear.
- Tiff Bluemle

- State's fiscal position: A lot of the data on which this report should be based is missing. The state economist is struggling to make forecasts given a lack of info. Revenues overall are on target. Transportation budget is struggling because of decreased fuel use and Governor's refusal to raise the gas tax. Rooms and Meals taxes are down. We have very low unemployment (second only to South Dakota).
- Challenges:
 - Health Care Costs
 - Losing federal subsidies and grants
 - Loss of SNAP benefits (10% of Vermonters use this benefit)
 - Less availability/eligibility for fuel assistance
 - Section 8 vouchers (for housing) are at risk, could result in many Vermonters losing rental housing
- We set aside \$\$ to support services in light of anticipated federal cuts
- We're going to lose some things that matter to us. The choices we make are going to be important. We need to find ways to talk about it.

8:15 Adjourn