



# Ward 3 Neighborhood Planning Assembly

Wednesday, December 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 Christopher Haessly, Ward 3 NPA Steering Committee member. A motion to adopt the agenda was made, seconded, and approved by a voice vote.

### 2. Attendee Introductions

- **NPA Steering Committee Members:**
  - ✓ Brooks Cummings, Cherry Street
  - ✓ Christopher-Aaron Felker, Park Street
  - ✓ Darrell Fields, Church Street
  - ✓ Christopher Haessly, College Street
  - ✓ Charlie Messing, College Street
- **City Officials/Staff:**
  - ✓ Melo Grant, City Councilor, Central District
  - ✓ Barbara Turnbull, Dept of Finance and Administration
  - ✓ Charlie Giannoni, Town Meeting TV
- **Presenters:**
  - ✓ Rep. Troy Headrick, Chittenden-15
  - ✓ Rep. Jill Krowinski, Chittenden-16 (via remote attendance)
  - ✓ Rep. Abbey Duke, Chittenden-17
  - ✓ Sen. Martine Laroque-Gulick, Chittenden Central
- **Community Members/Public:**
  - ✓ Susan Dow, South Champlain Street
  - ✓ Susan Forester, College Street
  - ✓ Jill Lesh, College Street
  - ✓ Suki Rubin, College Street
  - ✓ Alan Rubin, College Street
  - ✓ Trudy Richmond, Elmwood Avenue (via remote attendance)
  - ✓ Cathy Olwell, North Prospect Street (W1)

### 3. City Council Updates

Presented by: Councilor Melo Grant (Central District)

Councilor Grant provided an update on the work of the City Council with a focus on Public Safety issues.

- **Mayor Meetups:** Councilor Grant announced a change to the Mayor's community meetups. Starting December 9th, the meetups will move to a new time slot of 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM and will be held virtually to encourage higher attendance.
- **Court Backlog:** Councilor Grant referenced a recent *VT Digger* article regarding the new Chittenden County Court. The court has successfully resolved 152 cases to date, addressing the backlog of defendants with multiple open cases.
- **Public Safety:** Councilor Grant encouraged residents to read the police and fire reports available via the Public Safety Committee meetings. She noted a 2,000% increase in directed patrols, which has led to increased arrests and foot patrols.
- **CARES Team:** Councilor Grant expressed concern regarding the discontinuation of the CARES team (Crisis Advocacy Intervention Programs), noting that their work was not duplicative of the Howard Center and provided essential transport and wraparound services.
- **Early Morning Outreach:** A resident raised a concern that while drug dealers are present at City Hall Park as early as 7:00 AM, street outreach and police presence are often not visible until later (8:00 AM). The resident suggested 7:00 AM would be an ideal time for outreach intervention.
- **Situation Table:** Councilor Grant explained the "Situation Table," a multi-disciplinary group designed to address high utilizers of emergency services by breaking down silos between agencies to create comprehensive treatment plans.

### 4. Legislative Preview

Presented by: Rep. Troy Headrick, Speaker Jill Krowinski, Rep. Abby Duke, and Sen. Martine Larocque Gulick.

- **Budget Overview:** Speaker Krowinski and Rep. Duke outlined a difficult fiscal landscape for the upcoming session, citing federal cuts, tariffs, and a lack of COVID-era funding. The state budget is approximately \$9.1 billion, with significant stress on the Transportation Fund and Education Fund.
- **Corrections (Rep. Headrick):** Headrick expressed grave concern regarding overcrowding in Vermont prisons. Currently, over 150 men are housed in a for-profit prison in Mississippi, and the local women's facility is overcrowded. He emphasized the need for a cultural shift in corrections toward restorative approaches to improve recruitment and outcomes.
- **Education Finance (Sen. Gulick):**
  - 1) **Property Taxes:** A projected 11.9% increase in property taxes is anticipated, partly due to the previous year's buy-down and rising healthcare costs.
  - 2) **Infrastructure:** Gulick noted over \$6 billion in deferred maintenance across state schools.

3) **Reform Proposals:** The redistricting task force is proposing solutions including Education Cooperatives (sharing services like transportation), strategic mergers, and regional high schools to create economies of scale. Gulick argued that simply drawing new district lines without structural reform will not save money.

- **Healthcare (Speaker Krowinski & Rep. Duke):**

- 1) Commercial insurance rates are up 2%, but the loss of subsidies is causing premiums to spike for many residents.
- 2) The legislature is focusing on containing costs and supporting rural hospitals that are currently operating in the red.

- **Community Discussion:**

- 1) **Regional Governance:** A robust discussion ensued regarding Vermont's lack of county government. Several legislators and attendees noted that the lack of regional structure (county-level) hinders economic development and shared services, forcing the state to rely on a patchwork of non-profits and town-by-town governance.
- 2) **Toll Roads:** A resident asked about toll roads as a revenue source. Legislators indicated this is not currently a top priority due to federal funding complexities.
- 3) **Mental Health Facilities:** Residents questioned the lack of involuntary rehab or state hospital beds. Rep. Headrick noted the high cost (\$1 million per bed) and "NIMBY" resistance from communities when new facilities are proposed.

## 5. Public Forum

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

- **Alan Rubin (College Street):** Expressed a desire to replace Ward 3 City Councilor Joe Kane and was directed to participate in the upcoming party caucuses.
- **Brooks Cummings (Cherry Street):** Expressed concern about the Urban Reserve, comparing it to the former Sears Lane encampment. He cited issues with generators, propane tanks, and trash.
- **Melo Grant (City Councilor):** Acknowledged the record number of unhoused individuals and the lack of sufficient shelter beds. She advised reporting specific noise or safety violations to the police/CSLs.

## 6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 PM.