



Ward 3 Neighborhood Planning Assembly

Wednesday, January 7, 2026, 6:30 PM

Join in person: City Hall, Sharon Bushor Conference Room, 149 Church St.

Join virtually: <https://zoom.us/j/98644635243>

Facilitator: Christopher Haessly

6:30 pm **Call to Order | 5 min**

Adopt the agenda and review meeting ground rules.

6:35 pm **City Council Updates | 10 min**

An update on the work of the City Council's Transportation, Energy, and Utilities Committee and the recent proposal related to unaccepted streets.

- *Mark Barlow, City Councilor, North District*

6:45 pm **City Council Updates | 15 min**

An update on the work of the City Council's Community Development and Neighborhood Revitalization Committee and the recent syringe litter report.

- *Allie Schachter, City Councilor, East District*

7:00 pm **Downtown Farmer's Market | 30 min**

A discussion about the possibility of re-establishing a Downtown Farmer's Market.

- *Georgie Rubens, Burlington Farmer's Market*

7:30 pm **City Budget Presentation | 30 min**

A presentation on the current status of the city's proposed FY27 budget.

- *Katherine Schad, Chief Administrative Officer*

8:00 pm **PlanBTV Downtown Fences | 20 min**

A proposed change to PlanBTV related to the height of downtown fences.

- *Sarah Morgan, Principal Planner*

8:20 pm **Public Forum | 10 min**

An opportunity to share opinions, news, and events.

8:30 pm **Adjourn**

Our next meeting is Wednesday, February 4.

Use the QR code to go to any of these links: [Email us](#) • Go to [our website](#) • Watch meeting recordings on [CCTV's website](#) • Connect with us on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) • Request a time slot with the [NPA Request Form](#) • Links from this agenda



Appendix to the Agenda

Ward 3 NPA Ground Rules

- Meetings should have clearly defined agenda and roles.
- Honor Time limits: A best effort must be made to start on time, follow the agenda, and finish on time.
- Wait to be recognized: Members may not speak until recognized by the moderator.
- Listen to others: Make efforts to be an open-minded member of the group.
- Respect the agenda and the process: Try to remain focused on the issue at hand.
- Share your opinion respectfully: Speak out, but not over, others' comments.
- Treat people how you would like to be treated: Be respectful of everyone, including guests.

Public Forum Protocol

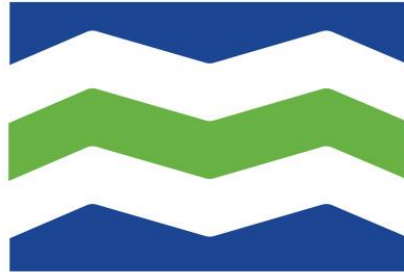
- Community members will be required to sign up for the Public Forum before the start of the meeting consistent with the process used by the City Council.
- Participants will have up to two (2) minutes to share their thoughts and will speak based upon the order in which the requests were received.
- Participants may speak only for themselves and individual speakers will not be permitted to yield their time to other speakers.
- Personal attacks will not be tolerated and the moderator reserves the right to limit comments that are disruptive and/or obscene.
- Ward 3 residents will be given priority and, if there is still time, persons who live outside the ward will be provided an opportunity to speak.

Question-and-Answer Protocol

- Please state your full name prior to asking your question.
- Each participant will have thirty (30) seconds to ask one and only one question.
- There will be no follow up questions so everyone has a chance to participate.
- Ward 3 residents will be given priority.

Discussion and Debate Rules

- Members may not speak until recognized by the moderator.
- Each member will have a maximum of two (2) minutes to speak on questions before the NPA.
- No member will be permitted to speak a second time until every member has had an opportunity to speak once.
- No member will be permitted to speak a third time until every member has had an opportunity to speak twice.



FY27 Initial General Fund Budget Review

Ward 3 NPA

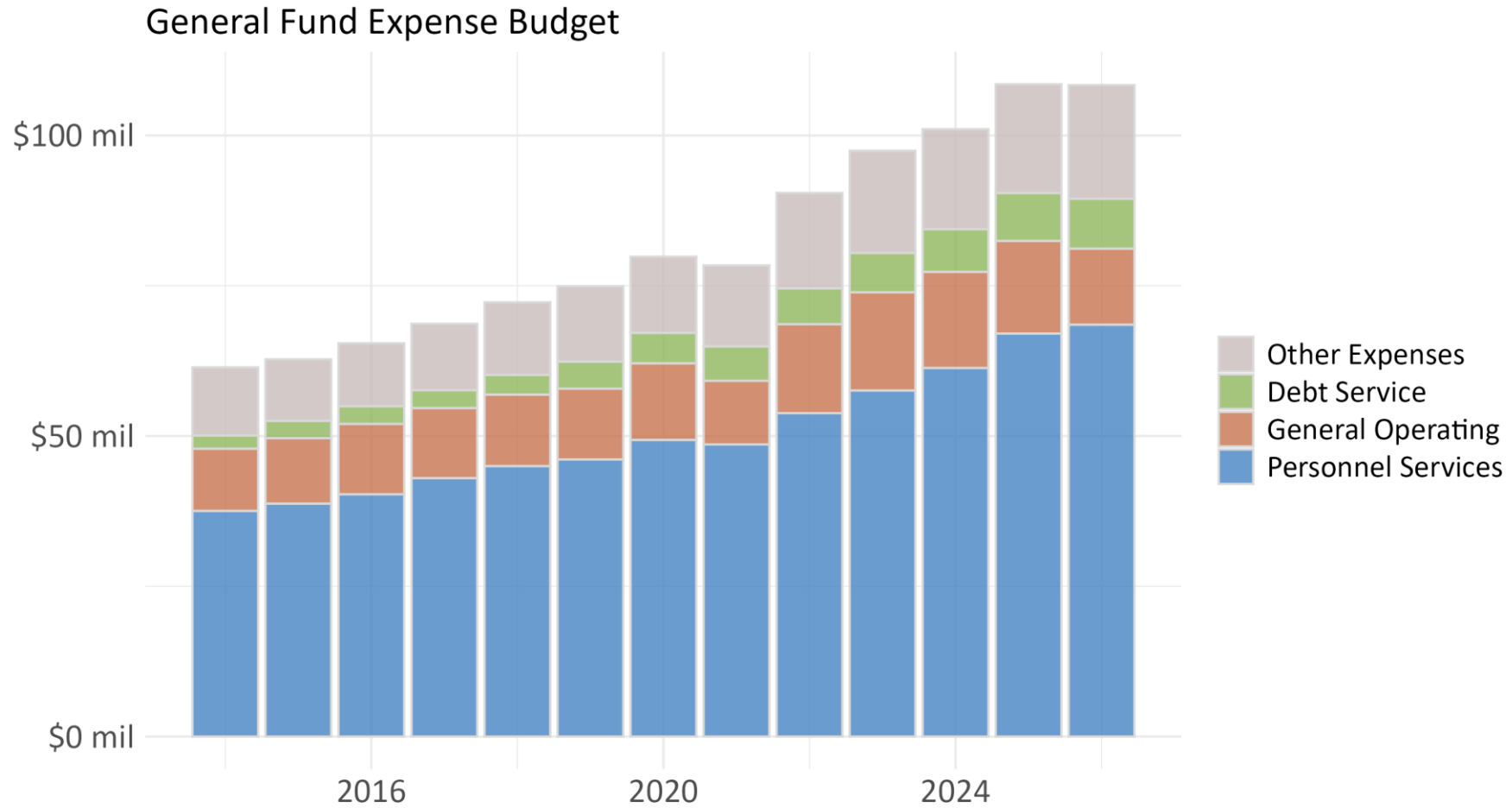
January 7, 2026



What the City Needs: Projected FY27 Expenses



General Fund Expense



Other Expenses includes Regional Programs, Capital Equipment, and Interfund Transfers.



What the City Needs in FY27 - Personnel

- Started with FY26 personnel budget
- Add **2 new firefighters** per BFFA contract
- Add contractually-negotiated **cost of living adjustments**
 - BFFA @ 7%
 - BPOA @ 4.75%
 - AFSCME – negotiations start in January so used a conservative estimate
 - Non-union – used AFSCME estimate as is our recent practice



What the City Needs in FY27 - Personnel

- Add required **annual step increases** for all eligible employees
- Increase **employer healthcare costs by 10%** based on initial estimate and subject to change based on current usage
- Increase **employer retirement costs by 5%** (initial estimate)
- Increase **worker's compensation** insurance costs by estimated **5%**



What the City Needs in FY27 - Operating

- Add 3% for inflation on most other non-personnel operating costs
- Added money have cash available to purchase nine new vehicles on the urgent/dire need list: six are for police & fire and remaining are for parks
 - Since 2013 City has constrained replacement of vehicles and equipment for budget reasons
 - In 2020 fleet committee estimated City needs \$2.7M year for sustainable replacement of fleet
 - City has not yet been able to find any sustainable fleet money in budget
 - Situation has is no longer sustainable for first responders

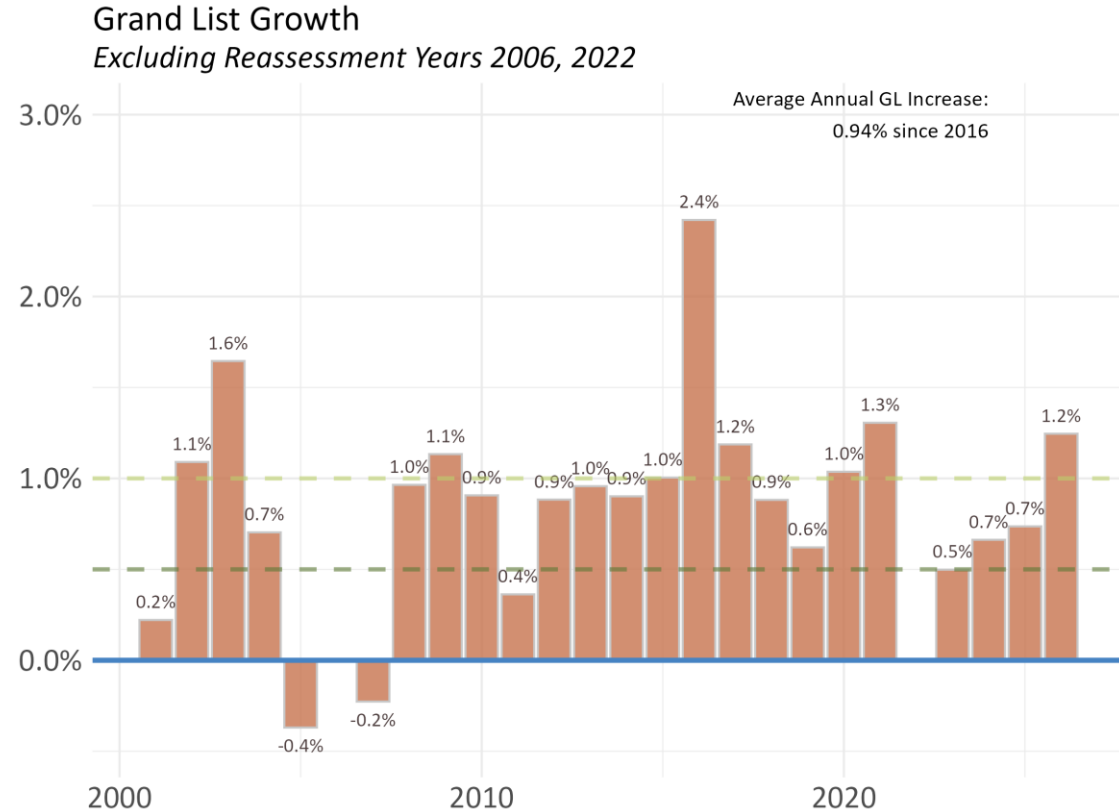


What the City Has: FY27 Revenue Starting Point



Grand List: Foundation for Prop Tax

- Start with new grand list estimate from assessor to create property tax revenue estimate
- This represents approximately half of City's GF revenue in total
- Average annual grand list growth of 1.05% since 2016
- FY27 we do not expect growth in tax revenue due to loss of business personal property tax + continuation of 3 large Waterfront TIF parcels (not paying municipal taxes)





Removing One-Time and Historically Unachievable Revenues

- FY26 Included **\$1.2M of ARPA funding** for police and fire salaries that is no longer available.
- FY26 included **\$650K of one-time increased collection** of delinquent property taxes & gross receipts – removing for further discussion
- P&I revenues and financial services & recording fee revenues overbudgeted in recent years and budget not met – revising downward to make realistic creates an **additional expected gap of \$1.3M**
- All of this adds up to about \$4M of revenue City had in FY26 that is not expected in FY27. The City needs to find a new source of revenue for this or cut this amount of expenses.



Current FY27 Gap Estimate

- There is a budget gap estimated between **\$10-\$12M**
- Will have more precise information after Department Heads update their budgets and health & retirement numbers finalized



Options for Meeting FY27 Budget Need



Budget Landscape

- City is not in a unique position, many others around the country face similar budget challenges post-COVID
- FY27 budget will continue to reposition City to rely on sustainable financial sources
- **As we have done in the past, City will meet this challenge with a mix of cutting expenses and raising revenues**
- Further discussions continue at Board of Finance next Monday



Raise Police & Fire Property Tax

- One option we intend to pursue is **\$.05 increase to police & fire tax**
- **Would raise about \$3M toward projected gap**
- Current police & fire tax projected to raise \$6.4M this year
- In contrast the budgets for those departments are \$39.1M
- Police & fire tax only raises 16% of costs for the services



Municipal Property Tax History

Note \$353K is current median assessed value for home or condo in Burlington



Fiscal Year	Past Muni Tax Rate	Total Muni Tax on \$353K Property	\$ Increase	% Increase
FY22	\$.6704	\$2,367		
FY23	\$.7085	\$2,501	\$134	5.7%
FY24	\$.7523	\$2,655	\$154	6.2%
FY25	\$.8326	\$2,939	\$284	10.7%
FY26	\$.8556	\$3,020	\$81	2.8%



Property Tax Proposed

- The municipal tax rate is made up of 15 different splinter taxes, including Debt Service Tax and Retirement Tax. Those two splinter taxes increase or decrease automatically each year without voter approval to cover actual costs incurred by City.
- This means that by Charter at a minimum FY27 municipal taxes will go up \$.0307 to cover Debt and Retirement expenses.



Municipal Property Tax Proposed

	Proposed Tax Increase	Total Proposed Muni Tax Rate*	Total Muni Tax on \$353K Property	Annual \$ Increase	Total Muni Tax on \$500K Property	Annual \$ Increase	% Increase
Required + \$.05 for Police & Fire	\$.0807	\$.9363	\$3,305	\$285	\$4,682	\$404	9.4%
Required Only – Debt & Retirement	\$.0307	\$.8863	\$3,129	\$109	\$4,432	\$154	3.6%



Other Options

Actively pursuing other options, including but not limited to:

- Cutting City expenses – each department reporting on possible 5% and 10% cut scenarios
- Early retirement and/or voluntary furlough program
- Leveraging City assets
- Use of one-time revenues
- Increased collections of accounts receivables



Summary

- \$10-12M current gap
- Will utilize a varied approach to handle – raising revenue + cutting expenses
- Any potential tax increase needs to be voted on by City Council to put on Town Meeting Day ballot by end of January
- Mayor and I will be back next month to discuss tax increase in more detail
- Full budget presentations by each department will happen in early April
- Budget drafted by Mayor and must be approved by June 30 by City Council



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TO: Burlington Planning Commission
FROM: Sarah Morgan, AICP, Principal Planner
Charles Dillard, AICP, Director of City Planning
DATE: November 25, 2025
RE: Proposed ZA-26-02 planBTV Downtown Code Fence Height

This memo is intended to provide an overview about the proposed changes included in ZA-26-02.

1. Overview & Background

Downtown business owners, their employees, and service providers are facing ongoing challenges related to substance use, hygiene, and safety, particularly in alleys, entryways, and service areas. Due to the rigidity of the planBTV Downtown Code, the Development Review Board has requested a zoning amendment that provides more allowance for taller fences in Burlington's downtown districts.

Currently, Article 14 of the Comprehensive Development Ordinance does not allow for Fences and Free-standing Walls to exceed 4 feet in height when placed in the First Lot Layer. The proposed amendment to Article 14 would create an administrative approval pathway for fences up to 6 feet in height, provided they are transparent.

Staff presented ZA-26-02: Downtown Fences to the Planning Commission during its meeting on October 14th. The Commissioners discussed the complexities surrounding this amendment, including the desire to make sure that Burlington's downtown remain welcoming while also providing more flexibility in the height and materials of fences. As originally presented to the Planning Commission, this amendment made no changes to requirements related to the material of fences, and while it would allow for taller fences, chain-link fences were still not permitted along the frontage line of a property. Ultimately, Commissioners referred to the Planning Commission Ordinance Committee (PCOC) for further discussion.

2. Summary of 11/24 Planning Commission Ordinance Committee Discussion

The PCOC met on November 24th to discuss this amendment and were in agreement that it should take a balanced approach. Committee members share the goal of supporting downtown businesses and also want to prevent this amendment from negatively impacting the City's broader goal of maintaining a welcoming downtown.

During Public Forum, members of the downtown business community spoke in support of the amendment and also requested that the amendment be expanded to allow chain-link fences in certain cases. Committee members acknowledged the benefits of allowing chain-link fencing but expressed concerns about impacting the downtown experience if allowed within or along the First Lot Layer. Ultimately, the Committee agreed that chain-link fences should be permitted only when used to enclose alleyways or loading docks, and that those fences may be up to 6 feet in height.

Committee members did not reach consensus on whether 6-foot fences should be allowed elsewhere in the First Lot Layer, or whether the 4-foot limit should remain in place except in the case of enclosing alleyways or loading docks.

The Committee voted to refer the revised amendment back to the Planning Commission, with the condition that the staff memo reflect that there was and should be additional discussion among the Commission on whether the height increase from 4 to 6 feet should apply more broadly within the First Lot Layer or remain limited to alleyways and loading docks.

4. Proposed Amendment: ZA-26-02

a) Amendment Type

Text Amendment	Map Amendment	Text & Map Amendment
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b) Purpose Statement

The proposed change in ZA-26-02 aims to address challenges related to fence height in Downtown districts.

c) Proposed Amendment

1. Amendments to Article 14: PlanBTV Downtown Code Fences

- Amends Sec. 14.6.8 (b) v. A. Fences and Free-Standing Walls to create an administrative approval pathway allowing for fences to be up to 6 feet in height, as long as they are transparent.
- Amends Sec. 14.6.8 (b) v. B. to allow for chain-link and welded-wire fencing to be used in alleyways or loading docks.

d) Relationship to planBTV

This following discussion of conformance with the goals and policies of planBTV is prepared in accordance with the provisions of 24 V.S.A. §4441(c).

Theme:	Dynamic	Distinctive	Inclusive	Connected
Land Use:	Conserve	Sustain	Grow	

Compatibility with Proposed Future Land Use & Density

The proposed amendment aligns with the land use and density policies outlined in planBTV. Its purpose is to support both existing and future businesses in downtown as the city adapts to challenges related to public health and safety. This change reflects the intent of the "Dynamic" theme, which prioritizes purposeful and economically viable solutions that enable the city to meet current needs and address future challenges.

Impact on Safe & Affordable Housing

This amendment has no direct impact on safe and affordable housing.

Planned Community Facilities

This amendment has no direct impact on planned community facilities.

h) Process Overview

The following chart summarizes the current stage in the zoning amendment process, and identifies any recommended actions:

Planning Commission Process					
Draft Amendment prepared by Staff 9/18/25	Presentation to & discussion by Commission: 10/14/25, 11/24/25*	Approve for Public Hearing	Public Hearing	Approved & forwarded to Council	
City Council Process					
First Read & Referral to Ordinance Committee	Ordinance Committee discussion	Ordinance Committee recommend	Second Read	Public Hearing	Council Approval & Adoption

*Discussed by the Planning Commission Ordinance Committee