

# Ward 5 Neighborhood Planning Assembly (NPA):

## Draft Agenda

Thursday, January 15th

6:30PM-8:15PM



Join in person: 645 Pine Street (DPW Building)

Join virtually: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89574495720>

**Facilitator:** Jason Van Driesche    **Note Taker:** Lena Greenberg

6:30	<b>Community Dinner</b>	30 min
7:00	<b>Welcome &amp; Public Forum</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introductions</li><li>• Open floor for community input</li></ul>	15 min
7:15	<b>Presentation and discussion of Town Meeting Day ballot items</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City staff will present on ballot items.</li></ul>	30 min
7:45	<b>Discussion of Calahan Park Path plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parks staff will share relevant updates and take questions on proposed path, which will require the removal of several large trees.</li></ul>	25 min
8:10	<b>Vote on Apartheid-Free Community NPA resolution</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion followed by a vote; all present who live in Ward 5 are invited to vote <a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1a_h3OECeeRvd4T3tkTEZBcxN2iRv_rwvPI54ThmULpC8/edit?tab=t.0">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1a_h3OECeeRvd4T3tkTEZBcxN2iRv_rwvPI54ThmULpC8/edit?tab=t.0</a></li></ul>	20 min
8:30	<b>Adjourn</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Next meeting will be Thursday, February 19, 2026</li></ul>	



# REIB CHARTER CHANGE

OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY, INCLUSION, & BELONGING (REIB)

January 15, 2026




## REIB Charter Change: What Voters Are Being Asked to Decide

- On March 3, Burlington voters will decide whether to add the Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB) to the City Charter
- The City Charter defines which parts of City government are permanent
- This change would make the REIB a stable, ongoing part of City government.
- Placing the REIB in the Charter helps ensure this work continues consistently over time, regardless of changes in leadership.



### What is DEI in City Government?

*Practical tools to improve systems & outcomes for everyone*

Diversity	Equity	Inclusion
<p>Recognize our community's differences</p> <p>Understand that one-size-fits-all solutions don't always work.</p> 	<p>Address barriers to access and opportunity</p>  <p>Provide fair support so all can succeed</p>	<p>Ensure people feel welcomed and valued</p>  <p>Create spaces where everyone can participate.</p>

*Focusing on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion helps the City serve all its residents effectively and fairly.*

## REIB Charter Change: What the REIB Does and Why it Matters for Burlington

### What the REIB Does in Burlington

- Supports city departments in the development, implementation, and coordination for programs and services to ensure consistency and accessibility
- Provides training and guidance for City staff, boards, and commissions
- Creates ways for community members to engage directly with City government

### Why This Matters for Burlington

- Helps the City and community respond to diverse and community-identified needs
- Supports a strong local economy and community resilience.
- Brings diverse perspectives into City decision-making and builds trust.



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## REIB Charter Change: Budget Clarity

### **Budget clarity:**

- The REIB already exists
- It represents about **0.7% of the City's General Fund**
- At its highest funding level, it has never exceeded **1% of the General Fund**



**Discussion of Proposed Ballot  
Questions:  
Proposed Tax Increase &  
Advisory Question on Tax Fairness**

Ward 5 NPA  
January 15, 2026



**Proposed Ballot Question:**  
**Proposed Tax Increase**



# Budget Landscape

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- City has expected budget gap of \$10-12M
- This is not unique to Burlington – many others around the country face similar budget challenges post pandemic
- 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



# Raise Police & Fire Property Tax

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- 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 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

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- 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

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



# Other Options

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Actively pursuing other options, including but not limited to:

- Cutting City expenses – each department reporting on possible 5% and 10% cut scenarios
- Voluntary furlough program
- Selling underutilized City property
- Use of one-time revenues
- Increased collections of accounts receivables



# Summary

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- \$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
- Full budget presentations by each department to Board of Finance will happen in early April
- Budget drafted by Mayor and must be approved by June 30 by City Council



**Proposed Ballot Question:**  
**Advisory Question on Tax Fairness**



# Background

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- Mayor convened Tax Fairness Working Group to study how to make City's municipal tax system more equitable
- Key finding: **Inequitable property assessment** put heavier burden on people who own lower-priced homes
- Recommendation: Value-based **homestead exemption**
  - Lower-valued homes get bigger relative benefit = "ability to pay"
- Straightforward way to address municipal tax burden on residents



# What is proposed

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- Universal \$30k homestead exemption
  - Minimal threshold to address impacts of assessment inequity
- Proposing **advisory question** for TMD ballot asking if City should pursue this change to municipal tax policy
- Advisory questions are non-binding & allow residents to voice opinion on issue ***before*** Mayor and City Council take action
- If this was something City pursues in future, would require Charter Change



# What \$30k exemption would mean

- **2/3 homestead properties** in Burlington --> reduction of \$150 or more on annual property tax bill
- Non-homestead properties --> 3.1% increase on annual property tax bill
  - City analyses show unlikely to significantly increase rents (\$8 or less/month per unit)
- Minimal overall increase for Ward 5 residents

Ward	Parcels	Homestead Parcels		Non-Homestead Residential Parcels		Commercial Parcels		Median Homestead Assessed Value	Total Grand List	Tax Diff
5	1,700	1,065	63%	545	32%	90	5%	\$453,949	\$1,088M	\$6,752



# Impacts on Homestead Properties

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**Properties assessed at less than \$30,000:** Municipal property tax eliminated

**Properties assessed at under \$200k (N=410):** Median decrease \$210 annually, or about 17% off annual median municipal bill

**Properties assessed at \$200k - \$400k (N=3,089):** Median decrease \$178 annually, or 7% off annual median municipal bill

**Properties assessed at \$1M:** No change to annual municipal bill

**Properties assessed at more than \$1M (N=118):** Median increase \$65 annually, or about 0.6% more on annual municipal bills



# Impacts on Non-Homestead Properties

Possible Impacts on Selected Rental Properties						
Address	Assessed Value	Units	Average Assessed Value per Unit	Municipal Bill	Municipal Bill Change with Exemption	Annual per Unit Change
North Ave Apartments	\$14,065,540	106	\$132,694	\$118,151	+\$3,617	\$34.12
Riverside Townhomes	\$1,314,500	10	\$131,450	\$11,042	+\$342	\$34.20
Pearl St Apartments	\$1,672,700	10	\$167,270	\$14,481	+430	\$43.00
Home Ave Quadplex	\$770,000	4	\$192,500	\$6,468	+\$201	\$50.13
Pine St Apartments	\$11,683,200	49	\$238,430	\$98,139	+\$3,042	\$62.09
S. Union St Duplex	\$738,000	2	\$369,000	\$6,202	+190	\$95.00



# Impacts on Non-Homestead Properties

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## Commercial property examples

**1,000 sq. Ft. commercial condo in Adams Building on South Union St (assessed value: \$119,800)**

- Increase of \$37 in municipal taxes per year

**Zero Gravity Restaurant and Brewery (assessed value: \$4,325,600)**

- Increase of \$1,347 in municipal taxes per year

**Hula (assessed value of \$27 million)**

- Increase of \$8,355 in municipal taxes per year (or 3% more than what it paid for municipal taxes in FY25 (\$270,480)).



# Where to find more information

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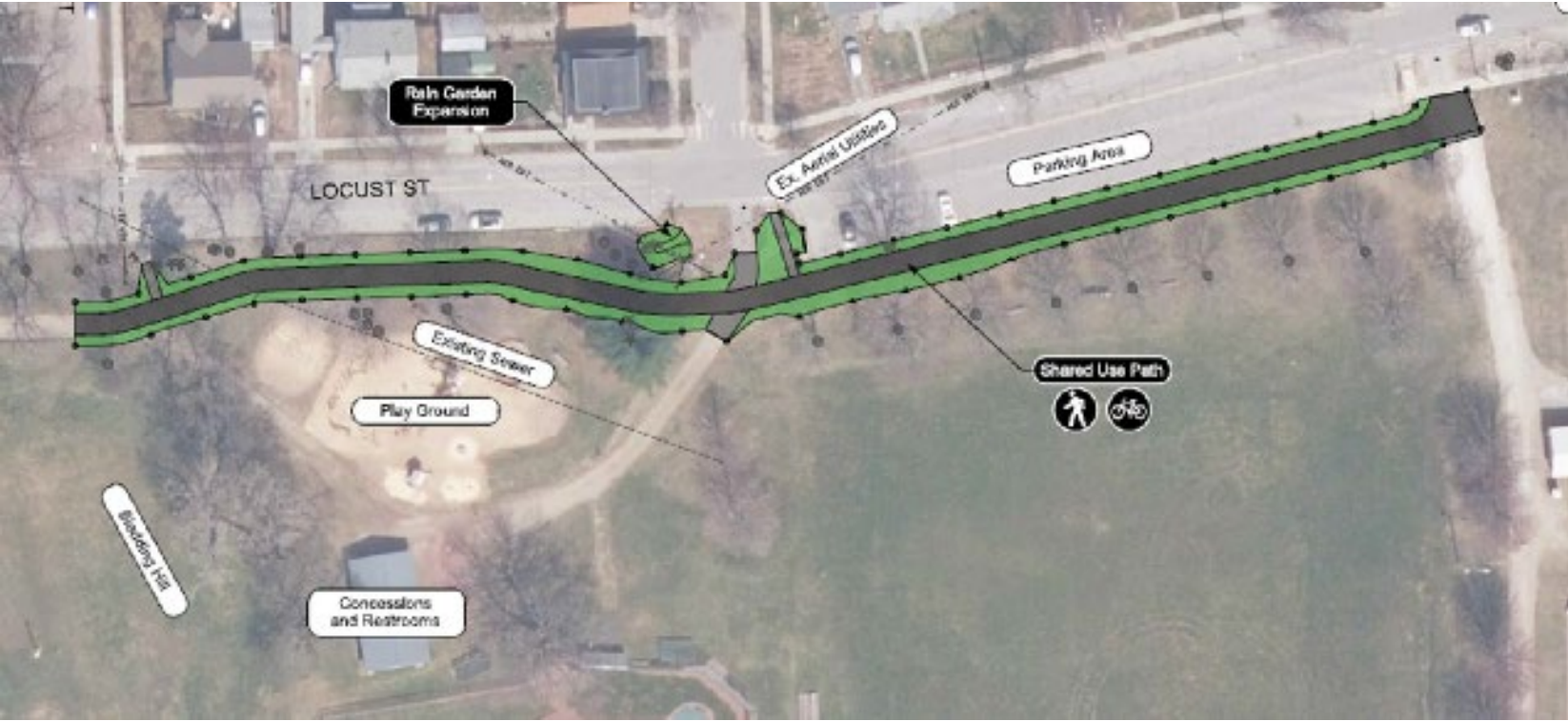
**Memo to City Council – Impacts on Homestead & Non-Homestead Properties**

**Data Dashboard – Modeling Tax Reforms  
on Current Municipal Tax System**



**Tax Fairness Working Group – Final Report & Recommendations**

# Calahan Park Pathway – Phase 1



Ward 5 NPA Presentation  
1/15/2026



# Overview

- Project History
- Timeline
- Project Goals
- Plan Review and anticipated Tree Removals

# Project History

- 2013 Safe Routes to Schools Study
- 2021-22 Calahan Park Comprehensive Plan
- 2022 Application for VTRANS Transportation Alternative Grant;
  - Awarded and grant acceptance approved by council in April 2023; 80/20 Split -
- September 2024 – Presentation of Comp Plan at Ward 5 NPA; providing an update on progress
  - BPRW provided an overview of Phase 1, expected timeline, and invited attendees to attend the Local Concerns Meeting
- October 2024 – Local Concerns meeting

## CALAHAN PARK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Prepared for: City of Burlington, Department of Parks, Recreation and Waterfront  
Report By: Offshoots, Inc.  
April 1, 2022



# Timeline

- NEPA Submitted following Local Concerns Meeting
- March 2025 NEPA Review Complete
- August 2025 Right of Way/Title Search Complete
- November 2025 Filed for Local Zoning/Stormwater Permit
- January 6, 2026 DRB Review and Approval
- Feb/March 2026 Design finalized and bid issued
- Fall 2026 or Spring 2027 Expected Construction

# Goals

- Improve accessibility
  - Create access for people with mobility challenges
  - Create an east-west bike/ped pathway in the Park (eventually) connecting to Pine St and crosswalks
- Resolve stormwater challenges with existing path

# Existing Pathway



- Water runs along path causing erosion.
- Elevation would need to be raised for drainage. This could impact the crabapples along the hillside.

# Existing Pathway



- Path passes through a low point between the building and playground
- Elevating the path to shed water would push water toward the building or playground, which would then need to be piped toward Locust St.

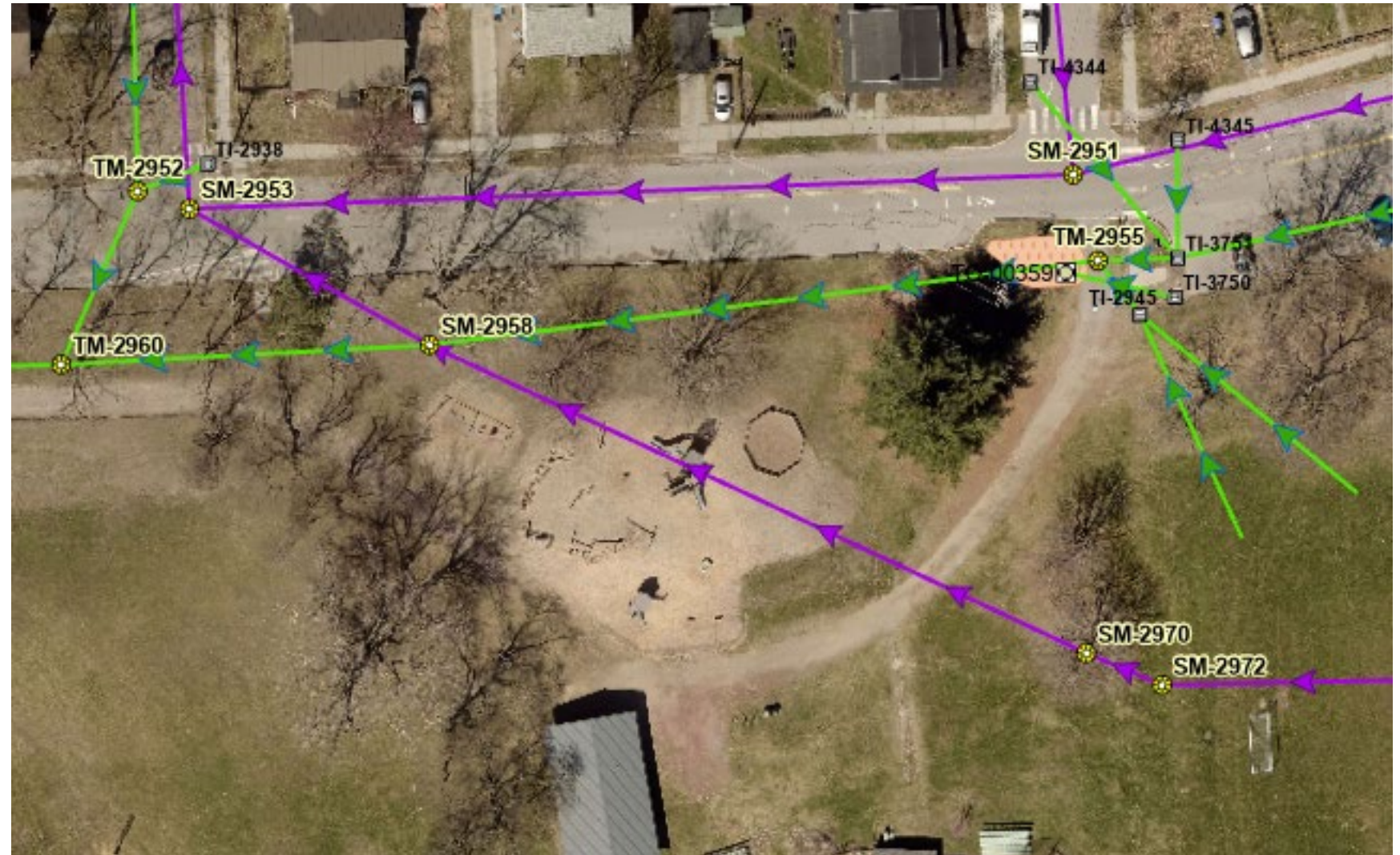
# Existing Pathway



- Continuing to Locust St, due to the berm around the playground water would need to be shed on the side toward the building. This again require installing drainage and piping the water back toward Locust St.

# Why site the path along Locust St?

- By siting the path along Locust St, we can use existing stormwater catch basins, pipes, and the rain garden/detention basin (green lines and gray squares)
  - Reduces cost and complications for construction



# Why site the path along Locust St?

In the long-term:

- We are planning for the future relocation of the building, which we know has structural issues and has been a target for break-ins.
- We are keeping new cycling and pedestrian traffic closer to the street and not directing it in between the playground and athletic fields.



## Ward 5 Neighborhood Planning Assembly (NPA)

### Resolution Urging City Council to Place Apartheid-Free Community Pledge Advisory Question on the 2026 Town Meeting Day Ballot

WHEREAS for two consecutive years, petitions were submitted to place the following non-binding advisory question regarding the Apartheid-Free Community Pledge on the 2024 and 2025 Town Meeting Day ballot: “Shall the voters of the City of Burlington advise the Mayor and City Council to adopt the following pledge? WE AFFIRM our commitment to freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people and all people; and WE OPPOSE all forms of racism, bigotry, discrimination, and oppression; and WE DECLARE ourselves an apartheid-free community, and to that end, WE PLEDGE to join others in working to end all support to Israel’s apartheid regime, settler colonialism, and military occupation.”; and

WHEREAS, in both years, the City verified that the petitions contained a sufficient number of signatures to meet the requirements of 17 VSA § 2642 and Burlington City Charter § 6 (5% of the registered voters of the City); and

WHEREAS, in both years, the City Council voted to block the aforementioned ballot question from appearing on the Town Meeting Day ballot; and

WHEREAS, the City has discretion to include advisory questions on the ballot, and exercising such discretion “... furthers the Council’s ability to balance the efficient transaction of city business with the provisions of a local forum for discussing state and national issues”<sup>1</sup>; and

WHEREAS, there is abundant precedent across Vermont for placing non-binding advisory questions about national or global issues on the Town Meeting Day ballot, including a call for a nuclear arms freeze passed in 155 Vermont municipalities in 1982, a vote opposing the Patriot Act passed in Waitsfield in 2003, a call to withdraw US troops from Iraq in 2005, and a measure opposing the basing of F-35 fighter jets in Burlington passed in 2018; and

WHEREAS, similar petitions to place the Apartheid-Free Community Pledge on the 2025 Town Meeting Day ballot were respected by municipal officials in Winooski, Brattleboro, Newfane, Thetford, Plainfield, Montpelier, Vergennes, Bristol, and Weybridge; and

WHEREAS, in April 2025, the City Council unanimously approved a resolution for protecting free speech on Palestine;

WHEREAS, the pre-condition of responsible and accountable local governance is free speech and democracy;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Ward 5 Neighborhood Planning Assembly urges the City Council to place the aforementioned non-binding advisory question regarding the Apartheid-Free Community Pledge on the 2026 Town Meeting Day Ballot.

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<sup>1</sup> *Cliff v. City of South Burlington* 181 Vt. 571 (2007).