



## Ward 8 Neighborhood Planning Assembly (NPA): Minutes

Thursday, January 22, 2026  
6:30PM – 8:00PM

**Location:** Sharon Bushor Room, City Hall, 149 Church St

**Facilitator:** Tom Carroll **Note Taker:** Barbara Turnbull (DFA Staff)

**Steering Committee Members in Attendance:** Tom Carroll

**Others in attendance:** Ita Meno, Christian Berry, Amy Malinowski, Steven Chisa, Allie Schachter, Marek Broderick, Jen Monroe Zakaras, Nick Brown

**6:30**            **Introductions | 5 min**

**6:35**            **Public Forum | 10 min**

- Ita spoke in support of the REIB Charter Change, the differences between the functions of HR and REIB, the many roles that REIB plays in the city
- Amy shared that the next meeting she will be nominating herself for Steering Committee, and that others should join the Steering Committee!
- Tom shared status updates about the Steering Committee

**6:45**            **City Council Reports | 10 min**

- Councilor Schachter spoke about the upcoming budget process which involves a \$10-12M budget gap for FY27. This is dominating the City Council's work. Potential public safety tax increase which would help close gap by \$3M. Council passed a resolution focused on housing and specifically infill development, implementation roadmap for neighborhood code, inclusionary zoning, housing trust fund, public/private partnerships. UVM dorm resolution was about enforcing housing standards with colleges. Councilors got to tour some dorms.
- Councilor Broderick shared that UVM and Champlain administrators will be coming to the Ordinance Cte meeting to discuss the housing code and process questions. DPI is providing assistance with tracking/meeting standards.
- Ita asked if this is still with the Ordinance Committee?

- Marek: yes, this is an ongoing conversation and will take several meetings throughout Feb.
- Ita asked if it will require a charter change?
  - Marek: no, more likely ordinances.
- Charlie: what about the housing situation for people living outdoors?
  - Jen shared that the City is partnering with CVOEO to open the cold weather shelter for 4 evenings (Fri-Mon) this weekend at the Miller Center. It's a big team effort, also involving the Fire Dept who makes the call whether or not an emergency shelter will open, and Police Dept who provide support.
- Charlie: what is the capacity? Is the state of VT providing any support?
  - Jen: 80-90 people capacity, usually there are fewer people. We haven't had to turn people away. The shelter is funded by state funding via CVOEO state grant and this dictates how many nights the shelter can be open. UVMHC is getting more involved as more people have to receive medical care. Shelter is at the top of the Mayor's legislative priorities.
  - Allie: COTS new waystation opened in December which added capacity. Another emergency shelter is opening with CVOEO.

6:55

#### Town Meeting Day Ballot Questions | 45 min

- Christian Berry presented about the proposal to add the office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB) to the City's Charter which will be on the March 3 ballot.
- Jen Monroe Zakaras presented about the process of developing the City budget for FY27 which anticipates a 10-12M budget gap.
  - Amy proposed increasing fees on blight properties
    - Jen: Mayor has tasked DPI Director Ward with looking at problem properties all over the city. It is something that's being worked on and producing action items. Ultimately it will be drawn out legal processes on a case by case basis. This is a longer term way to raise revenue.
  - Charlie: year after year there are tax increases. What is the plan for increasing the tax base?
    - Jen: We need to grow the grand list by increasing housing. The city has a history of being a housing leader. Also have to balance growth with what the community needs and goal of long term affordability. We also need to secure renter protections which takes time at the state level.

- Charlie: what are some of the reasons why people in Burlington want to keep living here and paying higher taxes?
  - Marek: it's a beautiful place. We need to fund our services and staff. Events that bring our community together.
  - Tom: this is a diverse and progressive city, people help each other, urban fabric benefits the rest of the state
  - Jen: strong community ethos, people really care
  - Allie: Jazz fest and downtown
- Steven: what city properties are we going to sell?
  - Jen: we are looking at vacant lots, unused spaces
  - Marek: this is what we will leverage for public/private partnerships, not just giving it away

**7:40**

### **School Board Updates | 20 min**

- Commissioner Matt Price spoke about the proposed school budget which will be up for a vote on town meeting day. The district looked at many budget models; level funding would have meant over 10% tax increase. Going to cut 10 FTE positions, including by attrition. Declining enrollment over the past decade.
- Tom: Governor is insisting on consolidation, how does that relate to Burlington?
  - Matt: any consolidation won't affect this budget year, our focus was just on this year. VT education is in a precarious place and there need to be changes to make it more sustainable. Task force report showed that forced mergers have a lot of challenges and they couldn't form recommended maps, instead we could share resources between districts. Governor has rejected this and it's unclear what will happen.
- Tom: 2 grandsons in Burlington schools. There are great resources and staff. The diversity is very important. We spoke earlier about what makes Burlington worth supporting, could you comment on that?
  - Matt: we do a great job at educating a wide variety of students. A few years ago the state decided to fund schools based on student needs rather than a flat amount per student. That formula has benefited Burlington. Now with Act 73 that funding formula is going away.
- Steven: are we getting cost savings from not renting the mall?
  - Matt: we were paying a lot of rent for Macy's. That is a big cost saving. The new high school came in \$6M under budget and we

won't need to pay debt service/interest on that savings. It will be the newest school building in VT for many years to come. We hope it can be a magnet for students in the area.

- Marek: Why Burlington, why BSD, why vote for these tax increases?
  - Matt: This budget was created thoughtfully and responsibly. We needed to make the ask as small as possible. Our schools drive our city forward and they are an investment in our future, we have one of the oldest populations in VT and need to grow our workforce. Great schools also attract young families to Burlington so people set down roots here.

**8:00**

**Adjourn**

- Our next meeting will be Thursday, February 26.

**Ward 8 Steering Committee:**

Tom Carroll, [fourthriver@yahoo.com](mailto:fourthriver@yahoo.com)