

Wards 4/7 NPA Meeting
February 28, 2026
Notetaker: Annie Lawson, Ward 4

6:35: Adopt agenda, vote on motion to extend meeting by 15 minutes, to allow recently-added candidates to the agenda and allow same amount of time for all candidates. Motion passes.

Open forum: Community Announcements

- NNE Food Pantry: Please remember food and clothing drive on last Sunday of month, 11:00-1:00
Now serving between 60 and 75 guests every Saturday, and that same amount every Sunday
Fully supported by donations since membership in VT Food Bank is still pending
Volunteers always welcome
- Lizzie Post:
North Ave near Flynn: A survey about temporary speed bumps. Please fill out survey for options other than Speed bumps due to shaking of homes when busses go over bumps. Please fill it out for bump outs, or another options besides speed bumps.
- Monica Ivancic: a ballot item is commissioner pay for school commissioners; currently these are not paid positions. This will support better representation on the board, including those who might need to pay for child care to attend meetings. Voting for \$24,000 total (\$2,000) each. This would not come from an increase in taxes: current budget includes some money already.
- Emily in Ward 4: thinking a lot about rapid response readihood for our neighborhood and wondering what we as a neighborhood can do if ICE comes here. Can this be an agenda item? Identifying roles, risk levels, etc.
- Olivia Taylor: asks for election support in the Ward 7 polling place.

Agenda Item:

- Dr. Kelli Perkins, Director of REIB office, presents on proposed charter change coming up on TMD. City Charter outlines which offices are current. REIB efforts have been a part of city government since early 2000s, incorporating the office into the Charter helps give it more permanent infrastructure. What is DEI in city government? Practical tools to help understand and look at how things work: who is reached by systems and services, and whether they work for folks who rely on them. Systems and outcomes. Burlington is second most diverse city in the state: lots of differences and diversity. Recognizing the differences among us shows that we can't have a one-size-all approach. DEI recognizes that we don't all start from the same place. Current scope of REIB's work: trainings, supports city departments, implementation, creates ways for community members to engage directly with City government. Also Committee meetings as part of City Council so folks can engage directly with councilors. Why this matters: identifies needs; supports strong local economy and community resilience; brings diverse perspectives into city decision-making and builds trust. Budget clarity: the REIB already exists. No further funding is needed. The ballot question asks whether it should be formalized into City Charter. REIB only represents 0.7% of general budget; it has never exceeded 1% of general fund.
- Mayor Mulvaney-Stanack: talking about structural budget gap, which is the result of rising health care costs for City employees and pensions, and the fact that the City has been using one-time funding for many budget items. A gap of \$10-\$12 million in City Budget. One option: raise a 5-cent increase to the dedicated taxes for police and fire (can only be spent here). This would raise \$3M. Overall expected increase to compensation and benefits for FY27 for police and fire. Municipal tax effect: increases \$285 per household, per year. Questions taken from attendees.

Agenda Item:

- Monica Ivancic: Presenting on school budget. This is an estimated budget because the full city budget won't get passed until June. The assumptions that go into the budget include: Wages: 5% increase based on pattern of settled bargaining agreements; Benefits: 8% increase in health insurance premiums; Debt service: 6.6% the last major increase associated with the new high school; \$2 m of program costs in excess of federal revenue; Rent savings of \$2m based on not having to pay for downtown rent; An existing surplus of 2.4m that has gone toward paying down the cost of new high school. Steadily decreasing student enrollment

since 2011. Some causes are the reduction in resettled families coming from other countries to Burlington. The decline in student enrollment has to be considered when the budget is created. And the decline in student numbers here is less severe than in many other communities around the state. Superintendent's recommendation: 140million. A 4.7% increase, but the current year's budget produced a tax rate that was 4.5% LOWER than FY25. In the absence of the \$75m tax buy down, the tax rate would be 8.99%. This isn't a sustainable rate of funding the system. Gov Scott extended the tax buyout for one more year even though this isn't sustainable. Some funds come from state of VT, other sources from federal government. Act 27 makes funding across state more equitable. So we are finally getting our fair share of funding, but with the new high school project, that savings went away. The actual tax increase is 4.7%, not 6.4%: the 6.4% number is the difference in per-pupil spending since the last year. If the budget fails to be approved, it would lead to more cuts. There are currently 11 teachers being cut from school district to meet existing budget. If not approved, more cuts would happen. We are not the highest paid school district: Those are, in order, South Burlington, Essex, and MMU. They may ultimately have to close an elementary school, since numbers are going down.

Agenda Item: Introductions from elected officials on the Town Meeting Day ballot, with time for each to take questions from attendees:

Candidates on the Ballot for TMD:

- Evan Litwin, Ward 7 City Councilor
- Bill Standen, Ward 4 City Councilor
- Sarah Carpenter, Ward 4 City Councilor
- Polly Erickson, Ward 7 School Commissioner
- Melissa Zygmant, Ward 4 School Com

8:20: Motion to Adjourn.