



**BURLINGTON BOARD FOR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS
POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMUNITY ROOM, 1 NORTH AVE, BURLINGTON, VT, 05401
OR REMOTELY VIA ZOOM.**

**MINUTES OF
MEETING
May 5, 2026**

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members in attendance: Annie Schneider, Alison Harte, Karen Rowell, Colleen Montgomery, Michelle Lefkowitz, Janet Stambolian, Jeanne Keller, Grace Grundhauser, Kevin Lewis, Lauren Ebersol, Lesley Gendron, Adam Franz, Youth Member Will Cunningham

Also present: Sarah Montgomery, Assistant City Clerk

1. Agenda

Karen Rowell made a motion to adopt the agenda. Seconded by Kevin Lewis. Passed unanimously.

2. Announcements

Annie Schneider said she would be unable to work on Election Day in August.

3. Meeting Length

The meeting was set to end at 7:00.

4. Adopt Minutes

Jeanne Keller made a motion to adopt the minutes. Seconded by Colleen Montgomery. Passed unanimously.

5. Public Forum

Jill Lesh from the VT League of Women Voters said she was joining to observe.

Melo Grant spoke about the meeting location, stating that when she was on the Police Commission they had heard from community members about not feeling comfortable meeting at the Police station. She suggested the board consider an alternate meeting location.

6. Clerk's Report

Sarah Montgomery reported 29,603 currently registered voters. Out of that total number, 6,548

are challenged. In April, there were 123 new registrations, 29 voters were removed from the checklist, and 108 voters were transferred to other Vermont towns.

7. Approval of Voter Challenges

The board reviewed the proposed challenge list, which contained 26 voters. Lesley Gendron made a motion to approve. Seconded by Annie Schneider. Approved unanimously.

8. Political Composition of the Board and Litigation Status

Prior to the meeting, Grace Grundhauser shared a brief comment from the City attorney's office with the board via email, which gave a status update on the pending litigation against the City regarding the composition of the BRV. The statement explained that litigation is still pending and the court will make a ruling, which will determine the correct interpretation of the city charter.

Will Cunningham offered to share a summary of the two sides of the litigation.

Jeanne Keller questioned whether it was appropriate to have this discussion since the litigation is still pending, and the ruling will be coming from the court through the City Council to this board. She added that she doesn't think it is the role of board members to be interpreting the litigation, or trying to influence each other's opinions.

Karen Rowell said she finds it disheartening that the City is fighting to keep Republicans off of the board.

Jeanne Keller made a motion to table the discussion about the litigation. Seconded by Janet Stambolian. Vote called.

Yes: Janet Stambolian, Jeanne Keller, Michelle Lefkowitz

No: Kevin Lewis, Lesley Gendron, Lauren Ebersol, Karen Rowell, Alison Harte, Annie Schneider

Abstain: Grace Grundhauser, Colleen Montgomery, Adam Franz

Motion to table failed.

Will Cunningham clarified that his intent was just to be informative since this case does pertain to the board, not to try to persuade one way or the other.

Lauren Ebersol asked if the attorney's office expected a ruling to happen prior to the appointments. Grace Grundhauser answered that it is unclear when the ruling will come out.

Jeanne Keller commented that it seems like depending on how the judge rules, the situation could be rectified in favor of the ruling.

Alison Harte suggested that Will could share the summary via email, and board members could

read it for their information.

Annie Schneider supported allowing Will to speak.

Lauren Ebersol noted that it is important to understand the situation since it will have ramifications on the board, especially in advance of the August election.

Will Cunningham summarized the litigation, explaining the City's defense, and well as the argument of the plaintiffs.

Annie Schneider asked what would happen if the current two members, who are currently serving as chair and vice-chair, are not reappointed. She noted that this would mean a loss of a significant amount of institutional knowledge. Grace Grundhauser noted that she is likely not reapplying.

Annie Schneider suggested moving onto the next agenda item.

Councilor Melo Grant noted that it was important to have qualified candidates who will support voters' rights, regardless of their political party. Members called for a point of order since this portion of the meeting was not open to members of the public.

9. Communication to City Council re: Board Member Appointments

Kevin Lewis had drafted a communication to City Council after conversations last meeting, which Grace shared with the board via email prior to the meeting.

Karen Rowell appreciated the draft communication and commented on how well written and thoughtful it is. She suggested adding a statistic that indicates how many Burlington residents voted for a Republican in a recent election, to show the political representation of Burlington voters.

Kevin Lewis responded that the communication was drafted with the spirit of collaboration. He would hesitate to add language that would encourage them to consider specific parties.

Lauren Ebersol said she thinks it could be helpful to highlight the tri-partisan representation of the state, rather than explicitly listing percentages, since there is no party registration in VT.

Jeanne Keller noted that she felt adding a statistic would make it feel like the board was giving the City Council a quota to fill, and thinks the language would make it seem like the board was supporting one side of the litigation.

Karen Rowell said she was interested in adding that language due to the make-up and attitude of the council, but is open to it moving forward without that specific language. She would like collaboration, but feels like with the current make-up of the board, her perspective is often dismissed. She said that having only one Republican on the board does not represent the make-up of the city.

Janet Stambolian stated the City Councilors are aware of the existing issues, so the intent of the

communication should be clear without adding in specifics.

Will Cunningham asked what members thought of Lauren's compromise, which was to exclude specific data, but including an acknowledgement that Burlington residents are represented at multiple levels of government by tri-partisan government.

Colleen Montgomery noted that there are four parties in Vermont. She disagreed with adding the specific percentages or language speaking to the specific parties and supported the document as drafted.

Annie Schneider said she appreciated the letter, but is unsure if there will be any impact in sending it.

Alison Harte said the letter was fair and well written. She asked if the intent was for the board to make a motion to send the letter tonight, or at the next meeting.

Adam Franz suggested adopting the letter as drafted. He noted that he disagrees with a lot of what Republicans are trying to do with voting, but does agree that he would be uncomfortable with being the only person of his party on the board.

Lauren Ebersol made a motion to extend the meeting by 10 minutes. Seconded by Colleen Montgomery. Passed unanimously.

Jeanne Keller said she would vote against sending the letter to the City Council. She noted that it is valid to discuss this among the board, but is wary of sending this communication and it being published on the news, further exacerbating the situation.

Janet Stambolian said the board does represent different parties, but they are also meant to represent all of the residents in Burlington. Due to this she does not feel like it is the role of the board to step into a political role.

Grace Grundhauser noted that the board members are not elected officials, they are appointed, so they are chosen by the city councilors, rather than the voters.

Alison Harte said she does not see the communication as political, or as telling the City Council how to do their job. The communication is asking for a fair and unbiased appointment process. She asked if it might make sense to have members who agree with the letter sign it individually, rather than it coming from the whole board, if the whole board does not support it.

Colleen Montgomery said the letter would not have been written if the board did not have an issue with how the appointments are made.

Kevin Lewis added that he suggested this letter after hearing Karen's perspective, but also due to the partisan process he went through when he was appointed. He said that if a councilor feels criticized by the letter, it could be an opportunity for them to reflect on the process. He noted that the letter highlights cooperation and transparency.

Annie Schneider said that the partisan appointment process is how appointments are, and have

always been, made. If that is the issue the board is trying to address, that is what should be explicitly said in the letter.

Lauren Ebersol said the board is appointed with their parties listed, so in part at least, it is by nature a partisan process.

Karen Rowell noted that the City is fighting against having Republicans on the board, and thinks the letter would help by sending a strong message.

Jeanne Keller said that Karen's comments prove how the letter is going to be used in order to advise the Council to add Republicans to the board. She said this letter should not be sent since it is not appropriate for the board to take a stance on the pending litigation.

Alison Hart suggested tabling the discussion due to the time.

Colleen Montgomery made a motion to extend the meeting. Seconded by Annie Schneider. Vote called.

Yes: Annie Schneider, Karen Rowell, Lauren Ebersol, Colleen Montgomery, Lesley Gendron

No: Janet Stambolian, Alison Harte, Michelle Lefkowitz, Jeanne Keller, Adam Franz

Abstain: Grace Grundhauser, Kevin Lewis

Motion failed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15pm