

Parks Commission Meeting

May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 5:30pm

645 Pine St., Front Conference Room & Zoom

Commissioners in Attendance: Lantieri, Mobley, Etter, Johnson & Bergmann

Staff in Attendance: Lewis, Sauve, Cahill, Cotton & O'Daniel

**1. Agenda**

**1.1 Motion to amend/adopt agenda**

The meeting began at 5:33pm. Mobley made a motion to adopt the agenda, Etter seconded. All were in favor, none opposed.

**2. Consent Agenda**

**2.1 April Minutes**

**2.2 Calahan Park Special Use Permit (CKS)**

Etter made a motion to adopt the consent agenda, Bergmann seconded. All were in favor, none opposed.

**3. Public Forum – Time Certain, 6pm**

The public forum was opened late and no one was present at the time, but one member of the public sent a message via Zoom in regards to the e-bike/motobike discussion that read: “An e-bike can be pedaled under rider power and I think those should still be allowed wherever normal bicycles are allowed. Completely different are electric motorcycles which cannot be pedaled and those should have some amount of enforcement as they need to be licensed, insured, and registered. I feel that it would be a misstep to limit e-bikes. Motobikes should be forbidden and enforced.”

**4. Deliberative Agenda**

**4.1 Coach of the Year**

Sauve shared a video compilation of the volunteer coach of the year, Carmen Smith. She then read the congratulatory write-up about why she was picked as the coach of the year as well as community testimony for how dedicated to and important she is for youth basketball.

**4.2 Skirack Bike Rentals**

Lewis began by sharing that in the Spring of 2025 the Commission approved the use of a city right-of-way just north of Echo for Skirack to host a bike rental operation. He continued that the typical rate charged for this type of operation is 10% of gross sales by the vendor, but due to the impacts of the city construction in the downtown core, they were granted a reduced rate of %5 and are requesting this again for 2026 due to the continued impacts of the city construction. Lewis shared that this was and continues to be supported by Public Works. He then shared his screen to show where this kiosk would be set up if approved.

Lantieri asked if Burlington Segway still had a presence.

Lewis answered yes and that they are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of a 3 year RFP agreement.

Etter asked if they were at 10% or 5%.

Lewis answered 10%.

Etter made a motion to approve the request for Skirack to operate a bike rental kiosk in the College Street right away at a 5% gross sales rate for the 2026 operational season, Mobley seconded.

All were in favor, none opposed.

#### **4.3 FY27 Budget Process**

Lewis began by sharing his screen. He noted that this FY27 proposed budget presentation was made to Board of Finance last week and is currently under consideration by the City Council. He continued that they are anticipated to have a conversation at the June 15<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting, so over the next month or so they will be looking at all of the individual budgets as presented in preparation for further conversations about the approved budget, which needs to be adopted by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Lewis continued by noting that this document was put together with staff at all levels working in collaboration with people in finance and under the leadership of the Mayor. He specifically recognized the 3 division directors, Sauve, Roach and Moreau, who he shared worked diligently with the managers and their staff to make sure they looked at this collaboratively to move forward in the best way possible. Lewis began the presentation by sharing the organizational structure and chart of the current Department, noting that there was a small reorganization in April as a follow-up to the RIF process last year to align resources in a way to have as supportive of a structure in place as possible. He continued that there will be 2 Recreation Managers who will report directly to him – noting that one position is currently vacant, but will hopefully be filled soon. Each manager will oversee a facility, which will involve rentals, athletics, camps, recreation programs for all ages and abilities, as well as working closely with BSD and partners.

Mobley asked for clarification about the vacant positions in the Recreation Division. Lewis confirmed that they will be filled, and all of them are currently in process. He shared that they will have 9 dedicated positions, 4 of which have been vacant, which has been very challenging for the people who have remained through this transition. He continued by explaining the structure of the Waterfront Division and the Planning & Development Division. Lewis then reviewed the Parks & Central Facilities Division, which is the largest division in the Department. He then shared some FY26 highlights, including – a successful July 3<sup>rd</sup> event, operating summer seasonal programs at capacity, reaching 10k followers on Instagram with that number continuing to increase, the opening of the Burlington Bike Park, the new Director was hired, the adoption of the Burlington Open Space Plan, emergency cold weather shelter dates at the Miller Center with a total of 239 individuals and 773 beds used over the 12 nights it was activated, the re-assignment of staff reporting structures, expanded the vendor permit program along the waterfront and aligned tasks to reflect work distribution and finalized the org chart. He then shared some cost saving measures for FY27 including – holding a custodian position open, which will impact services by 12% and they are currently working to try and identify

ways to lessen this impact, and the reduction of part-time/seasonal staff at Oakledge Park, which will reduce staffing coverage from 7 days a week to 4, so they are working to cover this gap in other ways.

Etter asked if only Oakledge was going to see a reduction in staff.

Lewis answered that it is the only park that has really had that kind of staffing presence, so yes.

Etter asked if this impacts people's ability to reserve things.

Lewis answered no, the spaces will still be prepped for rentals and they are working to fill the gaps.

Lewis continued that the Department-wide service reduction, which will be approximately a 7% reduction and will result in about a \$271k savings, will involve tightening belts across the board when it comes to materials, supplies and contractual services, reduction of staff training and recreation program scholarships (4%, \$1,500), reduction of internally produced events, elimination of annual flower planting and landscape bed maintenance at all parks (excluding City Hall Park), the reduction of watering and turf materials such as grass seed and fertilizer and the reduction of facility reinvestment projects across all divisions (limiting the ability to repair and replace public-facing infrastructure).

Etter asked about increasing BPD's enforcement in parks to reduce damage and vandalism to facilities etc.

Lewis answered that they are challenged with resourcing their core service areas and will most likely just be responding to events that are safety related, not adding patrols to parks in. He shared that the Department does work closely with them if we are noticing something that is regularly occurring to make them aware and increase their presence as they have resources available and vandalism is not something that typically rises to the top.

Etter followed up by asking if there was anything internally with Parks that was being done to address the vandalism.

Lewis responded that the more you allow vandalism to set the more prevalent it tends to be, so the Department is really trying to get on top of it at the beginning of the season.

Mobley noted that there used to be a program through CEDO where UVM students would volunteer to remove graffiti.

Lantieri chimed in that he did not believe CEDO, or any other City Departments, are operating any volunteer programs like that anymore.

Lewis responded that with the reductions to staffing and budgets over the past few years that the focus has been on keeping the core business moving forward.

Lewis continued by sharing the FY26 amended revenues and expenses and the FY27 proposed revenues and expenses, noting that revenues have gone down 5.6%, which is an adjustment based on the CORE closing and right sizing some revenue predictions. He also noted that expenses have gone up 3.4%, which is tied to increased utilities as well as salaries, wages and benefits. He reiterated that the Department is proposing a 7% general fund reduction based on the current fiscal year subsidy, but there will be a net increase in general funds this next year based off right sizing revenues and looking at

expenses that are required in order to do business. Lewis then shared opportunities moving forward, including how the new organizational structure will help stabilize and strengthen the Department's collaborative and supportive culture and the revision of BPRW's comprehensive plan, creating a community supported vision for the next decade, which will be a critical roadmap for the Department. He then shared that some areas of concern are the continued loss of Canadian tourism and the impacts of encampments on staff resources, capital assets and revenue. Lewis then shared three more opportunities moving forward, including the full activation of Waterfront Park for events, the new Leddy Arena Manager and after a time of challenges and transitions the Recreation Division is going to be set up to be successful moving forward with a full team working with the resources available to maximize opportunities for the community. Lewis then summarized that the Department will continue to provide a high level of service to the community within the allocated resources, there will be a lack of resources for repair and replacement of park and facility infrastructure and the Department will continue to identify grand opportunities.

Etter asked what the expectation across all of the Departments will be.

Lewis answered that all of the Departments were challenged by the Mayor to reduce budgets by 10%, with some of them being a little higher and some a little lower. He shared that they struggled to get closer to that 10% given the reductions that happened last year and told them the 7% was as close as they could get while still being operational in the way the community expects. He felt this was acknowledged.

Lantieri asked if there was a chance this proposal would not be approved.

Lewis responded that he hoped not, and feels there has been full transparency on all fronts throughout this process.

Etter asked if the reductions do need to be increased if there was a plan.

Lewis answered no, but that if there are any further reductions required beyond what has already been identified it would most likely either be closing facilities or cutting positions, but the City's focus has been to not cut people as much as possible. He's hopeful that this is the last piece and will be approved by City Council.

Lantieri asked if there were any updates about charging for services between City Departments.

Lewis answered no and that this would most likely be more of a longer term conversation since it would involve a lot of balancing and gray areas.

Lantieri feels it could be a potential opportunity to review transfers between departments and see the flow in and out, and maybe define some of the activities that could be revenue generating (or at least neutral).

Lantieri asked if there is anything with volunteers being included, such as in-kind donations.

Lewis responded that while volunteer work is a generally recognized value in the volunteer work hour as a national standard, the Department is challenged with not enough administrative support to track or support this at this time.

#### **4.4 Comprehensive Plan Update**

Sauve began by giving an overview of the open house on April 30<sup>th</sup>, which was a great success with 14 stations for the public to interact with, and a constant flow of people from 3:30pm – after 8pm. She then went through the slide show that was playing throughout the event, starting with the logo which represents the 4 coordinated plans that will guide how Burlington evolves and adapts over the next 25 years – the municipal plan, a transportation plan, a comprehensive economic development plan and a Parks, Rec and Waterfront plan. Sauve then touched on the timeline for these plans over the next year, noting that there's still visioning and engagement that will be happening, like dedicating time to certain focus groups, recognizing that there was a certain demographic at the open house and some voices were missing which is who they want to target for opportunities moving forward. She shared that the Planning team will have 2 interns this summer who will be going out to parks and do intercept surveys, so working with Parks staff to identify times when people will be in parks and also just do observations on park usage and collect data. She then shared various data shared out at the open house, such as who are the residents of Burlington, population ages, population size, household income, median sale price for homes and rent costs, what kind of jobs don't earn enough to live in Burlington, and cost-burdened households. She noted that new legislation requires Burlington to add roughly 7,000 new units by 2050, which is a big theme throughout PlanBTV. Sauve then briefly touched on the economic development slides. Next, Sauve went through BPRW's slides, with the first few highlighting the different kinds of places the Department stewards and the range of programs and initiatives it manages, not all of which are obvious or known. She continued by noting that it has been a decade since BPRW's last planning process and touched on some highlights that have happened since then, including – 6 park comprehensive plans and siting studies, Oakledge Park universally accessible playground, widened and expanded most of the Burlington Greenway, new department logo and Marketing Manager, expanded youth athletics programming and major improvements to various parks. She shared that the biggest question the community is being asked is what should BPRW's top priorities be, given that the Department must balance investments across the top priorities with limited resources and staff to be able to go into next season's budget cycle more confident in terms of prioritization. The next slide Sauve shared touched on the idea that this is the time to reimagine recreational program offerings, which will allow for the Department to identify where the gaps are and evaluate that. She continued by noting that it's not all dire, like the Conservation team identifying no-mow areas that can become pollinator habitats, which not only aligns with budget shifts but also has an ecological value, and highlighted the community stewardship that already exists as well as philanthropic partners like the Parks Foundation. The next slide noted that looking to the future, BPRW is focused on equity, accessibility and addressing the impacts of climate change. Sauve then briefly touched on the mobility plan slides. Next, she shared some slides that gave a quick overview of the open house statistics, including – that 323 people signed in to the meeting from all across the City, info about how long people have lived in the Burlington, why people are drawn to Burlington and whether they plan to stay here long term or not, answers to questions like "what is your favorite thing to do in Burlington in

the winter?”, why people were excited about the different plans, 105 vision statements, dream neighborhood designs, roadway designs, special memories in parks, root/trunk/leaves comments for BPRW values and about 90 people weighed in on economic development questions. Then Sauve shared that 100 surveys were completed online as a part of the random sample, 39 surveys were completed at the open house and encouraged Commissioners to continue to share the survey out with their communities.

#### **4.5 E-Bikes/Motobikes Strategies**

Lantieri opened by sharing that this item is a continuation of previous conversations on the topic – and the hope is to get a sense of where this body is in regards to what kind of policy and regulation seem like the right fit for the Greenway. He reminded everyone that Phillip from DPW came to discuss this topic and shared that they are currently doing some deeper work on the specifics about e-bikes and e-motos and he continued that Sauve has been in contact with the State’s Forest, Parks & Recreation Department. Sauve shared that they oversee the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and she had inquired to see whether or not they’re facing similar challenges, and while they have not, they are very interested in the conversation about various challenges that different kinds of e-bikes and e-motos bring up. She continued by sharing that the City’s ordinance committee has moved forward the edits to chapter 6, which includes the definitions about bicycles, so they are recommending it to City Council. She then shared that she will be continuing to connect with DPW as well as Local Motion, who is putting out information about e-bikes and e-motos.

Lewis chimed in that the ordinance language has developed through the ordinance commission and DPW is currently under review by legal as well as to the types of language that is needed for enforcement in addition to acknowledging that enforcement is very challenging for this. He continued that the City is looking at opportunities to potentially engage with BSD to share messaging about this with parents, given that a lot of the people being observed using motobikes/e-motos are youth. He noted that this is a challenging topic because enforcement will be difficult and different communities are taking different approaches.

Sauve shared that the ordinance that DPW is putting forward is more about what is allowed and less about what is not allowed, but that there’s a catch all in terms of riding/operating recklessly. This will give us something to point to, which is a start, otherwise enforcement isn’t even an option.

Cahill noted that a significant portion of the youth seem to be coming from Colchester. He continued that he gets calls from community members daily and his staff get stopped regularly while working on the Greenway about this topic. He and his staff have started tracking the data around maintenance due to this specific usage and in the past 3 weeks they have filled 80 ruts from Leddy to the Winooski Bridge in addition to harassment incidents with members of the public. He continued that while he has been in touch with BSD, and they are supportive and have spoken to students about the impacts of this, it’s not really BSD’s responsibility and they are advocates for the students, which is appreciated.

Sauve suggested utilizing Local Motion as a partner in this endeavor with their connection to schools and bike safety within the community.

Etter noted that enforcement may be needed in this case in an effort to avoid someone negatively impacted by someone going too fast on the Greenway to resolve the issue on their own through litigation. He continued that a lot of bikers can go 20 or 30mph on a regular bike, but it's more experienced bikers doing that who understand how fast they're going and the impact that has, compared to inexperienced people on e-bikes going that fast with pedestrians around.

Mobley share that she feels the "mixed use" piece of how the Greenway is used is a big part of the issue and that there are sections of the path that she would not walk on comfortably, specifically that stretch from Leddy to Colchester, because people zoom by compared to the south end of the path that tends to be quieter and more low key. She noted that the e-motos that have been referenced are a whole other thing and offered the idea of having something like random check points as an educational approach to enforcement.

Cahill brought up the idea of creating a generative place for this kind of use because it is not going away.

Etter noted the restrictions to ATVs in regards to where they can be ridden and that this could be a way to frame things.

The group then discussed what role pedals play and how they could be incorporated into potential speed limits, which led to how do you enforce speed limits and/or bring awareness to speed.

Mobley suggested putting up those signs that flash when you're going too fast. She noted though that she feels the conversational proactive piece of this can be a part of the process.

Etter felt that including information about what transpires if you hit and injure someone and what that liability entails would be helpful.

Johnson felt that making the distinction between an e-bike and a manually powered bike is going to be difficult to enforce.

Lewis shared that the current signage on the Greenway says to share the path, slower traffic has the right of way, keep right except to pass, use audible warning when passing, follow trail and traffic signs, maintain a safe speed and slow down through congested sections.

Mobley circled back for confirmation that the definitions of e-bikes are currently with the ordinance committee.

The answer was yes.

Sauve noted that if the Department/Commission wanted specifics to park roads, trails and the Greenway, then this Department/body would need to tackle that.

Cahill wanted to make the Commission aware that the community member who was involved in the incident that ended up connecting the Department with school staff has stopped using the Greenway with their children, partially out of fear of their identity being known, noting that this whole thing is delicate and challenging and the discomfort and anger is bubbling.

Lantieri brought up the idea of utilizing the new bike park and partnering with the Bike Park Coalition for messaging to the youth in the community.

Mobley circled back to the idea of an educational approach as opposed to an enforcement approach. The group then discussed potential inroads for this and the possibilities of focusing in on parents who are the ones purchasing these e-motos for their children.

## **5. Standing Items**

### **5.1 Parks Foundation Update**

Sauve shared that they are launching their newest campaign with the Pomeroy playground construction, which has begun and there will be 3-4 more weeks of work and they are working to establish a celebration date in June.

Lantieri shared that their next meeting is on June 6<sup>th</sup> and he has an e-mail out to their chair to re-connect.

### **5.2 Director's Report**

Lewis referred to the monthly report and specifically noted that they are looking for volunteers for Kids Day this coming Saturday. He also noted that the Department is gearing up for summer operations!

### **5.3 Commissioner's Items & Volunteer Hours**

Johnson had 3 hours to report for the Book Fair.

Bergmann did not have any hours to report.

Mobley had 4 hours to report for the Book Fair and Plan BTV.

Lantieri had 33 hours to report for the Book Fair, Plan BTV, attending the PACC meeting and several shifts cleaning up at the Urban Reserve. He continued by touching on the upcoming reappointment process and encouraged his fellow Commissioners to consider why they're here, if they want to be here and that if this doesn't feel like a good role for you that there is no shame in stepping back, because seeing where the budget is going, there is a need for a strong group that is able to advocate, be additive and have active participation to support the Department.

## **6. Executive Session**

## **7. Adjournment**

### **7.1 Motion to adjourn**

Mobley made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Etter seconded. All were in favor, none opposed.