

Ordinance Committee
Friday, May 1, 2026
Bushor Conference Room, City Hall
or Remote via Zoom. Burlington, Vermont
DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: Councilor Bergman (Chair), Councilor Barlow, Councilor Carpenter

Staff Present: Kim Sturtevant (Assistant City Attorney), Kara Alnasrawi (Interim Chief of Staff), Will Clavelle (Interim CEDO Director), Bill Ward (Director of DPI), Traci Isham (DFA), Caleb Manna (DPW), Philip Peterson (DPW)

Public Present: Sharon Bushor, Wendy Koenig, Alicia Estey, Amanda Clayton

Meeting called to order at 2:02 PM.

1. Adopt the Agenda
1.1 Adopt the Agenda

Motion to Adopt Agenda.

Motion by Councilor Barlow, Seconded by Councilor Bergman.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

2. Adopt Draft Minutes
2.1 Adopt Draft Minutes from April 23, 2026

No minutes available to adopt.

Councilor Carpenter arrived at 2:04 PM.

3. Public Forum

Marek Broderick: I am the City Councilor for Ward Eight. I like the changes to the UVM and dorm materials. I am advocating for keeping the 2.5% gross receipts tax rate instead of allowing it to sunset back to 2%. I believe consumption taxes are regressive and we should move to a more equitable taxation system, but the City cannot afford to lose the \$900k in revenue. Allowing this to sunset will not increase business downtown, particularly for restaurants. I know people consider the menu price but rarely are people thinking about the 2.5% gross receipts tax. The bigger problems are pointless wars, exploitative landlords, and high food costs due to climate change.

Sharon Bushor: I want to thank City staff for working on the UVM inspection exemption ordinance and I like the current materials. I wonder if there is a way for a university to inform the City of ongoing dorm issues that haven't been resolved but are being worked on. There has been an increase in ebikes being used on sidewalks and there is danger of injury for pedestrians.

I want to support businesses and I think this tax is small factor and they actually need more security. I also think Grubhub and UBEREATS should be paying this gross receipts tax.

4. Gross Receipts Ordinance Discussion.

Kara Alnasrawi (Interim Chief of Staff), Will Clavelle (Interim CEDO Director), and Traci Isham (DFA) shared a presentation on the Gross Receipts Tax Ordinance change. This presentation is available in the agenda packet on CivicClerk.

Will Clavelle said that many small businesses have trouble when it comes to writing a check to the City for the taxes they owe and it would be easier to have the money automatically remit to the City like it does for the State.

Councilor Barlow said that the City has previously indicated that the 0.5% was a temporary measure. He said that South Burlington and Williston both have thriving business areas that now compete with Burlington. We are charging more taxes for hotels and restaurants than neighboring towns. He said he would like to repeal this tax increase.

Kara Alnasrawi said the ordinance change would allow the City to hold businesses like UBEREATS accountable for the taxes they owe and make it easier for them to pay as well.

Councilor Carpenter said the tax increase was originally part of a stopgap while the City pursued an efficiency study. She said the City has not been able to come up with enough efficiency improvements to warrant lowering the tax back down and that the City needs to continue to improve on its efficiencies. She said that the bigger problems for downtown are safety issues and parking. She said that the Council can adjust taxes whenever it is necessary, so it was unwise to put the label on temporary on the original increase to the gross receipts tax.

Councilor Bergman said he has opposed the sunset of the tax increase. He added that the Progressive caucus never supported having a sunset on the gross receipts tax. He said that cutting revenue will add to a debt spiral. He said that Burlington has unique advantages, particularly the lake and the sunsets. He said that it would actually be anti-business to make cuts because the things that will be cut are good for businesses. He also added that the other changes to the ordinance also will be good for business and keep small businesses from having to pay interest after interest.

Councilor Bergman added that, despite knowing and liking everyone on the Council, he is outraged that there is debate over this tax at a time when the City needs the revenue. He said that whenever the City is no longer in need of the revenue or if economic policy requires it, then the Council can change the tax.

Councilor Barlow said that the budget has many moving parts, both expenditure decreases and revenue increases. He said that the unique boons that Burlington once had are not as unique or as important as they used to be. He added that Parks have raised their fees for events as well and there are other music venues outside of Burlington that have become more attractive for promoters.

Councilor Barlow asked for Kara Alnasrawi to bring back a previous report that was created regarding whether or not providing grants to specific small businesses would be effective or not.

Kara Alnasrawi said that the report was delivered in executive session. She added that the City did not ultimately give out funds to businesses last year, but Burlington City Arts (BCA) received some more money for downtown events and advertising.

Councilor Bergman asked DFA and the City Attorney's Office to look into how the removal or lowering of the local option tax on amusements would affect the budget.

5. University Exemption for Periodic Minimum Housing Inspection Ordinance Discussion

Attorney Sturtevant shared the most recent version of the draft ordinance. This draft of the ordinance is available in the agenda packet on CivicClerk.

Wendy Koenig (UVM) said that UVM is fine with the current draft ordinance changes and with the self-certification form.

Bill Ward said that the privately-managed and owned Redstone buildings are not subject to this ordinance and are inspected like any other apartment building in the City.

Councilor Bergman said that the issue of the definition of dormitory should be looked into later and not extend out the discussion on this ordinance.

Bill Ward said that issues or complaints about the inspection process for the City go to the Housing Board of Review for further review if necessary.

Motion to refer the draft ordinance back to the full City Council for second reading with a recommendation for adoption.

Motion by Councilor Barlow, Seconded by Councilor Carpenter.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

6. Bicycle and Motor Vehicle Ordinance Discussion

Phillip Peterson and Caleb Manna gave an overview of the changes the Public Works would like to make to the bicycle ordinance.

Caleb Manna (DPW) responded to Sharon Bushor saying that sidewalks are primarily for pedestrian use, but bicycles are allowed on sidewalks outside of the city center. He said that DPW has been working with the Burlington Walk Bike Council and the Public Works Commission on this issue.

Phillip Peterson (DPW) said that motorized bicycles are prohibited on sidewalks city-wide.

Caleb Manna said that the ordinance changes are to accomplish two goals: conforming the Main Street bike lane to state law and addressing the new electric modes of transport that are becoming more popular like ebikes or scooters.

Councilor Carpenter said she would like ebikes to be banned on sidewalks in general. Councilor Barlow agreed and said he has seen motorized bikes on the greenway and on sidewalks.

Caleb Manna said this ordinance change is mostly about securing the Main Street bike lane but the definitions of different types of motorized bikes did spark a larger discussion.

Attorney Ramakrishnan said an interim measure in the draft ordinance already is that the reckless or careless operation of a motorized bicycle is an ordinance violation.

Caleb Manna said DPW wants to solicit public input for any prohibition on motorized bicycles before bringing it to the committee.

Councilor Bergman asked Attorney Ramakrishnan to draft language around the prohibition of motorized bicycles in certain areas.

Attorney Ramakrishnan said a technical change to be made the current draft ordinance is on line 139, which should also say “otherwise as written” so that we clear about not removing the definitions.

Councilor Bergman suggested coming back to the motorized bicycle definitions and permissible locations at the June 18th meeting.

Motion to refer the draft ordinance back to the full City Council with the technical change on line 139, with a recommendation for adoption.

Motion by Councilor Bergman, Seconded by Councilor Carpenter.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

7. Any Other Committee Business

Attorney Sturtevant said there are City Circle ordinance changes coming up in June.

8. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Bergman, without objection.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 PM.