

## **Parks, Arts, Culture & Tourism (PACT) Committee Meeting**

Date: May 5, 2026

Time: 12:05 PM

Location: BCA, Lorrain Goodman Room

### **Committee Members Present**

Councilor Schachter, Councilor McKnight (Zoom), Councilor Barlow

### **Staff & Guests Present**

Mary Danko, Fletcher Free Library Director; Jonathan Chappell, Friends of the Fletcher Free Library; Doreen Kraft, Burlington City Arts; Samantha McGinnis, Church Street Marketplace; Phil Lewis, Director of Parks, Recreation & Waterfront; VJ Comey, City Arborist; Derek Roach, Parks Department; Will Clavelle, CEDO

Public: Jonathan Chapple-Sokol, Julia DiPietro

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### **1. Agenda Approval**

The meeting was called to order at 12:05 PM.

A motion was made to adopt the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of prior meeting minutes was postponed because the minutes were not yet attached in Civic Clerk.

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### **2. Public Forum**

A member of the public suggested renaming the committee to “Culture, Literacy, Arts & Parks” so the acronym would spell “CLAP.”

Public forum closed at approximately 12:07 PM.

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### **3. Fletcher Free Library Renovation Update**

Library Director Mary Danko provided an update on the Fletcher Free Library capital campaign and renovation project.

Highlights included:

- The project remains in the silent fundraising phase.
- The campaign recently surpassed the halfway fundraising benchmark.
- The library completed a geothermal test well near the building with positive results, including approximately 100 gallons per minute flow at roughly 328 feet.

- Staff are continuing discussions with Burlington Electric Department regarding future geothermal planning and possible broader district energy opportunities.
- The project continues to coordinate with planning efforts related to the Memorial Auditorium block.
- Construction timing remains tentative, a potential commencement timeframe around late 2027 was offered.

Committee members expressed support and excitement for the project and discussed the importance of the library renovation for the community.

Discussion also included:

- Potential future integration with broader Memorial Auditorium redevelopment efforts.
- Sustainability benefits and available geothermal rebates.
- The importance of arts, culture, and civic infrastructure investments in Burlington's economic vitality.

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#### **4. Downtown Events & Summer Programming Update**

Representatives from Burlington City Arts (Doreen Kraft), Church Street Marketplace-Love Burlington (Samantha McGinnis) provided updates on downtown programming and economic activation efforts planned for the summer and fall seasons.

Highlights included:

- Return of Festival of Fools as a two-day event.
- Expansion of downtown arts, music, and cultural programming.
- Continued "Summer in the City" marketing campaign.
- New "Art Amplified" programming series.
- Public art and mural-making internships for teens.
- Main Street reopening celebration scheduled for July 17–18.
- FIFA World Cup viewing events planned downtown.
- Expansion of "Illuminate Burlington," a coordinated winter lighting and arts initiative.
- Ongoing partnerships between BCA, Church Street Marketplace, Parks & Recreation, the Library, and local businesses.

Committee discussion focused on:

- Economic impacts of arts and cultural programming.
- Downtown visitation and business support.

- Future opportunities for measuring event success and economic impact through metrics such as foot traffic, parking usage, business participation, and surveys.

Staff also referenced ongoing city efforts related to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDO).

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## **5. Urban Reserve Cleanup & Camping Discussion**

Phil Lewis and Derek Roach provided an update regarding cleanup efforts at the Urban Reserve and broader waterfront concerns.

Staff shared:

- Approximately 35 city employees participated in a recent cleanup effort.
- Roughly 80 cubic yards and nearly 12 tons of material were removed.
- Cleanup costs totaled approximately \$7,500 including labor, disposal, and equipment.
- Multiple departments collaborated on the effort.

Discussion included:

- Ongoing concerns about camping, trash, environmental impacts, and public safety in the Urban Reserve area.
- Challenges related to enforcement capacity and staffing limitations.
- Existing ordinances related to camping restrictions.
- Long-term management and maintenance strategies.
- The need for continued interdepartmental coordination and policy discussions.

Councilors and members of the public expressed appreciation for the cleanup work while also voicing concerns about sustainability of cleanup efforts and continued impacts on public recreation areas and the Greenway.

Several speakers emphasized:

- The importance of balancing public access, environmental stewardship, homelessness response, and public safety.
  - The need for long-term policy and operational strategies.
  - Continued community engagement and volunteer cleanup support.
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## **6. Emerald Ash Borer & Tree Management Update**

City Arborist VJ Comey provided an update on Burlington's Emerald Ash Borer response and urban forestry efforts.

Key points included:

- Emerald Ash Borer was confirmed in Burlington in July 2024.
- Approximately 11% of Burlington's tree inventory consisted of ash trees.
- The City prioritized replacement and species diversification over long-term chemical treatment.
- Over the past several years, the City has systematically replanted throughout Burlington while removing ash trees as necessary.
- Approximately 65 ash trees remain in city rights-of-way awaiting removal.
- The City has secured more than \$60,000 in grant funding to support urban forestry efforts.

Discussion included:

- Communication with residents regarding tree removals.
- Opportunities for residents to privately fund treatment of certain healthy trees.
- Budget limitations related to stump removal.
- The importance of continued public outreach and transparency.

Committee members thanked staff for their extensive work and ongoing communication with residents.

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## **7. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:38 PM.