

**BURLINGTON CITY COUNCIL
ORGANIZATION DAY
CITY HALL, CONTOIS AUDITORIUM *OR*
REMOTE MEETING WITH CALL-IN
BURLINGTON, VERMONT
MINUTES OF MEETING
April 3, 2023
DRAFT**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Karen Paul
Joan Shannon
Ali Dieng
Sarah E Carpenter
Zoraya Hightower
Mark Barlow (via Zoom)
Joe Magee
Gene Bergman
Ben Traverse
Tim Doherty
Melo Grant
Hannah King

OTHERS PRESENT: Miro Weinberger
Katherine Schad
Kim Sturtevant
Jordan Redell
Lori Olberg

1. CALL TO ORDER and AGENDA

The meeting was called to order by Chief Administrative Officer Schad at 6:13 PM.

MOTION by Councilor Paul, SECOND by Councilor Magee, to adopt the agenda.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carries.

2. OATH OF OFFICE

2.01 Swearing In Of Newly Elected and Re-elected City Council Members

Mayor Weinberger swore in newly elected and re-elected City Councilors Barlow, Doherty, Grant, King, and Shannon.

3. STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

3.01 Mayor Presents State of the City Address

Mayor Weinberger began by wishing happy Ramadan to all Muslims in Burlington and across Vermont. He congratulated newly-elected and re-elected City Councilors. He additionally welcomed Marcelle Leahy, wife of Senator Patrick Leahy, Congresswoman Becca Balint, Senator Peter Welch, former Mayor Peter Clavelle, and Kyle Clark, CEO of Beta Technologies.

Mayor Weinberger then spoke about his tenure as Mayor for the last 11 years, including challenges and achievements, and momentous local and national events throughout that time. He said that though there have been challenging, the City is in many ways better off in 2023 than it was in 2012. He noted that in 2012, the City was many millions of dollars in debt, but is now a AA-rated City with millions of dollars in reserve. He noted that in 2012, the City was facing a housing crisis with only 500 more homes built in the prior decade, but now is making good on its promise as housing as a human right by constructing 1,300 homes so far, and 1,300 more projected. He spoke about the significant increase in solar arrays during his time in office, due partly to the City's green stimulus incentives. He spoke about improvements during his tenure in public infrastructure, including parks, streets, sidewalks, stormwater, and now breaking ground on a brand new high

school. He said that the City will also break ground to turn Main Street into a Great Street through the use of Downtown TIF District funding. He spoke about efforts to improve parks and create new parks and park infrastructure. He spoke about other public projects, including the Moran Plan, transit center, and Champlain Parkway.

Mayor Weinberger then specifically highlighted the dramatic improvements at the Burlington International Airport over the last 11 years, noting that its success would not have been possible without the support and attention of Senator Patrick Leahy. He noted that the Senator helped secure \$145 million in federal funding for the Airport. He said that to recognize Senator Leahy's commitment to the Airport and lifetime of service to Vermont, he announced that the City of Burlington will rename the airport the Patrick Leahy International Airport.

Senator Peter Welch said that he and his wife are proud to celebrate Senator Leahy's 48 years of honest integrity and brilliant service, and shared video messages of congratulations from Senator Chuck Schumer and President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Marcelle Leahy spoke on behalf of her husband, Senator Patrick Leahy. She said that he is humbled and deeply moved to have his name associated with the Burlington International Airport. She said that he has always strived to bring Vermont values to Washington and that bringing issues of importance to Burlington, Vermont, the national, and the rest of the world have always started out with a trip from Burlington International Airport. She spoke of his love for Vermont. She thanked the City for the honor of renaming the airport after him.

Mayor Weinberger then spoke about the war in Ukraine and said that all free people have a duty to stand by Ukraine in its fight against Russia. He spoke about several members of the Burlington community, Adam Roof and Colin Hilliard, who have traveled to Poland and Ukraine to deliver aid in country and have brought over \$130,000 in humanitarian aid to the country. He said that he is commissioning Mr. Roof and Mr. Hilliard to create a new sister city relationship with a city in Ukraine by this time next year. He said that in addition to cultural exchange, a goal of the new effort will be to partner with the City's Ukrainian counterpart to provide technical expertise as well as continued humanitarian support.

Mayor Weinberger said that after a decisive 2023 Town Meeting Day, the state of the City is reunited and stronger for having weathered so much, and the priorities of the City are clear and moving forward. He said that voters voted down a measure to remove authority from local elected officials (Proposition Zero). He said that two-thirds of the City value public safety and expect City government to restore it now, and that in two weeks, he will be coming to the Council to ask for approval of outstanding elements of the City's public safety plan. These include a new DROP plan for retirement for retaining senior officers, creating an assistant director to coordinate new resources at the Police Department, and resolving the unfinished debate over police oversight. He said that the City should bring the process to resolution by formalizing the Police Commission's role in a manner that promotes public trust and carefully protects procedural justice for officers. He said that public safety and racial justice should not be pitted against each other, and is working with the Director of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging to assess the department's structure and capacity, and restructuring it to have a focused impact on the City's top priorities. He spoke about the City's continuing legacy of climate leadership, noting voters' approval of the implementation of carbon impact fees in the City. He said that the City's net zero energy plan is the most ambitious in the country and said that the City's project to capture the waste heat from the McNeil Plant and convert it back into usable energy is one of its boldest. He said he is committing to making a go/no-go decision about this project in 2023. He spoke about increasing the housing supply and noted the City's active role in it. He thanked the profit and non-profit developers for their progress and commitment to Burlington as well. He spoke about initiatives to increase the Housing Trust Fund, as well as proposed zoning amendments for the South End to support the building of more housing in the City. He said that the State needs a clear plan (at the State level) to increase the housing supply, not another study of Act 250. He spoke about gun violence increases in Burlington and lamented the stalled charter changes around common-sense gun laws that Burlington has approved that have languished in the State house. He lauded the City's early childhood education policies and initiatives, including Lets Grow Kids, and called on more structural reform for early childhood education at the State level. He spoke about the drug crisis and reform that is needed for the State's Hub & Spoke opioid use disorder treatment program, saying that the program needs to be changed in order to address the skyrocketing levels of fentanyl in the community.

4. PUBLIC FORUM

1. Verbal Comments

None.

5. ELECTION OF CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1. Election of City Council President

Chief Administration Officer Schad called for nominations for City Council President.

MOTION by Councilor Traverse, to nominate Karen Paul as City Council President.

DISCUSSION:

- **Councilor Traverse spoke about Councilor Paul’s efforts to preserve Contois Auditorium as a place where all voices can be heard respectfully, her ability to construct agendas that are productive and efficient, and her recognition that Councilors will disagree on issues but also making every effort to hash those issues out prior to Council meetings.**

There were no other nominations.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carries.

City Council President Paul welcomed new Councilors Doherty, Grant, and King to the City Council.

6. ELECTION OF BOARD OF FINANCE MEMBERS

6.01 Election of Board of Finance Members

City Council President Paul called for nominations to the Board of Finance.

MOTION by Councilor Hightower to nominate Councilors Dieng, Magee, and Barlow to the Board of Finance.

There were no other nominations.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carries.

7. ADJOURNMENT

7.01 Motion to Adjourn

MOTION by Councilor Magee, SECOND by Councilor Traverse, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carries.

The City Council meeting adjourned at 7:24 PM.