

ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 19, 2023

Bushor Conference Room, City Hall and Via Zoom (Remote)

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: Councilor Traverse (Chair), Councilor Hightower, Councilor Shannon, Councilor Carpenter

Staff Present: Kim Sturtevant (Acting City Attorney), Megan Tuttle (Director of Planning), Charles Dillard (Principal Planner)

Others in Attendance: Colin Hilliard, Steve Conant, Christy Mitchell, Michael Monte, John Caulo, Jak Tiano, Michael Arnold, Colin Larsen, Nic Anderson, Ethan Brodowski, Amy Magyar, Carlos Esquivel, Dan Castrigano, Erhard Mahnke, Gordon Dragoon, Grey Johnson, Jasmine Walker, Karen Paul, Mike Hoey, Rick Davis, Ryan Thornton, Sharon Bushor, Todd Sarandos

Meeting called to order at 5:34 PM.

1.0 Agenda

Motion to adopt/amend agenda

Motion to Adopt Agenda as is.

Motion by Councilor Hightower, Seconded by Councilor Carpenter

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

2.0 Adopt Minutes from 11/30/2022

Motion to Adopt Minutes from 11/30/2022.

Motion by Councilor Hightower, Seconded by Councilor Shannon

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous.

3.0 Public Forum

Michael Monte: I am a resident of Ward 5 and have lived in the South End for about 38 years now. I live next to the neighborhood that will be immediately impacted, and I am also the CEO of Champlain Housing Trust. I believe this is a great opportunity to build affordable housing and the City should pass this ordinance as quickly as you can. Historically, we have not liked having housing in that district, but we now recognize the opportunity that is there. I support this ordinance.

Jack Tiano: I am a resident of Ward 5. I work at Generator and spend a lot of time in this district. Over the last year I have spent time engaging with the City on how to stabilize housing and cost of living prices. Money is always one of our most limited resources. The tax burden on home owners is already high and we have used TIF to fund some much-needed infrastructure improvements and financed a new high school. We are at the limit of what the current tax base of Burlington can shoulder. We still do need to plan for the future of ecological and social uncertainty. Density in City planning is important to increase the tax base while concentrating public spending. Realistically, every neighborhood in the City will need to provide more housing. Zoning for density to increase the tax base while also respecting that neighborhood should only adjust incrementally. The SEID is a place where people work, but there is no housing. It is

mostly warehouses and parking lots currently. We can develop this area rapidly because there is not really a current neighborhood there. The City is losing out on increasing its tax base and that puts continued strain on current residents. We should focus on increased density for this new South End district.

Michael Arnold: I used to be a South End resident, but recently moved to Winooski. Vermont currently has the second highest homelessness rate behind California. It is 150 times the rate as in Japan. I want to thank the Planning Department for putting together this proposal and the City Council for taking on this issue. The first priority for this district should be ensure more affordable housing. Issues like green space and shadows should be secondary. We should be trying to get Burlington to 5% vacancy rate and the Council should err on the side of more housing. I look forward to the continued upzoning of districts in Burlington.

Colin Larsen: I am from Burlington. With the increase in density, we also have to address transit and traffic issues. I like that a lot of the plan accommodates people that don't want to have a car. Speed humps will slow traffic and make the area more walkable. We will need additional transit service if we are building 1,000 housing units to reach the vacancy rate. The commercial should be daily commercial so that amenities are accessible by walking. In this district there should be a connection to the Greenway for recreation and transportation. Based on the direction of Senate Bill 100 goes in, we might need to expand the growth center to allow easier development around Act 250. Thank you.

Sharon Bushor: I live in Ward 1. I always think the people that live and work in a district should have a large input in things that affect them. Line 18 mentions mitigation to other areas like the arts district. What are the appropriate mitigations for this district? I would like to understand that better. I understand the shift to residential. I originally wanted City Place to be capped at the 10 stories that it ended up being. There was a lot of discussion about 6 stories vs 8 stories in the South End. I feel 8 stories is out of sync with that area of the City and should be capped at 6. Lines 79 and 80 seem to be in conflict regarding parking being behind/ in the periphery. Hiding parking is difficult and can be really ugly. The proposal is 90% lot coverage. 90-100% is the downtown. I just don't know if 90% is the right number. I see line 199 says 1 hotel per lot, but I don't know what the total cap on hotels could be. I just hope everyone uses a critical eye on discussing these ideas.

Dan Castigano: I am a resident of Ward 4. I wanted to comment that we should be building the most amount of housing possible and increase density. Others have mentioned the stats and numbers. On a broader national and global scale, the upward estimates are 1 billion people by 2050 that will move internally or internationally because of climate change. We should build dense housing so that everyone has a good place to live. Improving density will also limit cars and that is also good for the environment.

Gordon Dragoon: Overall, I think this is a great plan. It will turn a place that is mostly asphalt into dense housing. Given the restriction on FAR, we are trusting in developers to build how we imagine. We should look into how we can subdivide these lots so we are less focused on having big developers. I am not sure why the portion of Pine St. between Sears Lane and Lakeside Ave. is exempt from the proposal. It seems out of place. There are wonderful businesses in that area that should benefit from this proposal. Overall, it is a good plan and I look forward to seeing more upzoning ordinances for other parts of the City in the future.

Carlos Esquivel: I am a resident of the Old North End. I would like to see higher density overall in the City. I don't think we should overstate how tall or how out of place higher structures would be. At the same time, we should always focus on walkable and bikable developments. I am from another country originally and some of the newer developments are car centric and requires owning a car. As a non-car user I would like to see that taken into account. Thank you.

Erhard Mahnke: I live in Ward 1. We all have an interest in the South End. I play in a band just off Pine St. I spend a lot of time using the arts district heavily as a performing artist. I have a real interest in making sure that current artists don't get displaced. That is kind of a general comment to keep in mind. I am also a longtime affordable housing advocate as others have said. We need to make sure surrounding neighborhoods don't just increase rents and displace artists. That has happened to many places in urban areas. This was a large part of the discussion a few years ago. While we need housing for all income levels, I believe low and moderate income housing is the priority. The City may

want to increase the current 15% inclusionary zoning and go to more like 20-25%. The South End is one of the last commercial and light industrial areas in the City. It should have lots of different uses and not just be residential. One question I have, is whether medical clinics would be allowed in this area. The Lakeside Veteran's Clinic is in that area and I want to ensure that it is not affected negatively.

Nic Anderson: I am the director of planning and operations at Champlain College. We have a property in the middle of the SEID. We have worked closely with the Planning Department and we support the changes that are in this ordinance.

4.0 South End Innovation District Re-Zoning Discussion

Traverse: We have one agenda item to discuss today and I think it makes sense to turn it over to Meagan Tuttle and Charles Dillard from the Planning Department to begin with.

Meagan Tuttle and Charles Dillard gave a presentation on the SEID. The slides are available on BoardDocs on the April 19th Ordinance Committee agenda. Included below is Councilor discussion mid-presentation.

Carpenter: Why is the Barge Canal area not included in the SEID?

Charles Dillard (Planner): The area is not developable right now and the SEID is concerned with development.

Shannon: Is the Hula property prime for development?

Charles Dillard: It has already been developed, but does still have land left undeveloped.

Shannon: I have proposed that that plot be removed from the SEID. I question whether it is reasonable to include in the SEID. Is the GE site prime for development?

Charles Dillard: The GE site cannot be converted to housing right now. The parking lots are prime for redevelopment.

Shannon: Is there soil contamination in this area?

Meagan Tuttle (Planner): There is a small drainage area between DPW and BED that does have some contamination and has some controls because of that. On the Hula lot, there are prohibitions on converting commercial to residential, so the main change would be a slight change of use to a different non-residential use.

Hightower: Which of these lots are City-owned, if any?

Charles Dillard: The DPW building, the BED building, and 68 Sears Lane are all City owned. There are a few other stormwater areas that are owned for the Champlain Parkway construction.

Carpenter: The businesses along Pine that are excluded. Why is that the case?

Charles Dillard: We did not want to incentivize redevelopment of those lots toward residential so that the commercial space stays.

Traverse: Are we envisioning that the Champlain Parkway will be a means of access to all of the properties? Or is there going to have to be a roadway parallel to the Parkway? Will that occupy a lot of the space in these areas?

Meagan Tuttle: These sites are very large. The yellow and blue zones are each 100 feet and the red zone is about 200 feet. There is significant developable land in these areas.

Shannon: I have some comments. I do not support hotels in this district. I understand there is a demand for hotels, but I do not believe we should have hotel development in this district. Another thing, density has been a focus for a long time in Burlington. Many of the mock ups we have seen all have balconies or the like. I think this is important and we do not see enough balconies in Burlington developments now. I am not a fan of the planning idea of having buildings right up against the sidewalk and we should have more space between the sidewalk and a building. I will say I think we should cap the height to 6 stories north of Lakeside Ave. to preserve the views from further East.

Carpenter: I do think we should have a grocery store be a permissible use to have a walkable community. I know we can talk more about height caps at a later meeting.

Traverse: I am hoping for a dedicated bike lane or bus lane in addition to discussing setbacks along Pine St. and the Champlain Parkway. Has there been thinking on whether we could have standalone parking structures or subterranean parking garages? I am not opposed to having an entryway to a garage being right on the main thoroughfare as opposed to being behind the structure. It would be helpful to understand what the considerations are when discussing this.

Charles Dillard: Subterranean parking does not count towards floorplate. We can prepare some material that lays out the various parking options for the future.

Shannon: I would also like to hear more about the multimodal center plans in the future.

Traverse: We can wrap up this presentation at our next meeting. I think we can also dive into the ordinance itself next and start focusing on a line-by-line discussion.

5.0 Other Committee Business

Motion to Postpone agenda items 5.01 and 5.02.

Motion by Council Shannon, Seconded by Councilor Carpenter

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

6.0 Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn.

Motion by Council Shannon, Seconded by Councilor Traverse

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 PM.