

**CITY OF BURLINGTON
PARKS, ARTS & CULTURE COMMITTEE**

**Councilor Joan Shannon, Chair, South District
Councilor Ali Dieng, Ward 7
Councilor Mark Barlow, North District**

Staff: Holli Bushnell, Office Assistant
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AGENDA

**Parks, Arts and Culture Committee Meeting
Sharon Bushor Conference Room, City Hall, 149 Church St
Wednesday, March 22, 2023 5:00pm – 6:30pm**

MEETING CONDUCTED IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM

When: Mar 22, 2023 05:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Topic: PACC Meeting

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

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Webinar ID: 995 3599 1321

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Approval of the Agenda

Approval of the draft minutes from February 23, 2023

Public Forum (10 minutes)

Agenda Items –

BCA Update (Doreen Kraft) - 15 minutes

Odd Fellows Contract

Dewey Park Memorial update

Parks Update (Cindi Wight) - 25 minutes

Summer Camps - demographics and scholarships (Wight & Kraft) (15 min)

Dog Task Force – new applicant selection (10 min)

Update on Safety in Parks (Jon Murad and Cindi Wight) - 45 minutes

Schedule Next Meeting

Adjournment

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Minutes

Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 22, 2023, 5:00pm

MEETING CONDUCTED IN PERSON AT CITY HALL, 149 CHURCH ST, SHARON BUSHOR CONFERENCE ROOM AND VIA ZOOM

Attendance:

Committee Members: Chair Joan Shannon, Councilor Mark Barlow, Councilor Ali Dieng

City Staff: Doreen Kraft – BCA Director, Colin Storrs – BCA Staff, Cindi Wight – BPRW Director, Gary Rogers – BPRW Recreation Superintendent, Jon Murad – Chief of Police, Holli Bushnell – BPRW Staff

Public Present – Ryon Fink – Oddfellows Lodge Member, Joanne Kasliz – Dog Task Force applicant

Meeting called to order at 5:06 pm by Chair Joan Shannon

Approval of Agenda

Councilor Barlow moved to approve the agenda, Councilor Dieng seconded, all were in favor.

Approval of Draft Minutes from 2/23/2023

Dieng moved to approve the minutes, Barlow seconded, all were in favor.

Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 5:07pm, as there was no one present who wished to speak at this time, public forum was also closed at 5:07pm

BCA UPDATES:

Oddfellows Lodge Mural

Colin Storrs shared that the contract between BCA and the Oddfellows is close to being completed. And that Burlington City COA Katherine Schad has signed the contract providing \$10,000 from city councilor initiative funds to the Oddfellows as long as specific stipulations concerning design, theme, and process are met. The Oddfellows will review the public art guidelines and adhere to them as best as they can to insure both an equitable procurement process and protection of the rights of both the artist and the lodge. Storrs explained that the funds the city is providing will be in the form of a grant and that they intend to use standard framework in terms of reporting and how payment is issued. Storrs asked how the committee would like to have the Oddfellows report – during or after the project is completed, and in front of committee or in written form.

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Dieng requested that the Oddfellows provide a progress report around selection processes detailing the selected artist, the kind of art that will be created, and why they were chosen as well as the cost of the project. He noted that artists will have the option of designing for both the north facing wall as well as the lodge entrance and that the cost may change depending on the scope of the selected artist. Storrs confirmed that the request for qualifications does include the option to work on the entrance as well, budget permitting. It is not required, but it is encouraged. Dieng also felt a final report should be required upon completion of the project.

Barlow asked about the length of the process and how submissions will be queried. Storrs explained that the Oddfellows will either hold an open call for artists then convene a panel that will generate a short list of artists from that open call to create paid proposals or they may choose to internally develop a list of artists they would like to work with, essentially skipping the open call and moving directly to the paid proposal. The second option would be preferable if the timeline does not allow for an open call, however it would need to meet the goals of the project in terms of views and diversity (etc...). Ultimately it is the decision of the Oddfellows.

Barlow commented that he would like to have a report/check in with the Oddfellows once the RFQ/selection process has begun to make sure the project remains in line with what Ryon Fink has presented to PACC. He asked if there is a start to finish length for completion of the project. Storrs explained that BCA and the Oddfellows think the project will take a total of 6 months to complete - 2-3 months for selection and 2 months for design followed by another 2 to 3 months in production to be completed by end of summer or beginning of fall.

Storrs explained that the city policy in terms of payment structure when it comes to grants is to provide the funds at the end of a project. That said, the city's fiscal year ends in July. Storrs proposed releasing 25% of funds after when the selection panel convenes. He noted that councilors likely do not want to obligate the next fiscal year to provide \$2500 and that releasing the funds mid-process would be a good solution due to the constraints of the fiscal year.

Shannon asked what next steps in the process would be and Storrs explained that the contract between BCA and the Oddfellows will be drafted soon then sent to Oddfellows. They will incorporate any changes PACC might require.

At this time Fink joined the conversation and provided the committee with a brief update. The Oddfellows have met and approved the plan. A subcommittee will convene to work on mural this week and determine whether they will be using an open or closed call.

Dieng asked if the ownership of mural had been determined. Storrs explained that, because BCA is providing the funds in the form of a grant the Oddfellows will own the mural. They will be purchasing all the materials and facilitating all the work. Further details on ownership are provided in contract.

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Shannon thanked Dieng for presenting to the board of finance and securing funds for the project.

Dewey Park Memorial Update

Storrs explained that the RFP for the foundation construction has been issued with a deadline at the end of next week. Once the foundation contract is completed a lot of dates will click into place in terms of construction/permitting/zoning/public notifications. BCA anticipates that the unveiling will be on June 17th as part of the city's Juneteenth celebrations. BCA has been in conversations with the Integrated Arts Academy to integrate the themes of project into their spring semester at school. Roughly 2 days after IAA students graduate, BCA will be unveiling this brand new piece of public art virtually on their doorstep. Students will be involved in the whole process and feel a part of the project. BCA has also been in touch with the Burlington Farmers Market. Storrs confirmed that construction will be completed by the time the market opens, however the grass will need to be reseeded. BCA will insure the space is ready to be used when market opens.

PARKS UPDATES:

Summer Camps

Gary Rogers, recreation superintendent for BPRW was on hand to discuss the city's summer camp program. Roger's began by explaining to the committee that summer camp registration opened on February 1, 2023 and many of the camps filled immediately. This year BPRW held 15% of slots for Burlington residents, specifically ones who may need financial support. They worked with the Boys and Girls Club, King Street Youth Center, Spectrum, and the Sara Holbrook Center as partners to present a camp fair where families who use those services were invited to come and register. Forms were delivered to the event so they could register for scholarships. BPRW was hoping for 50 applicants, however only about 15 to 20 family have presently registered from the event. It was the first time BPRW has tired handling registration this way, and Rogers feels that they will likely reverse the order in which they solicit scholarship participants next year, allowing them to register first and then opening registration to the general public. Rogers assured the committee that BPRW is committed to holding spots for those with fewer opportunities and less access as well as seeking out families to apply for more expensive programs.

That said, Rogers reports that registration going really well. Social media efforts have been extraordinarily effective – in fact there were too many registrations on opening day. He added that, regarding non-residents, even BPRWs specialty camps are less expensive than other camp options in the region and staff knows there are many non-residents that are taking advantage of options they provide. Since the pandemic there has been a spike in non-resident applicants to BPRW summer camp programs and they do not anticipate a change in that.

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Rogers provided the committee with a handout detailing how summer programming has been funded for since 2018. The clearest trend in funding is the state and federal grants provided for the last 3 years. These funds include COVID-19 funds, grant provided to the Burlington School District, and a "No Kid Hungry" grant. BPRW is continuing to strive to provide more free programming as they apply for and receive more grant funds. There is a question of funding going forward as COVID-19 funding ends. For example, the summer meals program costs over \$100,000 to produce and usually comes from general fund, but BPRW is always looking for other ways to fund it. This year, before leaving office, Senator Leahy secured a \$90,000 grant to connect families to lakes. These funds will help BPRW provide free events such as fishing days, and the funds help to fill the "big green hole" for 2023. In spite of the loss of COVID-19 funds, BPRW will be able to provide the same level of free programming as last 3 summers.

BPRW director Cindi Wight added that the city has put a lot of effort into getting paperwork in line for children attending Camps on scholarship as the camp is considered a licensed child care program by the state. These efforts saved the city \$13,000 in 2022, just by holding families accountable and chasing down paperwork.

Rogers added that the federal government made it easier in 2020 for the summer meals program to feed more people by providing meals in bulk to families and removing the requirement of feeding one child at a time. He also explained that Pomerleau Foundation funds (\$25,000) have been specifically allocated towards assisting the BIPOC community. BPRW has been in contact with ALV and Spectrum and they are organizing outings for BIPOC community members. BPRW also has a rec specialist focusing on BIPOC community and they have developed the Burlington Teen Outing Program with this in mind. Pomerleau funds will go towards this program.

Barlow asked if BPRW anticipates that they will have to decrease programming, increase fees, or both when COVID-19 funds are eliminated. Rogers stated that he feels it will likely be both. The Summer Rec Nutrition Program has been in existence for 15 years and there has always been a fight for funds. It was supported with up to \$50,000 from the BPRW budget or general fund in past, but has made use of COVID-19 funds for the last 3 years. BPRW may have to cut back on sites and bring kids from other areas to different sites.

Barlow asked if programming might have some price elasticity for those who can afford it. Wight explained that the Summer Rec/Nutrition program has no revenue and that's why it's a struggle to fund. Other programs make money and those help fund rec/nutrition, however they do not fully cover the budget. Children participating in Summer Rec/Nutrition didn't have the choice of activities when there were less funds in the past. That said, BPRW may increase non-resident fees for paid programming. Rogers will look to see where non-residents fees need to be leveled and insure that they are comparable to other cities.

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Dieng asked for clarification on the spots in summer programming being utilized by Burlington residents, and Rogers explained that while 15% of spots were held for residents with limited access, 60-70% of all camp spots are used by Burlington residents.

Dieng stated that he would like to see the rec/nutrition program expand to year-round programming. He also feels, from his own observations when visiting the program that the recreation piece has been lacking in the rec/nutrition programming and he would like to see it improved. Dieng specifically mentioned the gardening element of the rec program. Rogers explained that BPRW has a learning garden at Starr Farm and that every site in the summer rec program visits the garden once a week to weed and care for the space. He also stated that summer rec offered more fieldtrips in 2022 than ever before, so perhaps that's why kids aren't doing rec on site.

Dieng asked if BPRW could provide demographic information on the children participating in summer rec programs, and Rogers explained that the data they have is from 2019, but he would be happy to provide it.

Dog Task Force Appointment

Shannon commented that there were many great applicants to the task force. The committee briefly discussed the process they would use to nominate candidates before asking the applicants present at the meeting to speak.

Joanne Kalsiz was the only applicant present and she stated that she applied to be on the task first the first time around as well. She is a dog owner and detailed all her thoughts in her lengthy application. Kalsiz has a background in social psychology and data collection. She also stated that she is out in the community a lot with dogs and can assist with data collection and analysis.

Dieng asked if Kalsiz has been attending task force meetings, and she explained that she wanted to go to meetings, however she struggled with miscommunications concerning when meetings were. Ultimately she did attend one meeting. Dieng asked about Kalsiz's availability and group work skills. Kalsiz explained that she works from home part time and would likely be able to attend any evening meetings. She does work on weekends and during school hours, but shouldn't have a conflict with the regular meeting times. In terms of working with a group, she stated that if she feels like she needs to learn more or is uninformed, she is happy to learn more, however if there's something wrong or hurtful happening that she disagrees with she will stand up.

Shannon asked about what remains on the task force's agenda and Wight explained that they will be providing council with a progress report on Monday. Overall, the task force is wrapping up almost 2 ½ years of work. They are finalizing results, writing a report, incorporating info from BPD – generally wrapping things up. It is a challenging time to add someone in, but still doable.

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Barlow asked about the remaining timeframe and scope of work and Wight explained that they hope to be wrapped up by end of June. They are working on ordinance changes, compiling data from the dog survey for off-leash areas, and working on a plan for licensing. All told it's likely about 3 more months of work. The task force will bring their recommendations to PACC in June.

Mark – We don't know how the council conversation is going. Off-leash ideas have created controversy. Doesn't know where council will go. In terms of adding someone, wait to see how council meeting goes, see how much work is left, if there's more than 3 months we add a member, if there's 3 months we leave it as is. Delaying until next PACC meeting OK because we will know the scope.

Barlow commented that he would have liked to hear from more applicants. Shannon suggested that the committee postpone the appointment to next meeting so we can hear from the other applicants but also noted that applicants provided a lot of information on their applications.

Dieng stated that Kalsiz has demonstrated commitment and passion to the dog task force throughout its existence. He nominates her for open position. Shannon added other applicant David Stanley to the nominations and called for a vote. Barlow and Dieng were in favor of Kalsiz and Shannon was in favor of Stanley. Kalsiz is appointed to the committee. Shannon requested that Holli Bushnell send a note of thanks to all the applicants and inform Kalsiz that she has been appointed to the task force. .

Safety in Parks

Wight began by explain that, in conversations with Chief of Police Jon Murad, he reassured her that any time there is safety issues in parks, BPD is will be there to support rangers and staff. She continued by explaining that BPRW is anticipating that the rangers will be spending a much of their time and energy on the unhoused in parks in 2023. The rangers are currently in Denver, training with their urban rangers. Sworn officers, CSOs and CSLs from BPD will be available to provide the rangers with additional support.

Wight and Murad also discussed BPD having a strong presence in City Hall Park as the rangers could potentially spend all of their time just in CHP. It is a space that has long term issues and BPD is stepping in to take a stronger role in prevention and enforcement in that space. BPD is working with the Mayor to develop a specific plan for CHP.

Finally, BPRW is working with the city attorneys to understand their authority in Urban Reserve. At present, rangers can enforce rules in parks and will be able to issue tickets in for violations in parks as of April first. The Urban Reserve, however, is not a park and, consequently, rangers cannot presently do any enforcement in that space. Murad added that he feels BPRW should have the authority to deal with encampments in urban reserve, but enforcement in the reserve should be provided by BPD. In regards

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to anything that has a safety component BPD should and will be there. Murad explained that there is no exact plan for CHP yet, but BPD has a number of potential plans in place.

Dieng asked about the concept of a security kiosk in CHP which was proposed by a member of the public at a previous meeting. Murad commented that they have been effective in many different cities and situation all over the country, however the kiosk would need to be staffed or it would become a target for vandalism and other nefarious activities. Ali – Kiosk? Just a presence makes a difference.

Murad added that 2 sworn officers will be assigned solely to patrolling Church Street Marketplace, and that patrol will include not only Church Street itself, but also CHP, Fletcher Free Library, the two large churches located on South Winooski, and areas of Main and Church Streets south of the marketplace.

Shannon commented that the redevelopment plan for CHP included a vendor kiosk with the idea that it would provide a presence in park. She noted that the concept was pre-pandemic and may likely be difficult to execute at present. Doreen Kraft interjected that a number of department heads have been working on a proposal for dedicated kiosk funds to go before the council. It's not something they could build this summer, but they could potentially have a temporary structure.

Shannon stated that there have been many flagrant violations of the law taking place in CHP over the last year that seem to be tolerated by BPD. She asked if Murad could speak to that, if it is the current policy of the administration and/or states attorney to enforce drug laws, if BPD feels supported by the community in enforcing drug laws, and if the community should have any confidence that things will change. Barlow concurred that a lack of drug law enforcement has been happening and asked if there is something BPD needs from PACC or council. He stated that PACC and the city council both want to help improve the situation. Dieng added that enforcement needs to be happening, however it doesn't all need to be done with man power. Cameras and signage noting that CHP is being monitored 24/7 could likely help decrease some behaviors.

Murad stated that his officers are concerned about what happens when they conduct enforcement that requires them to use force. He also shared that, while there is a written policy regard the non-prosecution of possession of Naloxone/Buprenorphine/Narcan, open air drug use is on the books as a crime. That said, it is a citable offense and does not trigger arrest unless there are other factors.

Shannon asked what happens when someone is cited and just ignores it. Murad explained that the person can be trespassed. If that person returns to the location again they can be arrested/arraigned. If they tear up the ticket and keep doing what they're doing they can be arrested. If an individual has multiple trespasses there can be steeper consequences.

He continued by saying that when officers have to use force there is concern that they will be held accountable in ways that don't follow training/policy. Murad stated that he will back his officers as long as they follow guidelines. He is hopeful that use of force issues can be mitigated.

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Shannon asked what the committee and chief think about a resolution that clarifies expectations from community in regards to enforcement. She also commented that the camping policy needs to be clarified. There is a policy, but enforcement has not been happening and it's unclear as to why.

Murad confirmed that there is a policy that was developed between the city and the ACLU. There is, however, an unclear moment in the policy where a tent being erected becomes an encampment. If the tent has been up for less than a day, it's a tent but if it stays up longer than a day then it's an encampment. With regard for tarped items being kept in parks – that was another area of questionable enforcement. Mostly, BPD did not have the resources to address the problem. This year, they hope that by establishing presences earlier and in a more no-nonsense way, we will stop people from accumulating tarped items.

Barlow commented that he felt encouraged by Murad's statements. He feels that the shift to having officers engage with folks instead of just responding to issues over and over again will help shape behavior in a positive way. He echoed Shannon's question as to whether a resolution regarding support for BPD from the council would be helpful.

Murad stated that council support could be both helpful or divisive. He shared that, following a time of increased violence in the city in August 2022 when BPD requested support from the state police, members of the council spoke out against the action stating that they felt it was an escalation and could lead to greater danger. The next time BPD requested support from the state fewer troopers came to provide aid. That said, BPD would welcome support from councilors. Murad leaves it to PACC to determine next steps.

Dieng asked if PACC or council could hear from some of the officers at a future meeting in addition to the Chief. He feels there is a need to have a place where officers can talk about their experiences since 2020. Shannon asked if officers would feel comfortable coming to committee or if perhaps councilors could come along on full BPD shifts. She suggested that might be a good way to rebuild the relationship between BPD and the council. Murad stated that he would be happy to talk to officers about doing ride-alongs. He also shared that the Burlington Police Officers Association can attend council meetings, but BPD cannot. That said, there may be officers who would be comfortable attending a PACC meeting to discuss their experiences. It's not likely, but it is possible. All three members of the committee expressed their support for and commitment to participate in officer ride-alongs.

Murad shared that BPD has taken the events of 2020 to heart. They just completed first session of racial justice training which included viewing a 6 part documentary followed by facilitated discussions with trained facilitators. The experts who visited shared that internal culture of BPD is one of the best they've ever seen, but there are many wounded officers who still don't understand what happened to them in 2020. Just this evening BPD saved a man who was slicing his own throat. Officers had to use force to stop him, but they saved him. This is the work BPD wants to do and they want to be recognized

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with the good work that they do. They are ok with being held accountable when things go wrong, but the opinion of what's wrong and what's acceptable is varied.

Kraft suggested creating a video of a day in the life of BPD that could be shared with many groups. She felt that something like that could provide a cultural shift if it was shared widely. She added that she likes the idea of doing something bold this year that hits the reset button in terms of the issues with safety in and misuse of parks. She feels that the behaviors are ingrained after two years and something needs to clearly show that this is a new year, there are different rules and different enforcement, and then enforcement has to happen going forward. She hopes that BPD will consider taking bold steps. Kraft also stated that all of the city department heads and councilors, are behind BPD and support them.

Shannon concluded by sharing her appreciation of the conversation regarding safety over the last several meetings.

Schedule Next Meeting and Adjournment

The next meeting date and location are TBD as Councilor committee assignments may be changing in April. The meeting adjourned at 7:10pm