

Draft Agenda Ward 5 NPA

February 21, 2019

City Market Community Room 207 Flynn Ave 6:30pm-8:30pm

Agenda:

6:30-6:40 - Open Forum (on non-election issues)

6:40-7:10 - Mayor Weinberger and Q&A on ballot questions

7:10-end - City Council Candidate Forum: Councilor Joan Shannon (Democrat), Mohamed Jafar (Progressive), and Paco DeFrancis (Republican)

Ward 5 Steering Committee Members

Bill Keogh, bkeoghsr@yahoo.com

Alec Bauer, awbauer@gmail.com

Ben Traverse, bentraverse@gmail.com

Joanna Grossman, joeyinvermont@gmail.com

Joe Dery, joedery@gmail.com

Andy Simon, earthadventure@gmail.com

Mohamed Jafar, mo.jafarmohamed@gmail.com

For more information about Wards 5 NPA visit their CEDO webpage

<https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CEDO/Neighborhood-Services/NPAs/Ward-5-NPA>

Keep Current on their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Ward5NPA>

In collaboration with Channel 17 cctv.org, we will also now be live streaming our meetings on YouTube, which will permit the submission of online comments during Q&A portions of the meeting:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel17townmeetingtv>

Neighborhood Planning Assembly Attendees



NPA (choose one)	Wards 1 & 8	Wards 2 & 3	Wards 4 & 7	Ward 5	Ward 6
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Date of Assembly : 2/21/19 Location: City Market St.

Please return to your convener, _____,
or email to nmiller@burlingtonvt.gov

1 EUSA NELSON	20
2 R. PAUL SMITH	21
3 JIM BERGMAN	22
4 Donna Walters	23
5 Alex Burt	24
6 Deb + John Coughlin	25
7 Mike Fisher	26
8 Olivia Laverchia	27
9 KEN GRILLI	28
10 Canyon Long	29
11 Marcia Gustafson	30
12	31
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19	38
20	40

2019-02-21 Ward 5 NPA meeting

Meeting video: <https://www.cctv.org/watch-tv/programs/burlington-ward-5-npa-meeting-41>

Moderator: Alec Bauer

Meeting called to order 6:40pm

Steering Committee present: Joe Dery, Mohamed Jafar, Bill Keogh, Joanna Grossman, Alec Bauer, Andy Simon

Open Forum

Mike Fisher - seeclickfix 3 reports resolved within a week, good tool to use; potholes, ice
Amanda Hannaford (from Ward3 SC) Friends Fletcher Free library presenting Jenny Johnson
Jazz brunch fundraiser on March 31, tickets \$40 in advance

Fareed(?) - Proposition Zero aims to change city charter to allow community-proposed initiatives on the ballot. Restrictions on ballot initiatives concentrate power, create inequality. Website propositionzero.org, also facebook/twitter

Ballot Question discussion (Mayor Miro Weinberger)

<missed a lot>

(responding to Prop Zero) - There are 4 ballot items giving the voters full authority over important changes to tax policy and structure of government.

I think it's important that the city council is able to block items, as with City Hall Park item. City Annual Report is out, including new Equity Report, will be available at voting sites.

Question 2 - Maintaining City Services. 2nd time since elected, asking for increase in city's operating taxes. Funding for police, fire, parks, library, general services. Expenses rise roughly with inflation, but property tax revenue generally does not. 1.5% increase. \$40/year for average home.

Question 3 - Permit Reform. Permitting system is key source of complaints. System itself is too fractured and complicated, creates errors and confusion among public, especially homeowners or small business owners not following the process frequently. Zoning office, Building Inspection Services, Code Enforcement merged into one. Mayor-appointed department head, confirmed by CC. Will be located at DPW building on Pine St. Plan to appoint Bill Ward (current Code Enforcement head) as new department's head if approved.

Question 4 - Downtown Improvement District. Gene Bergman in the audience, I have a lot of respect for Gene, though we disagree on this issue. Have had active management of Church St for last 30 years, this has been a success. Looking to fulfill the founders' intent and expand to the entire downtown. Facing challenges from shift to online sales.

Question 5 - Business Personal Property tax. Taxing business equipment like real estate. For example 3D printer at Burton, large fermenter at a brewer. It is relatively easy to move assets elsewhere unlike real estate, this has been happening. Most area cities have eliminated this

tax; was in place for 60 communities, now down to 30 in last few years. Phased out over 8 years, synchronized with Waterfront TIF district expiration to reduce revenue impact.

Question/Answer;

Community Member - Ballot question 4 DID is privatizing downtown and is not an example of direct democracy.

MW - not privatizing anything with this question; Council has extraordinary oversight over the new non-profit that would be created. Hundreds of these districts have been created in the country. We should debate details of this proposal instead of comparing to worst examples.

Donna Walters - Seems rushed, first article in November, I only heard of it more recently. Can we debate this in one month? Don't think many are opposed to expansion. Will vote no because this is not understood and debated by the community yet.

CM - Will this be a private nonprofit.

MW - Yes, a private nonprofit with majority of board members appointed by City Council.

Bylaws will have to be approved by CC, budget must be approved by CC every year. Will sunset after 10 years if action not taken to renew.

CM - Who will police downtown

MW - The City will police the downtown, DID nonprofit will not have policing function. Some districts hire ambassadors.

CM - Street outreach members are working for Howard Center

MW - Yes, need a representative of nonprofit service entity on board. City officials are ex-officio members.

Gene Bergman - offended by process, found to be rushed, and by governance structure. Lack of our care and concern around gentrification and displacement. Raising tax dollars and giving to private entity, which can own assets - benches/lights. Appreciate efforts to soften the effect of privatization, but board members own a fiduciary duty to the entity, not the City. Church Street Marketplace Commission power was only temporarily removed in 2010. Marketplace Commission is engaging in governance including licensing of events and cafes.

MW - this authority will be coming back to the city

GB - consultant gave DID 3 options including a public option. These did not go to public forum, NPAS, why? Experience around the country is that area is gentrified. City prohibited from using taxes to mitigate gentrification. Why?

MW - Taxing authority is not being turned over to the entity. City Council approves the entity's budget.

GB - I meant the appropriate of those tax dollars.

MW - Taxing only commercial properties. Spending will beautify and improve the downtown.

Broad, general improvements that these businesses and the whole downtown will benefit from.

This is taxing business revenue to make improvements.

Regarding the questions - I am sympathetic that appears to be rushed, but City Attorney's office was aware throughout. The public option was not recommended by consultant. Virtually all of improvement districts are organized as private nonprofits, except here we are layering on further public protections. There is discontent over how Marketplace is managed, and to expand without reorganizing would face opposition from feepayers. Regarding gentrification, this is a cynical argument. DIDs make the cities more appealing, attracts more people, and as a result

rents could increase. The solution is to make sure we are adding permanently affordable housing. Adding hundreds of units essentially rate restricted. The bigger problem is when we don't build to meet demand. Public opposition groups prevented new housing, which led to increased cost/rents. Now pushing back on that and it is working.

Joan Shannon - should be concerned about appropriating taxes, but we are not giving tax dollars to the business community through this system. City council has little oversight over current Marketplace. This is an opportunity expands marketplace district, use private funds for public benefits. Privatization is a concern as well. Long list of authorities that council retains, including controlling use of rights of way and publicly owned spaces. About 1/3 of housing downtown is 'permanently affordable'. CC appoints the majority of the board. More diversity on this board; 4 residents, 4 city dept reps. Trying to sustain downtown despite declining revenues under pressure from online retail.

CM - predominantly business people had participated in study. Church St is starting to get shabby. Why vote on this now when people are just trying to learn about it. Don't agree this was an 'extensive public process'.

CM (lives on Church St since 2005) - want to support business owners. Nov meeting, only about 100 postcards went out, low attendance. Benches between bank/cherry street removed, removed as businesses built out, trying to get one back 8 years. Snow removal begins at 2am. Not a good balance for deliveries vs skiing/snowshoe along church st.

MW - many details left out of proposal, to prevent having to return to the voters again. Lays out only general duties. Agree regarding adding back benches. Will continue to have authority to push improvements. See me for bagels Wednesdays.

South District City Council candidates: Mohamed Jafar and Joan Shannon

Moderator: Impartial members of SC combed through questions submitted online. Will read questions and give each a chance to respond.

Joan Shannon - believe that city government intended by work for people, so should get what people want. I reach out to get input, then go through this feedback to see how voting should be done. Sponsored single use plastics ballot question. We all want affordable housing and care about the city. Political engagement is what makes Burlington great.

Mohamed Jafar - grew up in Burlington and getting involved to address some concerns. Housing is a big one, and childcare. Homelessness, still have many sleeping in the cold. Don't believe everyone's voice is there in the council today. Address the needs of everyone, feel we are missing out on cultural and economic weight of New American families. Not enough opportunities for young people, too many moving away. Want to fight to everyone, youth, artists.

Mod; How can we make the NPA more relevant and accessible?

JS - NPAs are great for providing a forum to provide information and exchange ideas. Often faulted for engaging through meetings. Now requiring large projects to come through NPAs. Have access to Front Porch Forum, always get a lot of feedback this way.

MJ - Provide a definition of what the NPA is. Not everyone uses Front Porch Forum and Twitter, communication has been missing. Young folks should be involved. Reach out to people by creating relationships with certain communities who are not being reached. Limited resources, but have reached out to people and some friends have attended meetings in this and other wards.

Mod; Participation in muni elections low for many years. What is the reason for this?

MJ - town hall meeting put together with Ali Dieng and get to know legislators. New Americans may become citizens without understanding how and why to vote

JS - not only immigrants are not voting, it is across all demographics, because of voter apathy. Saw increase in participation since Nov 2016, maybe from shock. Efforts to increase voter registration, and make it easier to vote. More a function of the candidate popularity than what the council is able to do.

Mod; how will personal life experience help you

JS - always bring different things to the table, but have learned a great deal from others bringing their opinion forward. Had experience when suffering from Lyme how a handicapped person would get around the city. Reflected on great fortune to have a place to live when health was failing. <more>

MJ - personal experiences have drawn me to this process. My parents have been through trauma as refugees, makes me appreciate struggles for everyone

Mod; housing

MJ - can't build out of everything, need to pay people enough to stay in housing they have. 'Affordable' housing is not really affordable for large families.

JS - many things are driving affordability crisis, housing could be cheaper if fewer people wanted to live here. Don't want to make less desirable, only more affordable -- by increasing housing supply. As a community we have been resistant to adding this housing. Mixed large apartments and single homes can work. I supported City place. ⅔ of taxes are on education, need to look at cost drivers of education. Helpful to have income sensitivity, but continues to be a big concern statewide.

Mod - how do you feel about DID

JS - issues that amanda raised were good, regarding residents not having a lot of participation in how this is currently governed. Of 11 members, 4 would be residents. There is no resident representation in the current form. A way to use private money for public benefit. Making downtown a nicer place is not a bad thing, and won't cost residents anything. 3 members are also nonprofit. Downtown businesses brought the Street Outreach program. Trips sponsored by CSMP, Portland etc, these all had much larger scale. Businesses are interested in participating. There is in some ways more city control -- approve bylaws, budget, appoint members.

MJ - disagree with this, it is incredibly privatized, not inclusive. Lack of transparency in process, still not sure what the DID is. Wrong for us to be told the process is transparent. Residents have to take on the burden of these projects.

JS - DID does not raise rents, there are no fees on residential properties. All meetings have been in public, not sure what is missing. Can be an argument that we should have had more public engagement, different issue from transparency. Process did not engage many from the South End. Businesses were focus of engagement, since they will be paying. Everyone has to learn now that a charter change will be made.

MJ - Didn't the Mayor suggest that rent could go up

JS - Not directly, but this is a factor in rent costs. City Place could provide enough housing to reduce rents somewhat.

<moving on from gentrification topic>

Mod - do you believe that all citizen initiatives with appropriate language should go onto the ballot

MJ - Yes, and it's concerning that a proposal with 3500 signatures would be swatted down

JS - this is a representative democracy, and our job is to look at all details that come before us to a depth that the public will not want to. Asked for feedback on whether the public wants to see this on the ballot. 150 responses, more than 2/3 said no. There were also a lot of signatures on the petition. Problem with putting City Hall Park question on the ballot, don't believe that people would have gotten what they hoped for. May not ever get a project that can win a majority of the vote. Community does not speak with one voice, and have to decide on community priorities. What I gather from knocking on doors is voters do not want to see all these questions on the ballot.

Mod - how do you feel about completion of Champlain Parkway in its current design

JS - as Lakeside resident never cared for the Champlain Parkway. But now must represent both people whose livelihood depends on it being built, and not. Project is now permitted. Chapin has driven improvements to integrate better with neighborhood streets. Somewhat reluctantly support the project now.

MJ - original design of project did not account well enough for pedestrians and bikes. We need to see to it that it has safe access for pedestrians.

JS - projects considers peds/bikes and has support from Local Motion. It is absurd that this is said to improve downtown access, but will better manage traffic in the South End, particularly truck traffic. Not confident that King St/Maple St traffic lights will work, suggested the project start there to see how this works before adding more traffic. Advocate for early phases to dead-end more of the side streets, and repave Briggs.

MJ - concerned about King Street traffic as resident of that area. Concerned about dead ending Pine St.

Mod - transgender rights are under attack, do you see a role for the city council to support rights

MJ - city council should play a pivotal role in affirming rights of everyone. I struggled with misogyny in my youth, took a long time to figure out who I should be. City could reach out to communities that are marginalized in various ways.

JS - should protect everyone's right including transgender people

Mod - what is your opinion on the basing of the F-35 at the airport

JS - personally not a fan of airplanes, but have become aware that every contract the city has signed with the federal government has allowed access to military. The airport has benefitted from a lot of federal funding. Has been concern about F-35s carrying nuclear weapons.

Contacted Senators and assured this is not the case in Burlington.

MJ- have not supported to a single person who supported basing, so I do not support it either

Mod - what can you do to counter climate change

MJ - we should address our transportation system, especially busing system. Buses are running late, too many transfers are problematic. If bus system is better, vehicles can come off the road.

JS - certainly support more bus transportation, but we need more buy-in from regional area. Many people who live in Burlington have jobs in surrounding towns such as Williston. Want to see at the state level better commitment to regional bus systems. Also need to attract more jobs to Burlington so people who live in the city can also work here. Home heating 2030 challenge, working toward net-zero. As councilor have improved efficiency and environmental standards for new buildings.

Mod - would you consider supporting a requirement that candidates sit on a board or NPA

JS - Do not think this should be a prerequisite, people come to this in a variety of ways. Used to run around neighborhood distributing newsletters. There are many ways to be engaged in the community, should leave it to the voters to decide.

MJ - Served on <more> sudanese foundation, youth. But agree there should not be a prerequisite, people should be able to vote for any viable candidate who will respect their needs.

Mod - any closing comments?

MJ - thank you for being here, glad to have this opportunity to possibly represent you. With an inclusive society we can tackle anything.

JS - I share Mohamed's goals for an inclusive society, put together an event at the King St Center when he suggested his parents and others would be more comfortable. Acknowledge that prior to that did not have access to this community, less success with knocking on doors. I do want to represent all of our community from QCP to Main St.

Notes by Joe Dery

Meeting end: 8:40pm.