

Neighborhood Planning Assembly Draft Minutes



NPA:
(choose one)

Wards 1 & 8	Wards 2 & 3	Wards 4 & 7	Ward 5	Ward 6
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Date of Assembly : 10/19/23

Start Time: (Commence): 7:10pm

Location: 645 Pine Street

Finish Time: (Adjourn): 9:14pm

Note taker: Jason Van Driesche

Please forward official minutes to: Fosca Bechthold

Steering Committee Members in Attendance: Lena Greenberg, Joe Dery, FaRied Munarsyah, Terri Rivers, Jason Van Driesche	
Discussion Topics • <i>These can be copied from agenda items</i> • <i>Content of discussion not required</i>	Actions Taken / Decisions Made • <i>Immediately following Agenda Item</i> • <i>Generally includes: electing a new steering committee member, voting as a body to send a formal communication to the City, decisions to spend money.</i>

Welcome

Lena moderated meeting:

- Meeting called to order at 7:10pm following a slight delay in dinner arriving
- NPA Intro slides
- Welcome to everyone; all are welcome

Public Forum

- Robyn Schenck – Howard Street
 - Regarding city council resolution about public safety. A concern: what about safety of people who are addicted to drugs? Shared story about a person who stole her car and lived in it, and then later died of an overdose. Warming shelters are great, but we need to go deeper than that.
- Richard Gliech – Ferguson Ave
 - Has lived in Burlington for 25 years. Commenting on recent reassessment, in which many residential properties saw a huge increase in taxes while commercial property taxes went down. This means rates are based on a situation that was anything but normal. Result is about \$2M in extra payments from residences.

City could easily fix this by adjusting rates to reflect the fact that businesses are now doing well. Voted against school budget for the first time last year, due to this imbalance in taxes. City is becoming unaffordable.

- FaRied
 - Run People's Kitchen – free food distribution to people who need it. Distribution every week at South Meadow, and many other
- James Balady
 - Vermont Justice for Palestine – collecting signatures in support of freedom and justice for Palestinian people. Will present petition to City Council, with goal of getting it on Town Meeting ballot. Urgent need for peace talks
- Matt Somerville – Birchcliff Pkwy
 - Concerned about public safety, in particular on Church Street. Large businesses are considering moving out of Burlington.
 - Related that his son no longer goes to Battery Park because people are engaged in inappropriate sexual behavior there. Kids are now desensitized to what they see on the street. Increasingly in favor of active enforcement to indicate that certain behaviors are not tolerated.
- Evan Gould – Redrocks condos
 - Regarding property taxes: VT Ways and Means Committee is exploring the possibility of a “land value taxation” system, which would mean that both residential and commercial properties would pay taxes just on value of land, not on value of improvements. Can function to encourage development.
- Lena Greenberg – King/Maple neighborhood
 - Intervale Community Center is starting a pop-up food market called “ARLO” (Affordable, Reliable, Local). Will happen at ONE Community Center at 20 Allen Street on the second Tuesday of Each month.

BTV Neighborhood Code

- Presented by Sarah and Charles of Planning and Zoning Office
- Overall focus is on housing types between single-family and apartment building: duplexes, triplexes, etc.
- 40% of city is low, med, and high density neighborhoods – this is focus of Neighborhood Code work
- Purpose is to increase housing opportunities via neighborhood-scale solutions: lower cost, more choices, opportunities for multigenerational housing, etc.
- What is currently on the ground in BTV neighborhoods often doesn't conform to standards – meaning, standards are out of sync with our existing patterns of development
- Specific strategies:
 - Allow a duplex on any lot where a single-family home is allowed

- Allow multiple free-standing buildings on a single lot (cottage court, etc.)
- Focus on building mass rather than lot density
- Allowing smaller lots and higher lot coverage limits
- Create standards for cottage courts
- Joint Committee (Ordinance + Planning) are happening every few weeks into December and are open to the public
- Coffee hours as well, sponsored by AARP-VT, for discussion and feedback
- Comments/questions:
 - Jak Tiano: Zoning has historically been a key limiting factor in Burlington's growth. Focus of zoning for past 80 years has been to constrain growth. Current work is promising. Two questions:
 - Setbacks: serve to preserve aesthetics. Proposed changes are only to the rear setbacks. Why not reduce side and front setbacks as well?
 - Hi/med/low density: why do we need different intensities at the zoning level? Should zoning be used to enforce aesthetics, at the cost of pushing renters and lower-income folks out of the city?
 - Answers: rear setback is currently 25% of lot size. That doesn't work in a lot of the city. Key focus. Side setbacks are needed to guarantee building separation. But neighborhood code also introduces row house option, which is essentially zero side setback.
 - Evan: Biggest concern is front setback. Could be an impediment to cottage courts. Would prefer to see a max rather than a min. Allowing people to prioritize backyard space rather than forcing a front yard would be useful.
 - Ben Traverse: appreciate feedback and engagement. Lots of nitty gritty, but biggest question is where we draw boundaries of districts. Also, current proposal is to allow for much larger buildings on major corridors.
 - Jason Van Driesche: what is role of Burlington Fire Department in shaping changes? Call on city council to ensure that BFD is a partner, not a blocker. Fire safety and emergency response is one of many community interests that need to be balanced. Fire safety is important, but fire department should not get veto power.

Drug Crisis as Public Emergency

- Presented by Councilor Melo Grant (Central District)
- Background: served as member of Police Commission before running for City Council.
- Significant increase in "crimes of opportunity" as well as drug overdoses have increased dramatically in past few years. The two are closely related.
- Do a lot of outreach and engagement work as Councilor – going to lots of meetings.

- In capacity as member of Public Safety Committee – began pushing Council to take more action related to this crisis. Was not doing enough.
- Money from opioid settlement is being released to communities too slowly
- Downtown businesses have seen a significant drop-off in business from Vermonters – people aren't going downtown as much anymore
- Fire Department has been very innovative in changing how it responds to overdose crisis – now has a truck with an EMT and a firefighter that patrols areas of the city with high rates of overdoses
- October 10 City Council meeting has excellent presentation on drug issues – available via council webpage

Open Discussion Regarding Housing Crisis and Drug Crisis

- Matt Somerville: Key challenge is separating drug issues from homeless issues – they are not necessarily synonymous. Would like to have a better sense of the nature of the homeless population. More concerned about homelessness than drug use per se.
- Robyn Schenck: Curious about what is reason for lack of street patrols in Burlington. Dangerous stuff happening on streets and police do not respond. Example: man talking to himself while stabbing a hunting knife into a telephone pole as kids walk by on way to school. What do we do?
- Evan Gould: SeeClickFix is great for reporting non-emergency issues, but it seems that responses are slow.
- Question: How to get in touch with a CSO (community service officer)? Call police department, and then you get put into the voicemail in the phone tree which goes to CSOs. Could be helpful to the public to have numbers for Howard Center and other resources along those lines.
- Reps Bluemle and Stebbins had a forum on housing on 10/18; there are [google slides](#) available to view context of this issue

Announcement of Vote on Resolution at next Ward 5 NPA Meeting

Lena Greenberg officially announced that a resolution titled “A Resolution Affirming Norms of Respect Regarding Gender Identity and Expression within Neighborhood Planning Assemblies” will be discussed and voted on by the Ward 5 NPA at its November meeting. Any Ward 5 resident who attends the meeting is eligible to vote. A draft of the resolution will be posted on the Ward 5 NPA website shortly. Comments and suggested edits are welcome.

Adjourned 9:14 pm