

Ward 6 Neighborhood Planning Assembly Draft Minutes

Thursday, November 2, 2023 6:30-8:30pm

391 Maple St. & online

Start Time (Commence): 6:35pm Finish Time (Adjourn): 8:30pm

Note Taker: Mills Forni

Facilitator/Moderator: Dale Azaria

Steering Committee Members in Attendance: Mills Forni, Dale Azaria, Ute Regan, Nancy Harkins, Anita Rapone



6:30 pm | Call to Order, Announcements, Public Forum

- Introductions of Steering Committee members, guests, and invitees
- Call for any public comments or announcements
 - Sarah Hernandez Timm, Public Information & Community Engagement Officer for BPD
 - Community academy flyer ([more info](#))
- Share your news, your events, your questions, and your concerns

6:45 pm | Burlington's Declaration regarding the Drug Crisis and Public Health

- Invited Speakers include City Council Members Karen Paul and Joan Shannon, Police Chief Jon Murad, Fire Department Chief Michael LaChance, Superintendent of Schools Tom Flanagan, Police Commission Co-Chairs Shakuntala Rao and Mary Cox, and CEDO Substance Use Policy Analyst Scott Pavsek
- **Fire Department Chief Michael LaChance**
 - Drug use and drug overdoses are a concern for the community. Shared statistics on average overdoses in Burlington responded to by the fire department, including a breakdown of those transported and not transported.
 - Open alcohol consumption is a concern for the community.
 - Response to the homeless/houseless population has increased dramatically. These patients often suffer from substance abuse and mental health issues. Overdoses happen every day of the week in locations around the city.
- **CEDO Substance Use Policy Analyst Scott Pavsek**
 - Serves on state opioid settlement board
 - Stand up comstat
 - Looking at community syringe redemption program to mitigate improperly disposed needles around the city.
- **Victor Pursek - Burlington Public Schools**
 - Concern is not drug use by students, it's the presence of needles in the city, harassment in public.

- **Police Chief Jon Murad**

- We feel public safety has slipped in the city and there are a lot of concerns. That said, we're seeing a decrease in violent crime compared to last year, which saw a historic high.
- Deep concerns about the direction of public safety given the recent murder in Bristol.
- Many public concerns around public safety are due to the drug crisis. There's also concern about homelessness, which isn't a crime, but can lead to a sense of unease. Homelessness in and of itself is not a crime and the majority of unhoused people do not commit crimes.

- **City Council President Karen Paul**

- Introduced the resolution recently approved that declared the drug crisis a public health emergency and the top public health priority.
- This is a crisis of unprecedented proportion for a wide variety of reasons. Approximately 200 people are unhoused in Chittenden County, most of which are in Burlington.
- Convening a community forum on public safety December 13 and 14, location to be announced.

- **Q&A**

- Has there been a census done of the unhoused population in Burlington to learn their story and understand the issues they are facing?
 - There is a headcount conducted by the government, but not a formal census. However, many of the people working with the unhoused know these people quite well.
 - Working collaboratively with Howard Center.
 - Sarah Russell with the Initiative to End Homelessness is working on documenting the cases of all unhoused to better understand them.
 - The unhoused population is diverse, many are facing economic hardship. However, others have mental health and substance abuse challenges.
- What resources are available for University of Vermont students (and others) to safely and appropriately interact with people in crisis?
 - There may be an opportunity in creating more resources like this.
- How many families are unhoused?
 - We do not have a clear picture of that, Initiative to End Homelessness may. Most are individuals, some are couples, few include children (and those are typically temporarily unhoused).
- Are we seeing an increase of horse tranquilizer to street drugs?
 - Yes. It's in the community. We're seeing a lot of this in the community. The Fire department offers fentanyl and xylazine test strips. Narcan can be used to treat many overdoses, but it can be less effective when are drugs are combined.
- What can we as community members do to address this challenge?
 - Use see-click-fix to report needles being found around the city.
 - Burlington Public Schools conduct sweeps of school playground for needles.

- There are not regular sweeps of public parks. Department of Public Works is overwhelmed.
- How often are see-click-fix requests solved? Many of them are
 - Contact public works or submit another request if you don't see resolution.
- What new actions are being taken?
 - Actions include a pilot program in the fire department which provides overdose prevention kits and community forums.
- Iceland has a very effective method for substance abuse prevention - has Burlington considered this?
 - It's worth considering, unlikely this fiscal year.
- What is the role in houselessness in contributing to the drug crisis?
 - It has a significant role. Houselessness increase the likelihood of substance abuse and of mortality as a result.

8:30 pm Adjourn