



Ward 5 Neighborhood Planning Assembly: Draft Minutes

Date of Assembly: 01/18/24

Start Time: 7:03pm

Location: 645 Pine Street and Zoom

Finish Time: 8:40pm

Note taker: Jason van Driesche

Please forward these official minutes to: Fosca

Steering Committee Members in Attendance:

Rodger Brassard, Joe Dery, Terry Rivers, FaRied Munarsyah, Jason VanDriesche, Lena Greenberg

(Watch the livestream of the meeting [here!](#))

Agenda Items and Actions:

Public forum

- FaRied Munarsayah (People's Kitchen) – many thanks to neighbors who helped with clothes and toy drive. Over 200 toys and 200 items of warm clothing distributed.
- Lucia Campriello (Ward 5 School Board Commissioner) – wrapping up first two year term on school board. Would welcome signatures for getting on the ballot.
- Andy Simon (Ward 5 resident) – upcoming events in Ward 5 for Emma Mulvaney-Stanak. All are invited. Strongly encourage more people to vote. Turnout is way lower than it should be.
- Ben Traverse (Ward 5 City Councilor) – Ward 5 resident with three kids. Great honor to serve on City Council for past two years. Running for re-election. Looking forward to discussing the issues here at NPA.
- Lena Greenberg (candidate for Ward 5 City Council) – excited to talk about key issues we're facing as a community: safety, housing, climate.

Preview of bylaws work

- City has directed NPAs to update their bylaws
- Steering committee is planning a work session to develop proposed changes to bylaws; this meeting will be warned and open to everyone
- Proposed updates to bylaws will then be presented and voted on at a regular Ward 5 NPA meeting

Gateway Block redevelopment

- Presentation by Samantha Dunn of CEDO; works on a range of real estate-related projects to increase housing opportunities
- Focus of presentation is on "Gateway Block" – bounded by Main, Winooski, College, and Union streets

- Key issue is fate of Memorial Auditorium: structurally unsound, would be very expensive to rehabilitate (\$30M pre-COVID); no capacity remaining (with \$165M high school bond) to invest in rehabilitation of Memorial
- Private partners have fallen through
- Priorities identified in 2018 survey of city residents are still top of mind
- Goals are:
 - Attractive and welcoming gateway to downtown
 - Mixed income housing
 - Including of public space, including for youth
 - Public parking
 - Grow the grand list
 - Long-term economic benefit
- Barriers include:
 - Ravine sewer (very old sewer line deep under this block) – makes it difficult to redevelop site
 - Lack of city control of core parcel in middle of site
 - Lack of city bonding capacity due to new high school
 - High cost of adaptive reuse of Memorial Auditorium
- Current opportunity
 - Ravine sewer will be relocated as part of Main Street redevelopment (to be built in next couple of years)
 - Partnership with local developers (Eric Farrell and Joe Larkin) who have control of partners in center of block
 - Shared vision for block that aligns with key city goals
 - Access to private financing that is not available to City
 - Developing Letter of Intent with developer to outlines roles, valuation, priorities, logistics, etc.
 - Goal is to execute development agreement by January 2025
- Questions/comments:
 - Will there be any effort to preserve any portion of Memorial?
 - Yes. Currently being studied.
 - Please absolutely minimize surface parking – handicapped only – and reduce number of structured parking spaces also.
 - Yes, absolutely. Share that vision.
 - What can City require regarding affordable housing? Can it be 50% affordable?
 - Have to balance these goals with feasibility.
 - Transparency of finances: how will whole community have visibility into financing that is real and viable?
 - Hear that. Very different from City Place, in that City owns most of the land.
 - What is happening with old YMCA building?
 - Front part is being kept, back demolished; will be developed into 90 housing units.
 - When will reconstruction of Main Street happen?
 - Starts this spring; rebuild of ravine sewer is one of first steps.
 - How can people stay informed?

- Email sdunn@burlingtonvt.gov

School budget update

- Presentation by Lucia Campriello, Ward 5 school board member
 - Current year budget is \$104.1M
 - Proposed FY25 budget is \$119.6M
 - This is a 14.84% increase
 - About $\frac{2}{3}$ of increase is to support borrowing for new high school
 - Rest is annual increases to wages, health insurance, and other base costs
 - Impact to school taxes is a 13.97% increase
 - Would be a 5% increase, absent state rules regarding Common Level of Appraisal (CLA)
 - District and City are deeply concerned about this increase and are in active communication with state officials about it
- Comments from Clare Wool, school board chair
 - Very difficult situation with shutdown of old BHS
 - This is a sacrifice for Burlington taxpayers
 - Many costs are largely beyond our control: construction costs, healthcare costs, etc.
- Questions:
 - Are staff paying towards health care costs?
 - Yes
 - Is the CLA the law? Do you have to follow it?
 - Yes. But part of reason why education funding is broken.
 - Has commercial reappraisal happened?
 - Yes, but only partially. Ben T. is pushing for broader reappraisal.
 - Different approaches to taxation?
 - Perhaps schools should be funded by income taxes – i.e., ability to pay – rather than property taxes

Neighborhood Doing Assembly!

- We're going to review the things that came up at our August social - we organized them into a few categories. Took some time for each item and shared what we're excited about doing!
- Next steps - send out on FPF and ask folks to vote!