

**Public Safety Committee
Monday, October 2, 2023
Remote via Zoom
Burlington, Vermont
APPROVED MINUTES**

Members Present: Karen Paul (Chair), Melo Grant, Tim Doherty

Staff Present: Jared Pellerin (Acting City Attorney), Michael LaChance (Fire Chief)

Public Present: Councilor Magee, Councilor King, Councilor Shannon, Kelly Devine, Ryan Nick

Meeting called to order at 6:35 PM by President Paul.

**1. Adopt the Agenda
1.01 Adopt the Agenda**

Motion to Adopt Agenda as written.

Motion by Councilor Grant, Seconded by Councilor Doherty

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

**2. Public Forum
2.01 Verbal Comments**

Kelly Devine expressed concern that new changes would prevent the resolution from moving forward with the appropriate sense of urgency and requested that changes be kept to a minimum.

Ryan Nick commented that the Committee cannot afford to delay the passing of this resolution and implored them to act with haste, stating the current system is not compassionate for anyone and fails the most vulnerable of our residents.

Public Forum closed at 6:42 PM.

**3. Changes to Drug Crisis Resolution
3.01 Discussion of Changes to Drug Crisis Resolution**

Motion to reconsider currently approved version of the Committee's resolution that was to be presented to the City Council on October 10th.

Motion by Councilor Grant, Seconded by President Paul

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

Discussion:

President Paul noted that she would agree to second the motion provided there was an understanding that this would be the last meeting where this would be discussed that a motion to bring this to the full Council would come at the end of this meeting as there is great urgency.

Councilor Doherty noted that while agreeing to reconsider the resolution, it was not an agreement to language in the newly revised version presented to the Committee and noted two issues of concern, being the fairness of the revision process at this stage and the Committee's ability to act with urgency.

Councilor Grant responded that moving the resolution forward remains a top priority but wanted to add these changes based on information and feedback following the Committee's last meeting on September 21st.

Discussion of Revisions by Line:

- Lines 1-3: President Paul requested that Chief LaChance provide the Committee with the most recent data on emergency response to overdoses to ensure the resolution's currency.
- Line 14: Councilor Grant added "medically assisted". The Committee approved the change.
- Lines 17-19: Councilor Grant proposed a new clause describing the State's lack of urgency in supporting harm reduction. President Paul and Councilor Doherty shared some reservations over the language, and President Paul suggested revising the clause to read "...the State of Vermont has not...acted with significant urgency to embrace all evidence-based harm reduction strategies on a statewide level." The Committee approved this suggestion.
- Lines 20-21: Councilor Grant proposed adding a specific reference in Line 20 to a bill the Governor vetoed that would have supported the study of overdose prevention centers, H.728. Councilor Magee suggested changing H.728 to H.72 because H.728 was from a previous legislative session, whereas H.72 was currently being considered. President Paul and Councilor Doherty voted against the change for the scope of this resolution because they were not familiar with H.72, and do not feel comfortable adding it to the resolution.
- Line 34: Councilor Grant had proposed a change but decided to keep the original language.
- Line 39: Councilor Grant added "legislative updates", which the Committee approved.

- Line 51: Councilor Grant proposed adding a reference to the Council supporting drug checking programs. President Paul suggested adding it to a new clause, as the line Councilor Grant had initially proposed was speaking to initiatives the City Council has historically supported, and the City Council has not explicitly supported drug checking programs in the past. Councilor Doherty wondered if the placement of the new clause at Lines 52-53, made sense for the flow of the resolution and opposed the addition, but as a majority supported the change, the revision passed.
- Line 63: Councilor Grant added “and residents” to the clause that acknowledges those who are on the frontlines of the overdose crisis. The Committee approved the change.
- Line 74-79: Councilor Grant proposed removing language relating to the State’s Attorney’s Office’s hiring and retention challenges, as per Sarah George, the Chittenden County office is not experiencing challenges in this area. After deliberation, the Committee decided to keep the language because the Committee is also including requests for data and information from the State’s Attorney’s Office that would reveal more about challenges the State’s Attorney’s Office is facing. Councilor Grant requested “Assistant State’s Attorneys” on Line 76 be changed to “Deputy State’s Attorneys” to accurately reflect the title of the position, which the Committee approved.
- Lines 85-86: President Paul broadened the language to include pertinent Senate Committees as well as mention of the Legislative delegation, which the Committee approved.
- Lines 99-101: Councilor Grant added a resolved clause related to the Fire Chief’s data contributions to the Public Safety Committee, which the Committee approved.
- Lines 102-108: Councilor Grant proposed removing the listed categories of crime to be consistent with the clause at Lines 43-46, but Councilor Doherty stated he had agreed to the removal of this language from the earlier clause under the condition that it still be included in Lines 102-108 at the last meeting. President Paul suggested amending Line 107 to add “and if possible”, as the availability of some requested data is unknown, along with Councilor Grant’s added request for the current number of backlogged cases in Line 108. The Committee approved the changes.
- Line 110: Councilor Grant deleted the reference to “CARES” as the CARES team is not formally active yet, which the Committee approved.
- Line 111: Councilor Grant had added “...and are not working” after “...are not the solution...”, to which President Paul disagreed, noting some current responses, while not the solution, are helping people. The Committee agreed to preserve the original language.

- Lines 115-118: Councilor Grant added the State Legislature and the Governor to the clause regarding the development of public forums, and President Paul added language further emphasizing the scope of the problem, noting it as a statewide and national issue. The Committee approved both changes.
- Lines 119-122: The Committee approved the addition of a resolved clause that requests for meetings with the Governor and Legislature.
- Line 136: Councilor Grant added a request for Public Safety Committee to provide updates to the City Council on progress towards resolving the crisis, in addition to a request for updates from the Mayor's Administration, which the Committee approved.

Motion to accept the resolution and bring it before the full City Council on October 10th, pending legal review by the City Attorney's Office.

Motion by Councilor Doherty, Seconded by Councilor Grant

Final Resolution: Motion passes

Yes: Unanimous

4. Adjournment

4.01 Motion to Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned with no objection by President Paul at 8:03 PM.