City of Burlington
Vermont

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TO: City Council Members
Bob Kiss, Mayor

FROM: Benjamin Pacy, Assistant CAO

DATE: December 10, 2008

COMMUNICATION
DATE 12/15/08
AGENDA ITEM # 13.01

RE: Open Government Committee Development Recommendations

As requested, attached is the response from both the IT and Planning/Zoning Department to the recommendations of the Open Government Committee.

Additionally, I wanted to remind you of the general recommendations that were provided by the Committee which did not fall under either of the aforementioned departments. They are as follows:

1. The Code Enforcement Office currently has no citizen oversight. City Council should consider providing some form of citizen oversight to the department.
2. The Code Enforcement Office should develop an FAQ sheet that includes an explanation of its processes and the remedies available if someone is not satisfied with the response.
3. City Council should hold a public hearing on Open Government at least once a year and either act on the issues presented, request the city administration to act or refer issues to an Open Government Committee with diverse citizen representation.
    a. A significant minority of the committee felt that the City Council should constitute an ongoing Open Government Committee that is diverse (in terms of ethnicity, gender, economics, geography, and other factors) and includes members of the public.
4. The process for appointing Board and Commission members should be improved as follows:
    a. The Clerk Treasurers Office should look for ways to make openings more widely known.
    b. The Clerk Treasurers Office should make the application form more clear and standardized, with an accompanying explanation of process and City Council's usual practice in nominating and approving appointments. The form and the explanation should be posted online.
    c. The Clerk Treasurers Office should notify sitting Commissioners two months in advance of the need to reapply when their terms expire.
    d. City Council should enforce any stated deadline for applications.
    e. City Council should reopen the application process only after publicly announcing that it is unwilling to nominate anyone from the existing applicant pool.

Open Government Committee Development Recommendations

Information Technology Office Response

Open Government Committee Recommendation Web Recommendations	Information Technology Office Response
Recommendations: Organizational / Implementation	
1. The Burlington IT department— its personnel and functions— need to be centralized. A new Burlington page should be the umbrella for all other city Web sites. IT functions throughout the city should be uniform, with one content management system. Individual departments will still be able to put their artistic stamp on (and retain their unique expertise pertaining to) their Web pages, but each page should be recognizable as under Burlington's central umbrella.	The committee recommended centralizing the governance and to the extent practically possible, the operations of all IT functions throughout the city. However, the issue at hand specifically relates to the governance of the various technologies used as a means of communications to and from the citizens of the city. As such, the focus of these comments are limited to the city's various websites. Fortunately, this is one of the areas that most easily lends itself to consolidation both from a technical, organizational and governance perspective. Approximately one year ago, a Web Governance Committee was established. Members of all city Departments and Enterprises (initially excluding Schools) were invited to participate. The end result was a recommendation virtually identical to that which was forwarded by the Committee on Open Government to the city Council. However, the Governance Committee's focus was broader by definition than that of the Open Government Committee. It considered requirements related to supporting more efficient operations through the use of web based technology as well as addressing requirements related to supporting

transparent communications with citizenry.

Simply put, the Web Governance committee recommended development of a single web technology capable of supporting the entire wide range of city needs and allowing content management to be driven down to the lowest level of the organizations where its ownership resides.

Unfortunately, the size of the problem is such that selecting a solution that is strategic, effective, efficient and sustainable is not a trivial matter. The city's 15 separate websites contain over 10,000 pages of content and the functional requirements for each of those websites reflect the operational issues managed by each of the departments / enterprises that own them. The resulting list of functional requirements in total is extremely broad and reflects the wide variety of 'businesses' that the city is engaged in. Additionally, none of the city's current web platforms in use is robust enough to satisfy the needs of the city in total. This combination of issues combined with an assessment of the range of content management systems available (there are over 500) suggests that the city would be best served by a mid-tier content management solution. Such solutions generally cost, depending on the range of options, from forty to seventy thousand dollars for the initial installation. Additionally, there are ongoing support costs that typically cost approximately twenty percent per year of the initial license costs.

2. All content across departments should be searchable from Burlington's main Web page and anywhere else within the city site. Content recorded previous to the time of

This is really three issues;

a) Ability to search all web content within the city's web site(s). –

implementation of database storage should be entered in a reverse chronology of at least three years. Updating of the previous year should be completed within six months. Priority should be given to the posting of past city council, board of finance, planning commission, and development review board minutes

Practically, this is only realistic if the city migrates it's 15 websites to a single central site with subdomains. It would be prudent at this juncture to move to the new federal standard for state / municipal website domain naming convention. This would result in a top level domain name of "www.burlingtonvt.gov".

b) Indexing 3 years prior content – This is largely an operations question rather than a technical one. The degree to which this could be automated is unknown at this time. It's possible that the content in question would have to be manually moved, copied and pasted, or otherwise migrated into the new content management system. This effort required will no doubt vary from site to site. The availability of personnel in departments to do the work would have to be determined at the department level.

From a technical perspective, any mid-level web content management system would have the ability to maintain this volume of content. Additionally, we anticipate that the city's current server virtualization project will result in disk capacity with the required capacity.

c) Management of Agendas, Minutes, etc. – This is a related but more specialized form of content management often referred to as Agenda automation. Although it's possible to treat things like agendas and minutes as simple web content, there are workflow functions available in automated agenda systems that could be used to help streamline the process issues embodied in the city council legislative

process as well as various boards, commissions, committees etc. Implementation of such a system would require additional appropriations beyond that discussed here. Our cursory review of such system suggest they are in the range of twenty to thirty thousand dollars per year in licensing costs..

3. Individual city departments must be able to post their announcements, agendas, minutes, and other documents directly to their portion of the city's Web site. The protocol for posting should be uniform across the city, with a shared content management system.

The key issue here is that the content management system used needs to have sophisticated, granular security so that edit / approval roles can be directed to the appropriate group and/or individuals. Lower-tier Content Management solutions do not offer this level of function since they are designed for smaller organizations that do not have complex organizational structures like the city's.

4. A regular bulletin should be posted on the city's Web site. This bulletin would appear either weekly or fortnightly and would summarize the top activities of the city. Compiling this letter may be a new function of the mayor's office.

Our existing system supports this.

5. The city should implement RSS feeds and e-mail notices for residents interested in getting alerts about key issues.

Currently, the way this would be done varies widely with each of the city's websites and thus, impractical to accomplish centrally. With a central content management system it would be straightforward to support these functions throughout.

6. The city council and mayor's office should explore ways to expand computer and Web access in the city, particularly for low income residents.

The Information Technology Office stands ready to lend any assistance we can.

Recommendations: Improving Access

7. Except in the case of emergencies, meetings should be announced online on the city's event page one week prior to scheduled meeting times. If the meeting is not entered on the online events schedule prior to the meeting date, the meeting should be rescheduled. Agendas, with hyperlinked proposed resolutions, should be posted, too. All nonconfidential documents should be supplied on the details page announcing the meeting, including city council packets.	Our current events page has the capability to support this recommendation. Related to the agenda issue, to the acquisition and/or development of automated agenda system would be necessary to support this level of integration. These systems make extensive use of hyperlinks from agenda / minutes to subsidiary supporting content. They are intended to provide a comprehensive view of the entire legislative process and help manage all clerical process issues therein. They can track an agenda item from creation, through draft approvals, introduction, referral, recommendation all the way to the end ready for codification and automatically publish it on the internet.
8. Draft minutes of meetings should be posted within five days of a meeting and approved minutes should be posted within a week of approval.	Our existing system supports this.
9. When a hyperlink of an audio or video transcript is available, summary minutes are acceptable; however, approved resolutions and roll call outcomes of all votes must always be posted in full with the minutes. The city should explore the feasibility of increasing the digital recording of minutes, including the expansion of CCTV coverage.	The Information Technology Office stands ready to lend any assistance we can.
10. The city should convey information (internally and externally) electronically and digitally (including Burlington Telecom) whenever possible.	The Information Technology Office stands ready to lend any assistance we can.
11. All city Web pages should have a place for public feedback.	The current web architecture, with so many websites using so many

different technologies makes impractical to try to ensure this. A centralized content management system would make it easy not only to provide this global function, but also, to ensure that feedback is directed correctly to the appropriate group or person depending on the issue in question.

Content Management System Supporting Information

As has been recommended, the use of a properly scaled common web content management system can provide the City with a consolidated platform which would address the various deficiencies outlined by both the Open Government and Web Governance committees. Such a system would by definition need features that are not found in content management tools scaled for small organizations. Some of these features include;

- Audit Trail - Changes to content need to be logged so it's possible to identify who made the change, who approved the change and what the change was.
- Granular Privileges – A general principal of effective Content Management tools is support for driving content changes to the person with responsibility for the content in question. This means the system should support the ability to assign change or approval rights to individuals, groups or delegates as needed with clear support for organizational authority. A person with authorization to edit content on the Police Department's pages should not have the ability to do so on the Parks and Recreation pages for example.
- System Development (Sandbox) – The system should support the ability for IT development on a system separated from the production environment.
- Versioning – The system must support the ability to retain different versions of a particular page. This feature, which is closely related to Audit Trail above, provides the ability to roll back to earlier versions if necessary as well as the ability to stage changes as work in process or approval needs demand.
- Workflow engine – This feature provides support for defining and managing the approval process for content changes / additions / deletions. In some cases, particular content may require approval of either certain individuals or functions (City Attorney's Office for example). A workflow engine provides the ability to define the approval process so that bottlenecks do not occur and if they do, can be quickly resolved.

- Active Directory Integration – The City is moving toward a single active directory to maintain it's employee information and organizational structure. The content management solution needs to tie directly into this directory.
- Multi-Lingual Support – Some enterprises (particularly the Airport) require this.
- eCommerce – We have several enterprises that currently require eCommerce functionality. This is likely to grow as the City begins to look at alternative ways of supporting the various payments coming to the City.
- Document Management – The City has a related issue with regard to document management. Electronic capture of documents in order to reduce paper, save space and support easy retrieval of archived information is on the minds of many City departments. If the City's choice of Web Content Management technology is based on a platform that would provide a solution to the City's broader needs for document management we will be on our way to solving two problems with one tool.

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Burlington
Planning and Zoning

COMMUNICATION
DATE 12/15/08
AGENDA ITEM # 13.02

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kurt Wright, City Council President
Burlington City Councilors
Mayor Bob Kiss

FROM: David E. White, AICP, Director of Planning & Zoning

DATE: Thursday, December 11, 2008

RE: Open Government Committee Report – Dept. of Planning and Zoning Response

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Per your request you will please find attached responses from the Dept. of Planning & Zoning regarding the recommendations of the Open Government Committee regarding the development review process and related public information and notice processes.

Overall, the Department finds the comments and recommendations of the Open Government Committee to be very thoughtful and helpful. There are a number of activities and initiatives that the Department is either already pursuring or intends to pursue over the coming months. Others are creative ideas and insights that we are happy to try to incorporate into our ongoing procedures and materials as staff-time allows. Among these include:

- Publishing online a series of reports of all active permit applications sorted by Ward and status. We can also add meeting dates to the reports for projects that go to the DRB.
- Adding links to the City homepage to the permit application report and DRB/DAB/CB agendas for greater prominence and easier access.
- Producing a revised version of the Development Caseload Report listing significant development projects throught the city, and making this report available online and distributed via email to city officials, NPA Steering Committee members and others.
- Redesign the Department website and develop new information and educational materials to help people to find, understand and utilize information regarding the development review process. We can also include a simple flow diagram to help make the review process more understandable.
- Add the Department's website address on the "Z-Card".
- Investigate the creation of a single-sheet flyer that could be distributed by an applicant to their neighbors at the time of application and would provide information about the development review process generally and where they can go for more information.
- Include all NPA Steering Committee members on an e-mail list of all meetings and hearings.

There are however recommendations from the Committee that are simply not possible to accomplish with our Department's current staffing and resource level. As you are aware, our

Department is very small relative to the significant scope and complexity of our workload. In FY08, the Department processed 952 applications and requests representing a 14% increase from the previous year, and the greatest number since computerized records began. 90% of these applications were processed and reviewed administratively, while 92 went through the DRB. Development review, application processing, public notice, and applicant/citizen education is all accomplished by 3 planners and 2 clerical staff. Often other members of the department staff are called upon to provide some measure of assistance during peak times.

The Department sees it as an important part of our responsibility to improve how applicants and the general public are informed and educated about the development review process. The website and internet holds the most promise for delivering new and improved information at the cost of production (primarily staff time). The greatest opportunities and efficiencies are enabled by automation using data already produced in the course of business, thus requiring no additional staff resources on an ongoing basis. The opportunity to produce this kind of information is welcomed and in-fact fun to do.

However, even with the great strides the City has taken in information technology with AMANDA, public awareness of development review still comes with a staff cost. Additional direct outreach in the form of hardcopy materials and mailing will be extremely difficult to accomplish under tightening budgets and demanding workloads. Even a seemingly simple change in our businesse practices requires the time and focus for careful planning and implementation. However, both time and focus are commodities that we are finding increasingly scare. Our staff is already working at - and often beyond - its sustainable capacity, and our ability to absorb additional tasks is <u>severely</u> limited at this time.

As a final note, the Planning Commission has also reviewed the Open Government Committee's recommendations. As time allows over the coming months, the Commission will be taking it upon themselves to explore ways to improve and expand the Departments public information and notification processes and materials.

Thank you for your consideration.

Open Government Committee Development Recommendations

Dept. of Planning & Zoning Response

Open Government Committee Recommendation	Dept. of Planning & Zoning Response
A. Issue: People would like to know about development projects earlier in the process – before DRB hearings, for example.	
1. P&Z already publishes an online list of all applications received, updated daily. This list should be sorted by ward to make it easier to read, and its existence should be more broadly promoted.	Since January 2008 the Department has been publishing online a comprehensive report of all active permit applications (from the time an application is received to the end of the decision appeal period). This list is sorted by street and address. An automated process pulls information from the AMANDA permitting database, generates the report each day at 8:30 pm, and posts it to the web at www.ci.burlington.vt.us/planning/zoning/status_report/ . The Department plans to offer other similar reports sorted by Ward to enable citizens to easily monitor zoning activities in their neighborhoods, and sorted by status to make it easier to distinguish between projects that are currently in the review process from those that have already been permitted. Taking into consideration other related recommendations of the Committee, it appears that another type of report may be warranted as well – an individual report for larger development proposals to include a more detailed description, site plans, elevations, photographs and up-coming hearing dates. See response to #A3. **Implementation Challenges**: Creation of the report is a fairly simple process, but the conversion, re-formatting, and programming necessary to automatically send the reports to the website is something that is beyond our current technical capability. We will require the assistance of IT staff to complete this initiative. There are also opportunities to promote the existence of the Department's website more broadly. If one does a Google search using the keywords "Burlington Planning and Zoning", the Department's web site home page is the first entry on the list. Second on the list is the Board meeting and agenda links page. A link to the permit application report and DRB/DAB/CB agendas could be added on the City homepage for greater prominence, and information on where to find this information could be included in other outreach pieces like FrontPorch Forum and CEDO's Neighborhood BUZZ. Sending this information to the FrontPorch Forum would require their consent and a citywide subscription for the Department.
2. More than one set of direct mailings to residents could be	The DRB meets ~24 times per year. On any given DRB agenda there are between 2-6 projects which typically require direct notice to 15-25 adjacent properties (the range is more like 4-500). This

sent out. Notice of the DRB hearing is legally mandated, and can't be replaced by an earlier mailing. However, an earlier separate mailing could be sent out when an application is received, with costs on major projects to be borne by the developer.

amounts to ~3,600 notices not including those that are routinely sent to individuals on the mailing list. For this, the Department currently spends over $6,500 per year mailing notices (not including supplies, copying and staff time) which comes directly out of application fees paid by all applicants for permits. It should be also noted that the City's standard for public notification significantly exceeds that of neighboring jurisdictions and statutory requirements.

Implementation Challenges: There are essentially two approaches that could be taken:

#1. In order for the Department to revise its process and procedures to provide for an additional (early) direct notice once an application is filed, additional resources would be required. To send another direct notice would effectively double the time and expense to the department. This would require additional funding for postage and supplies, but more importantly would require additional staff capacity given the significant amount of additional copying and mailing that would be required on an ongoing basis. It is also important to understand that Burlington's application fees are already **by-far** the highest in the region. Raising them further would place an additional financial burden on applicants, large and small, and add another disincentive to development in the city.

#2. The other alternative would be to place the notification burden directly on the applicant for all projects that go to the DRB (similar to what is done for Act 250). For this to be accomplished, the City's Ordinance (Sec. 3.2.8) would be clarified to make this a specific requirement, the proper timing, form and content of each notice would need to be specified, and the Departments application fees should be reduced accordingly. In such a case, the financial and administrative burden is shifted directly to the applicant creating an additional complication and disincentive to development in the city. It must be noted however that not all applicants are professional and sophisticated developers. Many private homeowners and small independent contractors bring projects to the DRB for approval. In these situations, the applicant does not typically have the sophistication necessary to manage this part of the process on their own and will still look to Department staff to help them identify adjacent property owners and generate notice. Thus it is likely that some of the workload will fall back onto the Department staff.

Should the Council choose to implement this recommendation, the Department would recommend that the responsibility for public notice remain with the Department staff, and the additional staff and direct costs be added to the Department's budget without a requisite increase in the application fees in order to try to keep the process reasonably affordable.

3. At one time, the P&Z website included a summary of major projects that included projects in the conceptual stage (i.e.,

Prior to 2008, the Department produced a "Development Caseload" memo periodically for the Mayor and City Council highlighting selected development projects anticipated, currently in the development review process, and recently permitted/under construction. The report was prepared manually, and only projects deemed to be significant, with an emphasis on residential housing, were

potential major projects going out several years). That summary should be revived as a complement to the more comprehensive list.

included. The emphasis on housing was to meet the reporting needs of the CEDO Housing Program. With the City's investment in information technology, the Housing Program can now meet its reporting requirements using the AMANDA system on their own.

The Development Caseload report was replaced by the Zoning Permit Request Status report (noted in #A1 above). The Development Caseload report had several problems. First, the former report was created manually, required significant staff time to compile, and months could go by in between reports. Second, zoning review activity changes daily, and so the former report quickly became out-of-date. Third, it can be difficult to predict which projects the public will be interested in, and thus the former report often proved inadequate in meeting the needs of concerned citizens. And fourth, the former report did nothing to meet the needs of zoning permit applicants. Eighty-four percent of all permit applications are administratively approved, and thus the most common questions from an applicant is when their application was approved, and when they may pick up their permit.

The Zoning Permit Status Report is fully automated, is updated every day, posted on the web, and is a comprehensive status report of all permit applications under review or under appeal. The report not only informs interested citizens of zoning review activity, it enables permit applicants to know where their applications are in the process, and when their permits become effective so they may start construction. However the report does not include information on future projects.

Implementation Challenges: Time permitting, the Department is able to resurrect a revised version of the Development Caseload report, which lists only more significant projects, and make this report available online. This will require on-going staff time to designate which projects in the permit database are to be highlighted, add new ones, and delete those that have run their course. This report could include more information than on the Zoning Permit Status Report. It is anticipated that the generation of such a report would require the equivalent of 6-8 hours of staff time on a bi-monthly basis.

4. The P&Z website should include more information about major development projects, with links to plans.

It is important to understand that anyone interested in a particular development project has full access to the entire file in the Dept. of Planning and Zoning office as it is a public record under state law. However, putting application submission drawings and printed materials on the web site requires that they are in electronic form. Currently the Department uses a largely paper-based system for application submission. Thus materials such as site plans, building elevations, and photographs must be scanned by staff for incorporation into the AMANDA permitting database. This is done by staff for some applications, but not all, for a number of reasons. This practice can be changed, but it should be noted that the P+Z scanner has a maximum page size of 11 by 17 inches. For large projects, site plans, elevations, and renderings often exceed this size, but could be required in a digital form as part of the application submission requirements.

It should be noted that as the review process proceeds, revised site plans and other materials are often submitted. This is especially true for large projects. The Department's current policy is to scan only the **final** versions used in decisions. Scanning and incorporation into AMANDA of all materials would require additional staff capacity to accomplish, and manage the data in AMANDA so that the final approved plans are identified as such.

Implementation Challenges: This has the potential of requiring significant staff resources to maintain and produce even automated reports. This also would require a more robust (color and larger-format) scanner in order to convert larger site plans and elevations into a digital form. The Department would also require a significant amount of assistance from the IT staff for the programming necessary to automatically send electronic application materials to the website from AMANDA. Once this information is actually on the website, the files will be very large and anyone interested in viewing them will have to use a high-speed internet connection to download them. It is anticipated that the generation of such a report would require the equivalent of a 0.5 FTE on an ongoing basis in addition to the hardware and IT costs.

The Departments staff resources have to be balanced between meeting the regulatory and statutory requirements of zoning administration, and promoting public awareness of the process. The Department consistently meets and exceeds statutory requirements for public notification. The current system of having files available as interested parties request them has been working well for years and the number of individuals on any project that come to view files are few thus the cost-benefit of scanning application materials may not be justified.

B. Issue: People don't understand the development review process, and therefore don't know what the opportunities for participation are.

1. P&Z should develop a brief, easy-to-read explanation of the process that will be followed for each application. This explanation should be attached (by code, for instance) to the online application list. It should also be added to the direct mailings that go out. The "Z" card should refer people to the website for further information on process and the project.

Much of this information has been on the Departments web site for some time (see http://www.ci.burlington.vt.us/planning/zoning/zdesk.html). Administration of the zoning ordinance is not easily learned – it looks simple at first, but can quickly become complex depending on the application. Perhaps new web pages, targeted specifically at applicants, and interested citizens, are needed to help people to find and understand this information.

A number of years ago the Department started the creation of the "Design Review Guides" (www.ci.burlington.vt.us/planning/dguide/guides.html) as a means of providing more information to applicants about design review and the City's objectives regarding specific design features. This series was later expanded to include a version dedicated to the development review process. Unfortunately, the funding that made these publications possible has been focused into other areas, and no new guides in either series have been produced for 2-3 years.

With the adoption of a new ordinance, and particularly changes in the processing and procedures regarding applications, review and certificates of occupancy, it is timely to consider revisions and expansions to the web site. Inclusion of the Department's website address on the "Z-card" can be accomplished when it is time for the next printing.

Implementation Challenges: The primary challenge is the allocation of the necessary staff resources to develop new materials. This must also include the ability to revise them as a change in legislation, ordinance provisions or judicial decisions may render a guide inaccurate. Many of the guides we currently have are in need of such revision. Additionally, a simple flow diagram can be utilized to help make the review process more understandable. It is anticipated that a redesign of the Department website and development of new information and educational materials would require the equivalent of 80 hours of staff time.

2. As dates for meetings and hearings on particular projects are developed, they should be linked/posted to the projects list – especially for larger projects. People should be able to easily track a project throughout the process.

The online Zoning Permit Request Status report does not include information about upcoming meetings and/or deadlines. Once an application is scheduled for a DRB, DAB, and/or CB meeting, those dates are entered into AMANDA. Therefore meeting dates can be added to the Zoning Permit Status Report. Page space limitations may require creation of a separate, online, automated report for meeting dates.

It should be noted that information about all upcoming meetings is posted at http://www.ci.burlington.vt.us/planning/boards.php . Agendas are posted soon after they are finalized by zoning staff. Staff is also available to provide any information regarding a project in the process via a simple telephone call or email.

Implementation Challenges: Meeting agendas tend to be fluid as applicants may postpone and others are advanced in order to keep the process flowing. Agendas are finalized every Friday for one or more of the four zoning review boards, and posted on the Departments web site. Even a final agenda may change, and an amended version is posted to the web. Staff puts a premium on keeping online and analog agendas as up-to-date as possible. Therefore monitoring the agendas should remain the best way to track meetings.

C. Issue: More people should know about development projects, so they can have the opportunity to decide whether to become involved.

1. P&Z should be commended for going beyond the legally mandates for direct notice of the DRB process, and encouraged to continue to expand and improve on their methods of doing so.

The Department appreciates the acknowledgement, and sees it as an important part of its responsibility to improve how applicants and the general public are informed and educated about the development review process. The website holds the most promise for delivering new and improved information at only the cost of production (primarily staff time). Additional direct outreach in the form of hardcopy materials and mailing however will be extremely difficult to accomplish under tightening budgets and expanding workloads. The greatest efficiencies are enabled by complete automation using data already produced in the course of business, thus requiring no additional staff resources. Even with the great strides taken in information technology with AMANDA, public awareness of zoning review still comes with a staff resource cost.

2. No direct notice is currently given on administratively-approved projects. Abutters should receive mailed notice on some of these projects. P & Z staff should define which types of projects warrant notice to neighbors and at a minimum should include major additions and new construction and demolitions.

In FY2008 90% (824) of all development applications handled by the Department were processed (reviewed and approved/denied) administratively. It is correct that abutters to projects reviewed administratively receive no direct notice from the City (the "Z-card" is however posted for all applications). Only 10% (92) went to the DRB and thus adjacent property owners were directly notified by mail of the DRB hearing. Of the administratively approved applications, only 7 were appealed.

Implementation Challenges: Providing direct notice for all projects reviewed administratively would require a significant increase in staff and operating resources to accomplish. Further, staff has only 30 days from the time of application to render a decision (state statute requirement) which creates a major logistical challenge for providing any meaningful public notice, and an opportunity for community review and comment. This will create delays in processing these applications for many simple proposals for home owners who are improving their houses with such projects as small additions, decks, fences, garages and sheds, etc which may otherwise only take a few days to be processed. It is anticipated that to implement this recommendation would require the equivalent of a 2-3.0 FTEs in addition to the direct materials costs which could amount to an additional $30-50,000

on an ongoing basis.

To require that more applications are reviewed by the DRB instead of staff would place an additional burden on the review boards themselves, who are already overstretched. These are volunteers who already dedicate a significant amount of time to the city. While the Committee is recommending that only "some" administratively reviewed project receive broader notice, the difficulty is in knowing which. Even a very small project may be perceived as problematic by an adjacent property owner, so there are no simple thresholds to apply.

Improvements to the Zoning Permit Request Status report (noted in #A1 above) can help provide a better source of information to interested community members about projects in their neighborhood. Additionally, the Department will however investigate the creation of a single-sheet flyer that could be distributed by the applicant to their neighbors and would provide information about the development review process and where they can go for more information.

D. Issue: The Neighborhood Planning Assemblies should have greater opportunities for participation in the process involving projects in their neighborhoods.

1. P&Z's online projects list should be reorganized by ward, so that NPA Steering Committee members could check the list before each NPA meeting and bring it forward as an agenda item.	See response to A1.
2. NPA Steering Committee members should be automatically signed onto an e-mail list of meetings and hearings pertaining to development projects in their ward. Steering Committee members could use the Front Porch Forums to circulate information about projects they believe are significant.	All DRB, DAB and Conservation Board agendas are available online at http://www.ci.burlington.vt.us/planning/boards.php and already identify which Ward a given project application is located. These agendas are posted on the website at least a week in advance of the meeting. The Department also receives a mailing list of all NPA Steering Committee members from CEDO. To the extent that this information is maintained and accurate, it should not be a problem to ensure that NPA Steering Committee members are included on an e-mail list of meetings and hearings. To ensure consistency however, all NPA Steering Committee members should receive all agendas via email, and let the individual NPAs decide how they want to circulate this information about projects in their respective Ward.

3. NPAs could be given a more formal role in the development process. For example, developers could be contact NPA Steering Committees and offer to present to the NPAs on "major" development projects (those going through the Technical Review process) within the next two months. This potential action item should be a topic of discussion at the September Open Government Neighborhood Improvement Nights and in the discussions before the Community Development Committee of City Council on the role of the NPAs.

Department staff already regularly recommends to applicants of larger development projects that they consult with the respective NPA early in the project development process. Some do and often find this to be a very useful process, while others choose not to.

Implementation Challenges: The biggest question is "what is formal?" Several challenges exist to giving NPAs a "formal role" in the development process:

- Authority and Expectations: To give the NPAs a "formal role" would require a change to the ordinances (and city charter?) that would require a significant re-evaluation and re-structuring of the City's entire development review process. Would they have independent decision-making authority or would they play an advisory role? Would the NPA Steering Committee members be appointed by the Council like the DRB, DAB and Conservation Board members? In a truly formal role, the NPA would create another level of review and would have to follow the requirement of 24 VSA Sections 4433 and 4464. This would require more notification with associated costs.
- Timing: At what point would an applicant be expected to engage the NPA – prior to formal application or once an application has been submitted? Currently NPAs meet monthly and many take a month or more off during the summer. Many times they have very full agenda's and limited time to consider a complex project. If they are to be involved in the development review process on a regular basis, all NPAs would need to meet more frequently and consistently in order to provide meaningful comments in a timely manner across the city.
- Verification: If some form of NPA contact is a requirement of the development review process, this Department would need to verify that the applicant has met, or made an honest attempt to meet, with the NPA.
- Process and Training: Depending on the specific role, and the nature of the review, the NPA will need to have a process in place for providing a fair, consistent and orderly meeting, and to provide meaningful comments to the applicant and the development review process.
- Cost: How would the NPA prepare and provide decisions or comments on individual applications? Would they have staff to assist them? Depending on the level of formality and complexity, this could pose a significant expense in terms of staff and materials.

While this all sounds daunting, there may be opportunities for greater informal participation. Short of an actual decision-making role, the City of Portland (ME) has a process for meetings with community organizations that could serve as a model of sorts. However there are many questions that must be considered before this could be implemented particularly with regard to timing and verification.