

## **Ward 5 NPA Minutes**

### **March 19, 2015**

Minutes provided by Nate Orshan and Sandi Omanovic. List of members present in separate sheet.

#### **Meeting Start 7:00pm**

#### **7:05 Community Development Block Grant Update with Molly O'Brien**

Community Development Block Grants are a way for citizens chosen from wards to be on a panel to review granting applications from non-profits & projects. It's a democratic way of distributing grant money.

O'Brien is representing the Ward 5 CDBG Advisory Board. They will be having another meeting to wrap things up at end of March. They are making recommendations to the Burlington City Council on the amount that recipients should get.

There are a total of 11 grants in categories such as "Public Service" & "Development".

Public Service: There are 6 grants on, e.g., childcare & early childcare, equal access & literacy, public health...  
The Advisory Board has to recommended award for them.

Development: 5 grants, e.g., Housing, Economic Development, neighborhood development, construction projects. They met on 3/17, but no final decision on them, in part because they have an estimate of what the total amount of \$ (from HUD) could be, but didn't know for sure.

It turns out there's more \$ available than what applicants were originally told. There will be one more meeting to decide how to spend. They could, e.g., distribute among all the applicants, giving 'em all more...but would prefer to see a revised budget. On the other hand, they could just roll it over into next year's budget. (A con for doing this: If Burlington starts doing that every year, then HUD will lower the grant amounts.) The last meeting's 3/31, and then the CDBG Advisory Board will be making recommendation to the counsel.

Q: Can we see the projects?

M: There's a link to the *process* on Burlington site, but... Wish I had clarity about how much I can say. All 11 applicants are getting something, we just don't know how much yet.

Alec: Are the grants are low value?

Molly: No, they have to be a minimum of \$10,000, some are up to \$85,000. For Public Service there's \$109,000; Development, \$293,00.

Partial List of recipients:

- Childcare & Early Education: Lund (& Nurse Family?)
- Youth: Burlington Police Runners & New Arrivals (Sara Holbrook)
- Equal Access: VITA (CVOEO)
- Community Health Center (dental care for homeless)

- Housing: Champlain Housing Trust
- ReBuild
- Women's Small Business Program (Mercy Connection)
- Pathways Vermont (Wellness Co-Op to build a commercial grade community kitchen)

Q: What's your general sense of everything?

M: Really fascinating, interesting to hear from all the organizations re what they're doing. It's good to have citizen participation in the meeting.

Q: Is this year an exception to the rule re getting more \$ than usual?

M: In past there have been more applications. The CDBG Advisory Board hasn't always been in the situation where we have *more* money than we thought originally.

Q: CEDO used to break up funding between Neighborhood Development DG & CDBG(?). Maybe any extra money could go toward neighborhood projects?

M: Someone proposed that. If we want that back, we should make CEDO aware of it.

Those of us on the board have to disclose conflicts of interests. We have a chance to excuse ourselves org by org.

## **(2) Ibnar Goblik – An artist's perspective on the PlanBTV-SE Process**

Goblik was sick and could not attend.

## **(3) Miriam Stoll, Patrick Halladay, & incoming Commissioner Susanmarie Harrington**

Stoll opened by saying that for the first time in 25 years the budget passed EVERY ward!

New board in on 4/8, there'll be 12 members

Stoll discussed House Bill 67, saying "It'd take away the right to strike. It has a lot of support. VT's only state in the Northeast that doesn't have a law." She clarified that the bill is sponsored by Kurt Wright.

The law would say that teachers & board have to go to mediation, and then there'd be penalties to both sides if they didn't. The question about it is whether there should be a binding arbitration clause; there are pros & cons (many legislators don't want it, many teachers DO. "If you're at an impasse, then you do binding arbitration...and both sides have to agree to that").

Bill Keogh: The bill has a long way to go. Burlington always loses where binding arbitration's concerned. I'm surprised it's got this much support so far...but FOLLOW it, because it affects all of us.

Q: If House Bill 67 passes, how does it affect teacher negotiations?

Miriam: Their contract's up every 3 years, but I'm not sure how it'd affect it. I will suggest we come up with an ad hoc committee to understand how the law will affect things. There are some interesting experiments going on in the country & state re these types of negotiations (e.g., doing everything completely in public, TV cameras and all).

Q: How close have teachers come to strike lately?

Bill: Mentions Colchester & South Burlington.

Miriam: It gets very divisive, so that's what inspires this legislation.

Other bill in Statehouse: H361: Looks at Education funding & governance, re consolidating school districts. 2% cap on per-pupil spending increases. The budget went up by 1.7% this year, but most in the state increased much more. So there are lots of strong opinions ("takes control away from local districts"... "maybe you have too much latitude to spend?").

Bill: We should invite Joey Donovan, because she's on related committees now (Ways & Means).

Last thing: We're working on discipline. There's research to show that discipline isn't applied equitable. We know that kids of color or disabilities 2-3 times more likely to be disciplined. I'm a therapist, so I'm working on this a bit, too.

Alternatives include, e.g., reparative justice, or asking "how are we defining a discipline problem so we can educate our teachers appropriately?", e.g., kids with trauma issues, kids who are refugees. The truth is, kids sent out on detention are more likely to drop out and then get involved with Justice system.

Hans: What's the percent of the budget falling under new contract?

Miriam: Less than 80%.

Hans: (Incredulous) For 3 years, all the wrangling about the budget has been about ~20% of the budget?

Miriam: We can think about whether or not to have it for, e.g., one year.

Q: Will independent audits continue?

Miriam: Yes. By law it's supposed to be every 3 years. We're doing it every one year!

Q: Re 2 new hires: How's it going with the new superintendent? Also, what's going on with the Champlain School principal retiring?

Miriam: Mr. Obeng is from Canada, starting on 7/1. We have a formal policy in which parents will be invited, e.g., a meeting where parents can submit questions, then a final round where candidates answer questions. There's an internal central committee that (?)...then there's a hiring committee that does interviewing.

Patrick Halladay: We're excited to have Mr. Obeng. There are several other leadership positions open this year, e.g., Sustainability Academy principal.

Halladay sought Susanmarie Harrington out to run for School Board in Ward 5. She brings a wealth of experience and has been extraordinarily engaged.

#### **(4) Burlington City Council Comments – Joan Shannon**

Joan: I've been updating on form-based code. I'm still curious as to how this'll all play out; seems complex re the area within one form district being pretty diverse...so to place upon that area a prescriptive, form-based code seems restrictive. It'll take us a lot longer than we thought.

There's a possibility of expanding the Parks commission; it'd be a charter change on next March's ballot. The same is true for the Police commission in order to allow more diversity on it but that would also require a charter change.

Militarization of Police Forces will be addressed in the City Council next Monday. Members in assembly didn't believe that there should be militarization of the police in Vermont.

Retirement benefits: There's going to be another important resolution. Your taxes keep going up. A lot is driven by retirement benefits, and voters do not drive that; the actuary tells us what we need to put into the fund, and we have to do it. There were a few years we didn't do that, and that put us in a hole.

Karen Paul & Chip came up with recommendations, so on Monday they will ask the City Council to enforce them and for the funding to go from 70% to 85%. The unfunded liability is about \$50M The line item on the tax rate shouldn't increase for 3 years...but this is all subject to union negotiations.

Karen Paul: The goal is to get retirement benefits up to 85% funded...it'd be better to be 100%, but it's a great first step.

Q: Re form-based code: Have you formally decided that you'll ask for beyond-4/1-extension of mandate?

Joan: The plan is that the chair of the committee will on 4/13 make a presentation to the City Council and lay out what we think is a reasonable timeline to review the form-based code. We'll explain what we need to do the job, because we can't do it in current timeline.

Q: How committed is the committee to doing this? Is it possible that you would set form-based code aside?

Joan: We're pretty committed to trying form-based code on SOME level. For myself, I think there are some advantages to the public: We TELL the developer what we want, and it's a more predictable process.

Q: I went to meeting with Eric Moreau (architect) showing drawings of how it could work, including 11-story hotel on RiteAid site. I was shocked by what the code allowed. I was shocked.

Joan: We were all surprised. We wanted to have the architect design for us to maximize what they can do in the code...and also design the cheapest and then the BEST building. The exercise served the purpose. We then went into discussion re ultimate height limits. (It turns out our code didn't have height limits, just limits on stories in buildings.)

Q/Comment: My husband's from W. Hartford CT, & they used form-based code successfully there.

Q: In Chapel Hill, NC, developers are putting up the "biggest breadboxes that developers can put up", i.e., developers exploit code to maximize height & volume. "Incredibly big, boring, brick boxes".

Joan: To be clear, form-based code can set whatever bar we want.

Q: It's worth looking at communities that have done it rather than just jump into it.

Joan: Just like our conventional code, there are ways to do it well...and not well. I'd like to find an example that does it for infill development.

Alec: Sandrine & David will come to next meeting to talk specifically about form-based code.

## **(5) Champlain Parkway Update – Chapin Spencer (Director, Department of Public Works)**

Under previous administration in 2008, the Feds said alignment wouldn't veer off but would go up Pine St.

According to Spencer, Mayor Weinberger made it clear he doesn't just want repaving on Pine St. That's consistent with what a lot of prop owners want, too.

The Mayor called up the Secretary of Transportation and asked for a change. The Secretary said, If you can tie improvements to safety, we'll entertain the idea, said Spencer.

Public Works has attempted to maximize that, pouring over the design to see what we can do within the constraints of (1) not re-opening any permits on project, (2) not fundamentally changing the project's timeline, and (3) not blowing the cost of the project through the roof (the current estimate is \$30M).

(Spencer exhibits the document of conceptual renderings of project & an overview. After he hands out memo from last month.)

Changes:

- Design speed should be 25 MPH. A more walkable design.
- Was originally supposed to accommodate the largest tractor-trailer...but there are very few streets in Burlington where you can turn a tractor-trailer without going into the other lane. We want it to change to accommodating a smaller tractor-trailer.
- Change in Pedestrian crosswalks.
- Change in Streetscape improvements: Colorized asphalt lanes to make them APPEAR smaller. Also, bump-outs to shorten cross-walks and make it seem tighter (also add transit shelters)
- Change: 3 speed-humps. These would be actual, raised intersections, so the motorist has to come up to height of sidewalk. Pine & Howard, & Marble, & Kilburne. (Locust wasn't considered due to the fact they're thinking about putting a traffic signal there. There's also a grant for traffic calming measures on Locust.)
- Addition of transit shelters to enable people who want to take bus have a comfortable experience.
- Shared-use paths with adequate lighting.
- Also: buffered bike lanes beginning on Kilburne St (i.e., where the shared-use path ends) up to Maple St.

Q: Park & rides?

Chapin: No. We've been able to make the project more multi-modal, but park & rides work best on fringes. We didn't have a lot of success with the idea of people taking shuttles 1 mile from downtown...but commuter buses are becoming successful (e.g., from Jeffersonville, Hinesburg).

See [ChamplainParkwayProject.org](http://ChamplainParkwayProject.org)

**(6) Steering Committee Elections**

(The info will be gathered together for next month's meeting.)

**(7) Open Forum and Agenda Suggestions**

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum will be doing adventure camps on the lake. Schooner Lois McClure will be pulled out of the lake. There'll be an ROV robotics camp.

Q: St. Anthony project: On hold? What's up with it?

Alec: We haven't heard anything since...summer? Fall?

Joan Shannon: they just brought in a new bishop, so nothing's happening yet; discussions starting from scratch. The Church still has a fair amount of internal interest in the property, which means they may not be so hasty to want to sign it away. Per discussion with John Hughes, everything's still on the table.

Meeting Adjourned 8:40pm