



# Neighborhood Planning Assembly Minutes – Full Notes

**Date of Assembly:** 6/16/2015

**Start Time:** (*Commence*): 7:30 PM

**Finish Time:** (*Adjourn*): 9:00 PM

**Location:** St. John's Club, Central Ave.

**Notetaker:** Nate Orshan

## **Steering Committee Members in Attendance:**

Alec Bauer  
Elisa Nelson  
Nate Orshan

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### **(1) Legislative Update**

#### **– Representatives Johannah (Joey) Donovan and Mary Sullivan**

Mary: Regarding the previous week, significant charter changes re firearm regulation for Burlington were not passed. We can bring them back next year if we feel that's a good strategic decision. But the NRA still has some sway in Montpelier.

Joey: There's a doc, the "sportsman's bill of rights". Sportsmen are well-organized. Any time there's a discussion of gun issue, they come out. It's not a very trusting relationship. We in Burlington are not always thought of as real Vermonters.

It was disappointing. We went to the Speaker's office. He felt his hands were tied, because so many members of Democratic caucus wouldn't be able to support it.

Q: Why would this require a charter change?

Mary: All powers of city come from State.

Re the special session:

Mary: That was an energy siting bill. The majority of the committee cared deeply about it. We made some mistakes, but we did NOT do the bidding of the Governor. What should have been a 2-hour session took 12 hours. We were finally able to pass it.

Q: Where was the discussion? Was there general push in favor of it?

Mary: The language was of concern. The guts of the bill were about allowing towns and regions to plan for energy siting. \$300K had been inadvertently left out.

Other bill: The Clean Water Fund, to add citizens to the board.

Meeting attendee (who was part of "Campaign 350"): I spent time up in the Northeast Kingdom, and the biggest complaint is the degree of environmental

destruction that needs to happen in order to accommodate the turbines, e.g., cutting trees, pouring concrete.

Another meeting attendee: Massachusetts developed a technique for evaluating a scenic view. It's inexpensive; laypeople can do it. It's repeatable. It has validity. I've always wondered why this process wasn't used.

Joey: Re the Ways and Means (W&M) Committee: We've straightened out estate taxes a bit. It doesn't kick in until you have at least a \$3M estate.

On W&M, you see almost every bill, because they all have a revenue impact.

I'm struck by what a small state we are...and how few taxpayers we have. It's a problem when you go looking for revenues.

Q: What are you proudest of this session?

Mary: Carbon pollution tax: getting that introduced, getting the discussion going. It'll be re-introduced next year.

Joey: Paid sick days. I got involved 5-6 years ago. It wasn't as generous as originally proposed, but it's a good start. It gives sick days to 60-70K Vermonters! It affects a lot of single moms. All Vermonters will, starting in 2019, have 6-9 days/year.

Meeting attendee: I'm an attorney who represents employers. One concern: A lot of employers offer their employees PTO; now employees will use their time for sick days and be left with fewer vacation days.

Joey: Also proud of "Ban the Box"! Another favorite. There was strong evidence that prospective employers wouldn't let folks get a second interview.

Joey: Re marijuana legalization: I thought we'd address it over two years. We didn't. So I don't think we had enough time to discuss the issues and get public interaction. I'm hoping we'll continue conversation next year. Whoever's Governor will play a big role; they'd have to be supportive of signing into law a legalization measure.

Rand Corp did study. There could be a huge amount of money we could get via taxes, but that would be if the state "got in early".

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## **(2) Open Forum**

Elisa Nelson: I'm Ward Clerk for Ward 5. We have primary voting on 8/9! Get your absentee ballot in.

Tony Redington: (Provided handouts for the Coalition for a Livable City and Champlain Parkway Redesign Guidelines.)

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Motion to adjourn adopted at 9:00 PM.

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