

Wards 1 & 8 Neighborhood Planning Assembly (NPA)

Agenda

December 8, 2021

Location: Sharon Bushor Room, City Hall and Zoom online

Facilitator: Hannah King

Host: Sam Heinrichs,

CEDO Minutes: Tom Derenthal

7:00 Announcements & Introductions

7:05 Speak-out - General Public

7:20 Community Development Block Grant Advisory Board - new appointments for 2022

7:30 City Councilors: Questions/Answers

This month to increase dialogue, the City Councilor time will be Q&A only. You ask, they answer.

7:45 State Legislators

Legislative Priorities: statements from Legislators (~20 minutes)

Q/A - Discussion with Legislators (40 minutes).

8:45 Localvore coupons gifts - giveaways to two attendees

9:00 Adjourn

Attendees:

Angie Chapple Sokol

Barbara Rachelson

Carol Livingston

Caryn Long

Dave Cowley

David Martins - Director of affordable housing coalition

Hannah King

Jack Hanson

Jonathan Chapple Sokol

Justin – Housing coalition

Kathy Olwell

Keith Pillsbury

Richard Hillyard

Serrill Flash

Tom Chittenden

Tom Derenthal

Zoraya Hightower

The meeting started at 7:00 PM

Announcements:

- Carol Livingston: DPW is adjusting the traffic flow on University Place. Plan is to make it a one way North with parking only on the East side
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- Richard Hillyard: Redistricting – public meetings has concluded. Written input the Council’s consultant next week.
- Caryn Long: Cannot find the redistricting survey. Richard: Expecting the city to post the location on PFP
- Richard Hillyard: Will the dire performance of the Post Office result in a change of their property tax status

Community block grant - CDBG board appointments

- For W1 - Cindy Cook is interested. Nominated by Jonathan, Seconded by Carol - elected unanimously.
- For W8 – No person voiced interest.

City Council

Questions:

- Angie Chapple Sokol: There’s a lot of talk about affordable housing. Is the City interested in joining with UVM to deliver affordable housing? Have the city enforce rental codes in housing. Zoraya: Not all issues can be addressed by UVM. The President has shown little interest. This time UVM has taken the initiative. The ball is in the Council’s court to respond. Council isn’t in the negotiation room, but the Administration is. Council has approval of the negotiations. Jack: UVM has a big impact on Burlington housing. Council recently had an executive session that covered this.
- Caryn Long: Has 2 duplex’s 4 units / 7 bedrooms. Taxes increased \$7000 annually. Water and Gas also increased. So rent increases of approx. \$150 / month will follow. Long term tenants will be impacted. Assessor had said the change would be revenue neutral. UVM housing is \$1000, which makes off campus rates attractive, but regular working folks struggle or are priced out of the market. Glad there is a discussion. UVM has not delivered housing in the past. Jack: Agree it’s not only the amount of UVM housing, but as the largest landlord, their price sets a standard for the City. Council resolution designed to address the burden on low income residents. Caryn: UVM doesn’t pay property taxes on owned units. Private student housing [the lofts] does pay taxes. Champlain College’s housing on St Paul Street is tax exempt. Zoraya: Promises made need teeth to ensure compliance.
- Linda Rizvi – Property Taxes. Is there work in progress to correct assessment imbalances? Jack: Resolution in progress to change assessment process and how taxes work. Some proposed changes include: Credits for affordable rents, 2nd home rates, transfer tax, surcharge tax on short term rentals, tax classification on rental properties and increasing commercial rates. Committee to report back to Council is due in June. There’s an adhoc committee to do the investigation. Applications to be a member are still open. Administration is finalizing use of one time Federal funds to provide immediate relief. Linda: The process work sounds like it will be for the next reassessment. Will there be a change in the tax rate that applies today? Business values went down during the assessment period. Some are paying taxes on market value and others on some lower value. Zoraya: City council job is to set policy. Short term rental and other non-tax ideas may be done easily, but tax structure changes mostly require a City charter change. Current charter changes haven’t gone far. Linda: What can be done in the next year? Will anything be done? Jack: Structural tax changes can be approved before the next reassessment. Zoraya: Those will require voter approval followed by legislature approval. Jack: Localities should have more authority to change their own charter. Barbara R: The legislature

has spent much time working on charter changes. Changing the charter process would likely require a constitutional change. The letter with school tax rates is forthcoming. Rates are expected to be lower for a number of reasons including unexpected high revenues.

- Keith Pillsbury: If as a Council member representing the East District or Ward{s}, you were asked what issues are most important today, what would you say? Jack: most conversations involve housing, cost of living and quality thereof, climate crisis, last year it was public safety and justice. Zoraya: UVM and housing, sidewalks, pedestrian get around, public safety, general support for climate and environmental protection... and education/the high school/funding/location.
- Richard: Postal Service comments? Zoraya: There are no plans to change anything at the postal service. There are no income taxes at the local level. Richard: They don't pay property taxes and are no longer providing a public service.

State Legislators & Legislative Priorities:

Rep. Barbara Rachelson [Chit 6-6]

- Will send Jack and Hannah the educational doc for today
- Gearing up for the 2022 session. Will send links for legislative updates, including climate change plans and the housing crisis.
- Judicial nominating committee – Active due to a vacancy. Also working on the process.
- Forfeiture bill
- DNA testing privacy bill

LINKS:

Education fund outlook and property tax rates:

[https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/Subjects/Education-Fund-Outlooks-for-2022-Session/ed223b11a8/EF_Outlook_for_FY2023 - December 1st.pdf](https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/Subjects/Education-Fund-Outlooks-for-2022-Session/ed223b11a8/EF_Outlook_for_FY2023_-_December_1st.pdf)

<https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/Subjects/Monthly-Target-Tracking/e933ba9d84/FY2022-Target-Tracking-EFPDF.pdf>

The State of Housing in Vermont Update

<https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/Publications/All-Legislative-Briefing-December-8-2021/7827cf974b/Hanford-TheStateOfHousingInVermont.pdf>

Economic outlook

<https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/Publications/All-Legislative-Briefing-December-8-2021/019c6d4730/Kavet-Economic-and-Revenue-Review.pdf>

Federal Funds Update and Budget:

<https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/Publications/All-Legislative-Briefing-December-8-2021/95fc3837de/Belliveau-and-Clark-Budget-Overview-v2.pdf>

<https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/Publications/All-Legislative-Briefing-December-8-2021/a17aac875e/Howard-Federal-Update.pdf>

Climate Council and Global Warming Axt Update:

<https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/Publications/All-Legislative-Briefing-December-8-2021/c50e57dd86/Moore-Climate-v2.pdf>

Sen. Tom Chittenden

- Transportation and education committees
- Draft bill for multiple modes of transportation in support of climate objectives.
- Kindergarten entry ages – impact on child care – looking for consistency across the state
- Gun control / concealed carry permits.
- Birth Certificates – new certificates with gender
- Pupil waiting report
- Also on SB council – Housing – SB is considering restricting UVM’s ability to build housing.
 - o FYI UVM is the largest SB landowner
- Climate committee is considering Act 250 to exercise more regional control

Sen. Phil Baruth

- Judiciary and Appropriation committees
- 40% of 2022 work will be pandemic related.
- Mask mandate – Gov. wanted a bill that allowed cities to impose a mask mandate. However, Gov. didn’t want cities to use this authority. Sen. Baruth would prefer a statewide requirement.
- Federal Funds – Infrastructure bill revenue needs to be converted into a set of rules.
- Prisons reduce number of incarcerated.

Sen. Kesha Ram Hinsdale

- Government Operations and Economic Development and Housing committees
- On Health Care Task Force
- Supports some local control over charter changes. Supporter of just cause eviction
- Expects a majority of work to be driven by pandemic.
- Civilian climate corps
- Housing – First gen grants | Permit reform | Do away with single family zoning
- Healthcare affordability
- Redistricting will take time and energy. Chittenden County will be divided into senate districts.
- Criminal Justice Reform, including changes to or elimination of qualified immunity
- Environmental justice bill – priority of climate action plan.

Rep. Brian Cina [Chit 6-4]

- Healthcare committee

- Seeing tsunami of mental health and substance abuse that need care
- Homeless are living in hotels [there is no other housing available].
- H210 passed
- Increase evidence based practices
- Need workforce development and better pay
- Expand agriculture – year round food production
- 3-5 year plan for public works, including housing

Rep Selene Colburn [Chit 6-4]

- Talking about a single issue – overdose crisis
- Vermont is an outlier 40% increase in 2020?
- Low barrier access to treatment
- Access to medications via Medicaid
- Clean syringes save lives
- Bill to expanding authorized syringe host program
- Wants overdose prevention sites
- Wants to address criminal justice - How we handle drug crimes

Sen. Chris Pearson

- Vermont has much deferred social maintenance – how to pick the priorities
- Cochairman of Climate Solutions Caucus
- Pushing the Climate Solutions Plan | Renewable Energy Standard [utilities] | Clean Heat Standard
- Transportation – getting people out of low mileage and into high mileage vehicles
- Infrastructure
- Policy and Money – we have some, but who will actually do the work [weatherization...]
- This will take many years, our partners need long term stability to invest in their workforce, etc.
- Change school funding change from property taxes to income tax
- Universal meals in schools
- Minimum wage to \$15. Now is the time, the market is paying more than \$15, so doing this now will prevent backsliding in the future.

Questions & Discussion

Tom Derenthal - How the state sets safety standards for PCBs. And if BSDVT replaces the high school, will the state participate. Sen. Baruth: Legislature funded the move to downtown BHS. Environmental emergency fund could not be used for PCBs. A language change could change that. The Federal standard was out of date and the State standard is more in line with current science. The administration changed the State standard by rule... the reasoning is not completely understood. Kathy Orwell: New state law – all schools must be checked for PCBs in the air [material levels are different]. Under the old state standard, many school would not pass. BSDVT is not changing course [i.e. building a new school], because we have high levels in materials. Therefore the buildings are not safe. TomD: Can Federal infrastructure funds be used for rebuilding schools? Chris P: we don't know because the rules are so new. Sen. Chittenden: Pushing all schools to do testing, starting with Radon. This will reveal the level of work that needs doing. Vermont in the past had a "bond bank" which enabled lower interest loans, but not today.

Sen. Baruth: There's been a moratorium on State aid for school construction for 10-15 years. We need to get back to the State helping out school districts. Federal infrastructure bill may address some long time state needs like for water... and free monies for school buildings. Rep. Colburn: There is a surplus in the school funding, some of which may be used for buildings.

Kathy Orwell: How does the legislature feel about the pupil spending study? Selene: Shares the concern. Categorical funding will leave Burlington and Winooski worse off than previously. Sen Baruth: Wrote the bill that would take the UVM study and implement it. But the Education committee changed the bill to include alternative funding like categorical funding. Changing pupil weights is difficult [as we're seeing], but categorical funding can be revised annually. This is an attempt to have affluent communities be buffered against rising taxes. Kesha R: One complication is in small districts where ELL students are few, the funding via pupil formula may not be sufficient. In this case categorical funding may work better. It has been proposed that ELL funding go from \$7M to \$11M. The challenge is that categorical aid may help some districts that don't need it and underfund others. A hybrid model could be better where aid goes to some communities and use tax capacity on top of that to meet gaps, including those beyond curriculum, like cultural and family services.

Michael Long: Wants to support the original bill that would provide equity using updated pupil weights and funding.

Jonathan Chapple Sokol: Are there opportunities for the legislature to support the City in creating opportunities to make housing more affordable? Chris P: There is a lot of Federal dollars and more to come. President Garimella said UVM wants to build beds [maybe 600 or so], but there are City zoning rules that get in the way. E.g. the setback for Trinity is 150'. You cannot increase housing with the current density rules. We need a campaign that comprehensively addresses this over a long time. For example, maybe UVM commits to housing all 3rd year students, the City gets grant to get people into first time homeowner programs, convert bigger houses into apartment houses make them affordable.... What doesn't work is a one thing and a different class of professionals come in and longtime poorer residents are not served. In theory reducing students will reduce demand and rents. But we need to do something else in parallel to serve poor residents. Jonathan: That sounds close to what the Neighborhood project was trying to do. Brian: Part of this is a lack of campus housing. And it impacts the culture of neighborhoods and QOL. Students go downtown because there's nothing to do on campus. And the culture on campus is you go downtown. The State can take leadership by working with regional planning commissions to identify regional recovery zones. These could be rapidly redevelopment districts that promotes social equity and financial equity for individuals and families, includes mixed income options, rent to own... Plans include employment plans, workforce recovery plans and access to transportation. The roadmap to end homelessness need 400 new supporting units, and 1200 units targeting those with 30% of median income.

Imagine how climate change will aggravate this problem, especially if we don't build housing now and for the future. Hannah: It's great that UVM wants to build housing. The incentive to move off campus includes price, where UVM charges \$1000 and off campus is \$800 per month, so more expensive on campus housing will not reduce the financial desire to move off campus. Selene: The City needs to put housing front and center in the MOU with UVM. It's not now. There's a lot on the line.

Localvore Raffle

- The raffle was postponed until next meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:11 PM