



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Retreat Minutes
January 24, 2020

Commission Present: Pierce, Healy, Hurley, Farrell, Todd, Traverse, Barlow and Harris

Staff Present: Wight, Mulvaney-Stanak (facilitator) and Putzier

The meeting was convened at 8:00 a.m. by Pierce, no actions or motions were made as the meeting was a retreat and informational and educational in nature.

Public Forum

Seeing nobody from the public the forum was closed.

Opening & Introductions

Mulvaney-Stanak introduced herself and had each person introduce themselves and what they feel they bring to the commission, department and City.

What is the role of a Commissioner

City Attorney Hesler began to explain with handout of article 72, Appendix D, Article II and the guide to open meetings as well as the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center FAQs. Certain aspects have been delegated to this commission. Explained can look to Wight when certain issues are day to day issues as well as to the City Attorney when it may be unclear as to what the role is, generally should be clear.

Wight gave an example as to what may be unclear and stated the banner fees and one commissioner questioned if staff should be coordinating this and Wight said not Commissions responsibility for that specifically.

Todd asked about the special use permits and wanted to know if the commission would be seeing those and was told the special use ones for Waterfront events are on a special committee called the Waterfront Advisory Committee and they meet twice a month for approval.

For other licenses would be under section 13, for others outside of the waterfront, once the commission sets the parameters then the staff would be doing the day to day, boots on the ground management of the licenses/permits. Wight stated that all walks should technically go on the consent agenda moving forward.

Vermont Open Meeting Law Primer

City Attorney Hesler explained he was also here to speak of the open meeting law, gave a handout and also stated all meetings must be warned, can't create email chains that get into deliberating and when you realize you have more than 50% of the board or commission involved in the chain it becomes a meeting. If meeting or discussing one on one before the meeting it is permissible but would not encourage too much conversation would put on agenda for discussion. Encourage to contact Justin St. James, City Attorney if ever in question of what is considered a public record or commission business. Encouraged all to use their City email at all times when conducting commission business. No obligation to keep all text alive forever but electronic communication is considered admissible for public records request.



Barlow asked about a quorum and Hesler said you would need more than 50% for approval, need who made motion, second, what the motion was and memorialized and a good summary. Only need the basics however, you want to memorialize and don't want to approve blindly.

Justin email address is jstjames@burlingtonvt.gov or rhesler@burlingtonvt.gov for any further questions.

Traverse asked for confirmation that once you delete an email that the city can retrieve it and it was confirmed that was the case.

BPRW – Divisions and staffing

Wight handed out the staff organizational charts, beginning with Leadership team, division leaders; Roach, Sauve, Rogers, Cate and Moreau. Wight then explained the staff within each division.

Wight gave a brief description about what each division consists of in terms of staff and the level of work they perform for the department. Commission asked specific questions about each division.

55 full time, 2 part time employees, often times employees doing work in other areas of the city.

Being an Effective Commission

Mulvaney-Stanak asked a couple of questions of the commission;

1. How can I, as an individual Commissioner, and/or us, as a Commission, best support the Parks staff?
 - Able to act as first take and serve as advisors on new ideas
 - Share knowledge two way with community and staff
 - Show up at public meetings/events to support department (open minded)
 - Being purposeful to express thanks and remaining mindful of the time given, express gratitude to staff, be efficient in meetings
 - Being a champion for Parks in personal network
2. How can we best handle, consider and encourage constructive dialogue y residents, stakeholders and staff within city government as it relates to our department? What should we do/not do?
 - Model good, professional behavior, in person and online
 - Assume good intentions
 - People awareness of process, meetings esp. with big topics
 - Don't assume that your community is the only one, know your blind spots/bias
 - Use vehicles such as NPA, FPF for dialogue and promotions
 - How to use public forum so not negative, but champion space
 - Assume people don't know what topic or terms are – define
 - Timely follow-up is important
 - Direct people to correct person



3. How can we balance representation of our local neighborhood versus larger region of city as a whole? What should we do to make sure neighborhood voices are heard especially if no Commissioner comes from that part of the City?
 - In public, come “out” as a commissioner – be a resource
 - When a vacancy, try to encourage people to apply and think of unrepresented people/groups
 - Location of our meetings- go to the people
 - Timing of meetings
 - More outreach for meetings – Feature location, including community groups (signal boost) – CORE
 - Use schools as a location
 - Also way to get more penny for parks applications
 - Find meeting places in the wards that are not being represented
 - Use food
 - Public Access Coverage
 - Commission 411 event (all departments)
 - Facebook Live

Community Engagement

Mulvaney-Stanak suggested to think about a time that each experienced a really good model of community engagement;

-Housing Summit; had time to ask questions, conversational with community and experts, could talk with officials/experts

-Leddy Open house; different stations self-serve, participatory (stickers), very welcoming

-Tours/ BHS; Visual demonstration of needs for capital spending, punctuated

-City Market/South End; started very early on in the process, had multiple meetings, reached out to community in multiple different forms corridor, easy website with regular updates, plans in draft mode because wanted community input, ongoing and cycle back

-Winooski Avenue Corridor; rounds of feedback, virtual meetings, good role definition for task force and community

Then Mulvaney-Stanak asked all to think of a time they experienced a process or project that did not go so well.

-Redistricting for Wards; competing points of view, not structured well, not purposeful

-NPA's; loudest voices win, hard to manage particularly at election time, good community mix, naysayer come with agenda items and balance of conversation not always there

-North Avenue Corridor; no clear roles and responsibilities for task force

-City Hall Park; process too long, old input



Review of FY2020 Department Goals and Discussion

Wight went through the goals list by division beginning with the Administration division; explained trying to get a handle on the budget, some big deficits, can tap into other areas, alluding to some changes within the department, so many project going on and working on the accreditation and how to move forward. Planning division; working on several project; Bike Path, City Hall Park, S. Champlain, Starr Farm fencing, Schifilliti field conversion, Leddy Maintenance, Leddy tennis renovation, Schmanska walkways, Urban Forest Master Plan and section 8 of the cemetery. Marketing division; working on RFP concessionaire spaces and sponsors, update marketing plan and work collaboratively with other departments on pricing and supplies. Parks division; Grounds, knowing and map what is in parks, playgrounds in compliance, evaluate all practices and look for efficiencies and conservation lens. Park Facilities; working on Schmanska Barn and potential Lyman building improvements at Perkins. Trees division; continue ash replacement, convert 80% annual gardens to perennial gardens and green storm water support. Conservation; look for more no mow areas to support, 311 North Ave. property, Arms Forest and coordination with Wildways partners to enhance volunteer program. Cemetery; conservation lens of spaces, section 8, volunteerism and Greenmount. Recreation; continue to reach all Burlington resident on opportunities for programs, recreation plan based on CAPRA standards, expansion of outdoor programming, continue and expand collaboration with other City departments. Waterfront; Cottage renovations, floor repair of small bathroom building, master plan and how to do incremental improvements within available fund, work with City Planning with Harbor and Waterfront Master plan, permitting all docks and parking-enforcement, kiosks, paving Perkins. Recreation Facilities; CORE transition if that goes through, preparing for staff departure in May, standardized customer service policies among facilities, fiscal sustainability, policy for waivers/contracts. Central Facilities; looking to make its own division, full understanding of all facilities and needs and asset maintenance program.

Mulvaney-Stanak asked the group what excites them and what they are more curious about which can be for a future commission meeting to discuss.

-Exciting Stuff

- RFP for sponsors (creative, new revenue)
- 311 North Avenue (new opportunity of cool space)
- Lyman Building at Perkins (underutilized space, waterfront access)
- Urban Forest Master Plan
- Trees, Make good on public promise of more trees
- Annual to Perennial Gardens
- Schmanska Barn (great potential)
- Geo Spacial Inventory

-Tell Me More

- Urban Forest Master Plan
- RFP for Sponsors
- Learn more Can Public access information collaborate with UVM
- Master Plans for all areas
- City Hall Park (Status, Public Info Plan)
- Wildways Partners & Arms Forest
- Beach Closures
- Playground Compliance (Ward 5/Oakledge for All)



Closing

Things that worked well;

- prompt questions and small groups
- annually repeat goals & open dialogue
- free flow dialogue
- knowing each other
- longer time versus short normal meeting time
- org chard (fluid)
- more effective conversation with staff and community
- Breaks
- On Time
- set up/planning
- food
- positive group

Things that were not as good;

- legal advice shorter or not do annual
- build on onboarding process for newbies (not repeat for returning)
- make goals for commission each year and review annually
- prompt questions send ahead of time
- learn from staff how effective commission is and can be

Adjournment

The meeting ended just before noon.

