

Burlington Advisory Committee on Accessibility

January 20th 2015, 4-6 pm, City Hall Room 12

Minutes

Committee Members Present: Ralph Montefusco (chair), Elaine Zimmerman, Ron Redmond

Committee Members Absent: Sam Handy, Brad Stephenson, Maggie Leugers, Ned Holt, Julie LaPlume, Ben Johnson, Shelly Waterman, Michael Watson

Others Present: Nate Wildfire (CEDO), Sarah Stickle (First Night), Sandi Omanovic (intern), Cleary Buckley (architect/citizen) Peter Owens (CEDO), Nate Besio (VCIL)

COME TO ORDER at 4:12pm

Introductions

Introductions were made of everyone present.

Public Forum

Cleary Buckley is trying to continue to try to be engaged with school districts such as Edmunds to increase accessibility. Buckley has been in contact with Jay Diaz from Vermont Legal Aid to look over the school budget.

Brad Stephenson did not attend the meeting due to the fact that he has moved to Washington D.C. He will be periodically present until replaced.

Burlington Mall Redevelopment

Wildfire started his presentation with a brief overview of the history of the mall development plans. Wildfire explained how the mall had been bought about a year ago and the new owner has been working with CEDO to transform the mall into a modern public and commercial space. There is a desire is to include housing, office space, and potentially even hotel accommodations.

Wildfire and Redmond reference the developments in Chapel Hill, North Carolina as a guiding example to the restructuring that Burlington will under go. Two big elements that Chapel Hill did that would be similar: 1) Owner of mall will pay \$150,000 that the City will use to hire experts in different fields such as urban design, attorneys, etc.; and 2) Public engagement process, a plan to notify neighbors and community that something of this magnitude is happening and engage them in the process.

Wildfire's expressed concerns of public opinion for mall development are resolved by his suggested methods of collection:

- Collected over 500 sticky notes
- Set up Kiosks or comment boxes around community
- Burlingtonvt.gov/btvmall website has a comments section and has an aspirational plan ready for viewing
- February 18 to 21 will be a public design workshop

Concerns from Committee: How will the mall accommodate those with visual and hearing impairments? How are New Americans going to be welcomed? Suggestions include: multi-lingual signs, a center within the mall to host cultural events such as fashion walks and concerts . Will there be accommodations within the new housing such as a roll-in shower for people with disabilities? Also, the housing is usually one room although some that are impaired require an in-home aid and would need another room. People of lower socio-economic class feel that Church Street is not for them because most shops and restaurants are out of their price range. Concerns about walkways on Cherry Street involve the construction period and its effect on the sidewalks for people with canes and walkers. Members also expressed concerns about connecting the Burlington waterfront with the Burlington town center with Cherry Street.

First Night

Sarah Stickle presented on First Night New Years success. There was minor snow dusting; although, the snow was cleared quickly to provide safe access.

Stickle said that ASL interpreting experienced a hitch, while 11 hours of interpretation for shows was scheduled, due to a lack of available certified interpreters only a few hours could be provided. There were suggestions on involving the UVM ASL community and certifying committed members.

The committee was pleased with the accessibility with the First Night event, they commented on how they hold First Night to a standard, which they met.

Zimmerman expressed complaints she received from people about the schedule online having too small of font to be able to read. She suggested possibly color-coding the schedule to make it easier to follow.

Annual Projects and Goals Discussion

The group closed off the meeting by discussing accessibility at future city events such as Mardi Gras and the Jazz Fest. Concerns focused on the limited number of accessible bathrooms for people with disabilities. A key bathroom is the one on the first floor of City Hall; although, City Hall is not open on the weekends and with a bustling Church Street Marketplace would be difficult to get to. Along with more accessible bathrooms the group desires more visible signs guiding people to the bathrooms.

MEETING ADJOURNED at 5:48