

Ward 6 Neighborhood Planning Assembly
Minutes from Meeting on May 7, 2015

The meeting began at 7:10 with approximately 16 people in attendance.

1. Peter Keating presented the agenda. The meeting thanked Ben Chason-Sokol, retiring as a member of the Steering Committee. The February and March 2015 minutes were presented and approved.
2. John Caulo representing Champlain College gave an update on college events and construction. Graduation will be this coming Saturday and a shuttle is in place to handle remote parking for visitors. The CCM project on Maple Street will be completed over the summer and ready by August 15. Between 80- and 90 people are now working on-site. Small repairs to other buildings will continue. The Eagles Club property demolition is underway to be followed by site work. Construction date is yet to be determined. Question (Q): What's happening at the Ethan Allen Club? Answer (A): Nothing, other than a pop-up museum for student art work. Housing is planned there. Q. Will you be moving the Perry Hall signs off public property? A. We will check on their location. Q. Eagles Landing date to open? A. Fall 2017 is the new date. Q. Maple Street has been brutalized by construction and water breaks and has two sink holes and needs attention. To what degree is this CC's responsibility? A. We had a street cut at one place on Maple St. but our repairs have held up. We will investigate other pavement issues as to our responsibility.
3. Lisa Kingsbury, representing UVM, gave an update on university events and construction. Commencement will be next weekend. Most construction projects are in Ward 1 and on the Central Quad. area. CBW dorms are coming down this summer. The STEM project is waiting for Act 250 approval. Angell Hall and Cook demolition/reconstruction scheduled for completion in 2018. The first year housing scheduled for the Quad will be reviewed at the Development Review Board (DRB) tomorrow. The 61 Summit St. Alumni House renovations are underway with some interior work and there will be a new pavilion-event building. It will be about 6,000 sq. ft and involve a small amount of additional parking. Event visitors will be directed to other campus parking facilities. Q. Are you coordinating with the hospital construction? A. Yes. This shouldn't impact our work or traffic on Colchester Ave. There is a Ward 8 and Ward 1 task force facilitating construction impacts. Ask me (LK) about those meetings.
4. Ted Whimpey of the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity explained the activity of their office. He is Director of their Fair Housing project, promoting a variety of housing at different income levels in the state and more vibrant neighborhoods. He's working under a grant to create seminars and training this summer on this topic. He explains that they focus on fair housing law, that is, anti-discrimination. Protected classes now include those with disabilities as well as the more traditionally protected classes. In Vermont these also include sexual orientation and gender identity. It is also illegal to zone or plan so as to exclude low-income groups. HUD gives funds to both the State of Vermont and Burlington to fight discrimination in housing as well as to enhance the ability of those in protected classes to have housing choice. In Burlington, we have inclusionary zoning and new projects are required to have between 15 and 20% of units affordable to those with incomes of less than 80% of medium income. This rule may be tweaked under on-going discussions, perhaps adding a tiered system, but I'd continue to want to see mixed income in projects, not concentrations of low-income people. Q. Are large projects restricted to student housing downtown in violation of fair housing? A. No, if open only to enrolled students is a dorm. Rental ads targeting students are okay if a landlord will accept students who are non-traditional, say married or with children. You can't discriminate against children. Q. Are you promoting worker

housing? A. We don't provide housing. We want to promote a range of housing possibilities, including auxiliary apartments--in-law apartments. These are an opportunity for older residents to gain income. We don't work with any groups that specifically create workforce housing. Q. Are you talking with the developers at the Sinex project (Shops on Church St.)? Yes. I support additional housing rather than the convention center what was deleted from the plans. Q. Will creating more housing lower prices or help with the quality of life in neighborhoods? A. The jury is still out on prices. There is a market effect if you add more housing but if it is added at the high end, that won't lower prices at the lower end. We need more middle-level housing for young professionals and lower-end housing.

5. The representative from Vermont Gas couldn't make the meeting. Alex Prolman of Rising Tide Vermont presented an analysis of the tax impacts on Ward 6 residents of the proposed gas pipeline extensions to Addison Co. and New York. He said that there was presently a 5% surcharge added to all gas bills to build up a construction fund of \$5 million for this extension. It isn't enough. There may be an increase in rates of 15%. In 2011 GasMetro, which owns VT Gas, wanted to extend the pipeline to New York. It broke the \$6 billion project into smaller pieces to make approval easier. The state guarantees them an 11% return on investment. They sought to build up their System Extension and Reliability Fund (SERF) using that initial 5% increase on current customers. This will last until 2031 and total \$100 million. This is an unprecedented means of funding a project in that it is up-front or in advance of the project and assessed on current rate payers. If no pipeline is built, rate payers are owed a refund. As of December 2013, project costs were estimated to be \$86 million and with a 4% increase added on to that, they got a permit from the state. Then they said they needed \$35 million extra, which would mean a 10% increase on current rate payers. Then there was another increase in the estimated cost of the project. We think that rate-payer bills will increase by 15% for this project. In 2015 International Paper pulled out of the project along with its \$30 million contribution. We have to ask, is this project still in the public good, as law requires? The Department of Public Service and the Public Service Board should be targeted with a lot of public comment as to whether this project is really in the public good. Q. Vermont outlawed gas fracking. Is the gas brought into the state from fracked Alberta sources that generate climate-warming methane emissions? A. VT Gas says it has no way to know or control this. There's no way to separate out fracked gas from conventional gas.
6. Councilperson Karen Paul gave an update on city business. She said the Board of Finance had approved an MOU on the waterfront marina; the New Moran plan project is going forward; a series of public meetings and presentations on the downtown mall (Shops on Church Street) have continued up to this week and in response to public comment, the proposed convention center and hotel have been dropped. There will be 12 or 13 stories of apartments with floors 3 and 4 devoted to Inclusionary Zoning units. The developer will honor the 20% Inclusionary Zoning requirement, whether in terms of space or number of units is still unclear. There were 100 people at the presentation at city hall this week on the project. Re-connecting St. Paul and Pine Streets to Cherry Street is important, in one case opening access for cars as well as bicycles and of course pedestrians. There will be roof-top public space and one building of office space. Construction of the Cliff Street sidewalk will begin this summer. The UVM MOU is up this year. Give your comments to me (KP) on any new MOU. Noise complaints are being vigorously responded to with calls to landlords and in some cases police response. Involving landlords is the key. If they are aware, they will act.
7. Councilperson Joan Shannon also gave an update on city business. She said the Way-to-Go website is offering prizes so please register. She said that with a smaller number of councilors, each will now have 2 to 3 standing committee appointments and additional ad hoc committee

assignments, making for a busy schedule. She hopes that council membership won't be limited in the future to the retired or those not having to hold a job. One reason for this additional workload is the shift some years ago from a commission style city government to a strong-mayor, strong-council form. This shuttles more decisions to council. Council is now seeking ways to streamline the decision-making process to avoid committee responsibility duplication. We are comfortable with height proposed in the Mall area, that is, 12 story buildings. The rest of downtown will have a 65 foot height limit which with bonuses could go to 105 ft. This last would mean 8 stories for the non-Mall downtown. Q. I understand that the Mall is asking for 14 stories. Form Based Code initially called for 10 stories and the mayor reduced that to 8 stories maximum. Now it seems that 14 stories is okay. Don't we have a moving target here? Won't other developers use this as a precedent to say, hey, I want 14 stories too? A. The Mall is the area where tall buildings, if we are going to have them, belong. Q. Isn't concentrating affordable housing to two specific floors of the Mall a kind of segregation? A. (JS and KP) Yes. As for building heights, we always understood mall development would require changes in the regulations but these will be in compensation for the very real advantages of the developer opening up the thru streets. The original proposal had taller buildings and we agreed to reduce it. We are now talking of feet, not stories, and the cap will be 65 or 105 ft. The Mall area is an exception. Q. Are there plans for student housing at the Mall? A. No. It will be mixed housing. There's be nothing specific for students. Q. Is there a problem with inclusionary zoning housing on specific floors? A. This may depend on the size of the units. The ordinance says 20% of the units, not the square feet. Q. In the past we had height bonuses that were never built. Can we guarantee that this won't happen again? A. Our current mayor is familiar with this. It will be part of the approval at the permit stage.

8. Miriam Stoll, School Board Member, gave an update on school board issues. She will continue to chair the finance committee of the Board. We are ending the year soon and foresee that it will be deficit-free. This is in part due to a \$700,000 refund payment to the schools from the Burlington Electric Department for past over-billing. We plan to spend \$100,000 of this on capital planning addressing the needs of our aging high school. Our new superintendent will arrive in June or, if visa problems from Canada delay him, in July 2015. This year there will be the need to negotiate a new contract with teachers. High school graduation will be June 12.
9. Steering Committee elections: Caroline Saba was elected as a new member of the Steering Committee to replace Ben Chason-Sokol. The rest of the committee, Peter Keating, Julie Richards, Clare Wool, and Charles Simpson were re-elected for another term.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:45.

Respectfully submitted,
Charles Simpson