

Wards 1 & 8 NPA Meeting
January 12, 2022

Agenda:

6:45 - 7:00 p.m. Zoom line open to call in
7:00 (Formal start to the meeting) Announcements & Introductions
7:05 Speak-out - General Public
7:20 Community Development Block Grant Advisory Board - Ward 8 appointment for 2022
7:25 City Councilors: Questions/ Answers - this month we are trying to increase dialogue, so we are dedicating the City Councilor time to Q&A: you ask, they answer.
7:40 School Board Commissioners: Questions/ Answers
7:50 March ballot - Downtown Tax Financing District - Brian Pine, CEDO
8:05 ISGOOD Project - Brian Cina
8:20 City's Strategic Plan for Racial Equity - Skyler Nash
8:45 Redistricting Committee Update - Anne Brena (Ward 8) and Richard Hillyard (Ward 1)
8:55 Localvore coupons gifts - giveaways to two attendees
9:00 Adjourn

Attendees:

Ally House
Angela Chapple-Sokol
Bobby Butani
Brian Cina
Brian Pine
Carol Livingston
Caryn Long
Dave Cawley
Erhard Mahnke
Hannah King
Jack Hanson
Jane Stromberg
Jason Stuffle
Jonathan Chapple-Sokol
Karen Vastine
Kathy Olwell
Laura Wheelock
Louis X
Morgan Lamphere
Olivia Darisse
Richard Hillyard
Selene Colburn
Susan Butani
Tom Derenthal
Zoraya Hightower

The Meeting Started at 7:00 PM

Speakout:

Dave Cawley – The Old East End Group is sponsoring the 2nd Winter Interlude at Schmanska Park in Feb. It's self-directed and will include sledding, decorations and more. Special events: Feb 4, lighting and craft lanterns and hot beverages. Saturday, Feb 5th – loaner ski equipment and sleds. Also a story walk and refreshments with music at 11 or 12PM. With a repeat on Sunday. Distancing and masks as needed. See FPF for more information or to get involved.

Jane Stromberg: Announced she is not running for another term. Thanks sharing the space and trust over the last 2 years. Am grateful for the opportunity to serve.

Selene Colburn:

- Thanks to Jane Stromberg's service on Council
- Legislative restarted, working remotely at this time
 - o A couple bills have already passed – One provides flexibility to towns on Town meeting day.
 - o Judiciary committee – Expungement and sealing of records – work in progress. This impacts ability to get a job and re-integrate into the community.
 - o Work to start on S30, a bill that would address bringing guns into hospitals and some other gun violence prevention measures
 - o Concerned about and supports schools especially in light of the latest COVID guidance from the Dept. of Education.

Ali House:

- Social work student, public school educator – running for W8 city council.
- Interested in Brian's community garden project and how it connects to racial equity and promotes justice.
- Passionate about climate and racial justice
 - o Concerned about Burlington's housing crisis. Affordable housing is out of reach. Burlington has in the past depended on private developers. There are options that will not include gentrification.
- Vermont is at a crossroads to address climate change.

Zoraya Hightower

- After a quiet period has decided to run for re-election
- Am excited about housing and public safety
- Hope the next two years will not be as difficult as the last two.
- Thanks for the support.

Bobby Butani

- Shout out to DPW and S.D. Ireland – Did a great job installing a new 4" main on Fletcher Place.'

Caryn Long

- Happy to hear Zoraya is running again.
- Good luck to Jane Stromberg
- Would like someone from the auditor's office to talk about TIF. It's not free money. We need to be careful. There are many questions. Our focus should be on a top notch high school, not a great street on main street.

Jonathan [for Jared Wood]

- On a recent walk, saw 32 cars that didn't stop at stop signs, one did. Believes this problem is City-wide. To be a walkable city, we have to be able to cross the streets.

Morgan Lamphere

- Issues along N. Winooski Ave. Recycling containers have been stolen. Near Butch&Babes, people hanging out long into the night, smoking & drinking. These actions resulted in fearful house guests. Jack Hanson will look into this off line.

Community Development Block Grant

- o Need a W8 representative. Hannah nominated herself after no other nominations were offered. The nomination was seconded by Jane Stromberg. Hannah wins unanimously.

City Council Q & A:

Carol Livingston: Is there a plan to keep the tenor of City Council meeting respectful and safe? Are there intentional actions being taken? Council meetings should be safe, respectful with attenders listening.

Response: Zoraya Hightower: Council meetings are hard because the public has 2 minutes to speak, then are otherwise not allowed to participate. It must be frustrating. The mask meeting was difficult. It was handled as well as possible. There's a lot of emotion in the room. Not sure how to fix. Has never felt unsafe at a council meeting. However does have concern that Councilor addresses are public. People do send threatening mail or show up in person.

Response Jane Stromberg: You cannot tell if the situation will escalate or calm down. Has also received threatening and inappropriate mail. Has talked to Max Tracy about this. Perhaps there is flexibility for public statements. Also Council is challenged with repeat offenders. How to address those who significantly interrupt business. Recent meetings are more settled down.

Response Jack Hanson: The issue of civility is complicated... and how people express themselves. Council decisions have impact, and people feel strongly about this. Example, the evacuation of Sears lane brought out emotions. The conversations are necessary, so the dynamic is tricky. NPA is a healthy space. If people don't feel heard or unable to express themselves, frustration grows. When people don't feel heard they become vitriolic and it impacts Council's ability to work. And volunteers to serve.

Caryn Long: Is there openings on the Tax board with Joe McGee? Response Jack Hanson: It's a committee of stakeholders looking at reappraisal process and the tax burden generally. The committee has openings for 2 renters and one commercial landowner.

Caryn Long: had a recent experience with people looking for housing after their rent increased by ~\$450 month. These renters felt like they were being kicked out. The \$450 increase seemed

unreasonable. Response Hightower: The just cause eviction ordinance would provide help to those impacted. The charter change [the enables just cause eviction], is in review at the legislature.

School Board Commissioners:

Kathy Olwell

- The board is working on the budget. Expect a budget presentation next month.
- BSDVT hired architectural firms, Freeman French Freeman and 2 others. Visioning work sessions started this week. Faculty and staff to be interviewed Jan 18 & 19, followed by public sessions in late Jan / early Feb.
- Work continues on per pupil weighting changes. The proposal, which includes grants for ELL has gone to the full legislature. BSDVT is pushing to replace grants with the per-pupil recommendation [from the UVM study]. Response Selene Colburn: Supports ELL via updated per pupil weighting. There has been some push-back on categorical aid for ELL.
- Selene Colburn - Has heard from many we're at a breaking point moving through the latest COVID wave, with movement away from contact tracing... How do we support teachers over the next few months? Response Kathy Olwell: When contact tracing stops... We need a discussion. We have to do something. The Superintendent has additional test and N95 masks, but BSDVT is limited without action from the State. Selene: It may be possible to purchase masks using Federal dollars.

Downtown TIF Bond: Brian Pine, Lora Wheelock and Olivia Darisse

Brian Pine delivered a presentation on the 2022 TIF Bond which will be on the March ballot.

- Summary: The bond addresses the downtown district. This is separate from the waterfront TIF. The slides showed how TIF works including how the bond is repaid. The funding will pay to convert the downtown part of Main St into a "Great Street", including addressing a ravine sewer that runs under main street today. The bond amount is \$35.92M
 - o Complete details are available in the presentation, available here → ??
- Questions:
 - o TomD - Will the increased value of the project area bring in sufficient funds to maintain the new features and infrastructure? Brian Pine response: TIF will grow the tax base, so its likely taxes on the increased value will be sufficient to maintain the new features.
 - o Erhard Mahnke: The project looks great, but are parking spaces lost? Can Federal funds pay for part of this? Response Brian Pine: While there's potential for some Federal funding and we will compete for our share. In any case, needs for infrastructure exceed what Federal funding may cover. Laura Wheelock response: The parking estimate is a work in progress, expect an update at the end of May.
 - o Caryn Long: What private projects will bring in the extra tax monies? The 30-42 King street [which is tax free]. And Eagles landing where only the land is taxable. How does the financing really work? Response Brian Pine: Expect this public investment to spur private investment and increase value. E.g. Stratos property was developed

on St Paul St due to TIF investment. There are potential developments in the downtown area, including a VFW redo, redevelopment of the old YMCA, potentially into a boutique hotel, plus new development on what's currently a parking lot on S. Champlain St. Laura Wheelock response: The new Champlain dorm does contribute to TIF repayment, but in a non-traditional way.

IsGood [Isham Street Gardening and other optimistic doings]: Brian Cina

- Brian presented "Neighborhood Outreach Worker [NOW] Program Pilot Project"
- The presentation can be found here →?

- Questions:
 - o Ali House: Does the staffing plan include a director who would field calls? Response: Brian Cina: Director should be an MSW and on call [Thurs - Sat].
 - o Richard Hillyard: You may be interested in the Old East End how it's been successful.
 - o Morgan Lamphere: Is there concern putting community members in harm's way? Safety is a big concern and serious violence could undermine this project. Response Brian Cina: Training will include skills to de-escalation and generally be smart. Deployment will not be completely risk free. We as a community need to decide how we respond to conflict.

City's Strategic Plan for Racial Equity - cancelled and rescheduled for a latter NPA meeting.

Redistricting

Ann Brena gave a summary of the ad hoc committee process, collection techniques and some of the public response. The final recommendations will be hashed out 1/13 and presented to Council by Diane Meyerhof before the end of the month. Trends from the public include: Ward 8 does not work. It was gerrymandered. It has low voter turnout. Residents in general are not in favor of "districts". Ward configurations must preserve neighborhoods. Ann also read some specific comments from the public.

Richard Hillyard added that there was concern over how the last redistricting was done and W1 has been under-represented since the last setting of district boundaries. Richard also reviewed results from the online survey.

Localvore drawing winners: This months Localvore winners are Selene Colburn and Bobby & Susan Butani

The meeting ended at 9:06 PM