

Minutes to Wards 18 NPA Meeting November 10, 2021

In-person at Fletcher Free Library, 235 College Street

Facilitator: Hannah King Host: Ethan Fellows, CEDO Minutes: Tom Derenthal

Agenda:

6:30 - 6:45 p.m. Zoom line open to call in (see below if you have problems)

6:45 (Formal start to the meeting) Announcements & Introductions

6:50 Speak-out - General Public

- Brief review of COTS project (278 Main) - Bob Duncan, Jonathan Farrell
- Request for crossing guards - DPW, Dan Hill

7:05 City Council Report and Questions/Answers

7:30 School Board Commissioners Report and Questions/Answers

7:40 December 7 Ballot Items, City Issues and Questions/Answers - Mayor Weinberger

8:00 Ad Hoc Redistricting Committee Update and Input - Richard Hillyard (W1) & Anne Brena (W8)

8:40 Localvore coupons gifts - giveaways to two attendees

8:45 Adjourn

The meeting started at 6:45 PM

Attender List:

Angie Chapple-Sokol

Ann Brena

Bob Duncan

Caryn Long

Dave Cawley

Erhard Mahnke

Hannah King

Jack Hanson

Jane Stromberg

Johnathan Farrell

Jonathan Chapple-Sokol

??

Kathy Olwell

Keith Pillsbury

Richard Hillyard

Samantha Sheehan

Tom Derenthal

Zoraya Hightower

Speakout:

Bob Duncan: Bob provided a housing development proposal by COTS. This repeat of the same in October is to meet meeting warning requirements. See the slides in the Oct minutes.

Jonathan Chapple-Sokol [speaking for Jared Wood]

- Jared recommended spending \$15M of the bond capital on the high school. There is a clear need. [this is in response to the survey].

Richard Hillyard [speaking for Himself and Jared Wood]

- Jared was unhappy with the Mayor's last North Ave news column. Why does the city feel it needed to spend ~\$850K in recruitment and incentives for BPD officers?

City Council Report:

Jane Stromberg

- Council has established an adhoc committee to review this year's re-assessment and make recommendations for the next one. Focus will be on equity and pressure on low income households. Feedback to Council expected in Jan 2022.
- Re-assessment: There is ongoing discussion how to correct and/or fix the last 2021 reappraisal
- Council allocated \$1.3M - to help some pay outstanding electric bills [from the COVID period]
- Postponed the Police Chief search by 6 months.
- COVID cases are going up – be careful
- Area food shelves are struggling to meet demand – please donate

Jack Hanson

- Council voted to increase police staffing to 79, excluding officers at the airport
- Updated sex work ordinance – this decriminalized sex work at the local level.
- Equity department – Created a strategic roadmap to reduce racism and inequities
- Sears lane encampment – Mayor chose to break up encampment. Council is looking for stable housing for those deposed.
- Resolution: Transportation Demand Management – A study on what a city wide system would look like for existing employers and institutions. More than parking lots and free parking. – did pass.

Zoraya Hightower

- Short term rentals – Position is that we will allow people to rent within their own homes if the owner is in the same building. Decisions about tenants or those in officially affordable housing exercising offering a short term is TBD. Considering tying the number of short term rentals to the number of affordable units [in the same building].
- Police Cap – The old cap was 97, reduced to 66 and increased to 79.
- CNA recommendations – 150 recommendations in the CNA report. Public safety committee to work on implementation.

Questions / comments::

Caryn Long – Police chief recruiting – The news cited a need to raise the pay to get a good candidate, but cities comparable to ours pay what we're offering. Why do we feel we're competing with towns much larger than ours?

Zoraya: Mayor called an emergency meeting to discuss, but comparisons were thin. Council asked for more data to determine what we need to do to be competitive. Jane: We expected many great candidates, but got few. Jane wants to keep the process open and keep applications coming in. Jack: Comparable analysis was incomplete. Would prefer to get someone who has experience leading transformative change.

Keith – AIR BNB – some owners are out of state, property managers are not in Burlington. What is Burlington doing to negotiate with UVM to invest in housing. Note: UVM is accepting more students, Jack / Zoraya: Council is pushing to have UVM house more students. This was addressed in a recent executive session.

Ann Brenia: Police Chief search. Is the position considered desirable? Has the Mayor already expressed interest in a professional recruiter? Zoraya: We have not done the analysis what the salary should be and have a conversation about it. Burlington will be a uniquely difficult place for a new chief. Jack: The analysis was thin, and we're in an OK place with compensation. No compelling argument to raise the salary. The current in house pool are versed in the old way of policing. Need a transformative person to lead through the desired changes.

Tom D. - How long can BTV go without a police chief before we do damage to the police or city?

Jane: We've already gone a long time, ~6 months already. The city deserves a solution. We should not wait another 6 months.

Jack: We should be working hard to recruit. The mayor picks department heads, and council's role... Zoraya: BPD are comfortable with the acting chief [because of his tenure on with BPD]. So there's not likely much harm to date. That said, the quicker there's a new chief, the better.

School Board: Kathy Orwell

- Decision to build on Institute road.. Don't think 100% of tech center and high school build cost will pass on the ballot. Plan to ask donors for money
- Signed Superintendent for another 3 years.
- Pupil weight study in legislature: BTV is part of a coalition that has been underfunded for some time. Legislature paid \$100K for study, now are considering pulling poverty and other things [ESL...] out of the weights and funding through another mechanism.

Comments / Questions:

Jonathan – What can we do to help? Kathy: Reach out to our state representatives and the legislature committee to get the weights for ELS+ included.

- Act 60 was originally one of the most equitable funding mechanisms, but moneys are distributed unequally. Poor districts cannot fix buildings...

December 7 Ballot Items, City Issues and Questions/Answers - Mayor Weinberger

The Mayor presented the case for 2 ballot items. The first is a \$40M general obligation bond that will continue infrastructure investment in a variety of city projects. The impact to the homeowner of a median priced home would be ~\$13 per month. This bond will leverage other State and Federal revenue sources. See the Mayor's presentation for details. The second is for a BED revenue bond to further the City's net zero energy objectives. The impact to BED rates will be minimal in the first 5 years and expected to be in the range of 1% in years beyond 5. The details can be found in the Mayor's presentation.

Questions / Comments:

Tom D.: Where do we stand against a reasonable borrowing limit for the City. Mayor: The target for the city's borrowing is a max of 1.75%. This bond is consistent with this borrowing. Moody's is comfortable with this.

A \$300M [tomd guestimate] school and tech center paid with bonds will exceed that limit. However the school cost is TBD and the school district needs to define their costs and options.

Caryn Long: High school is a priority over other projects... and should be completed ASAP. The cost of borrowing is on top of increases from the reassessment. The reassessment is driving families out. Mayor: We do pay too much in property taxes. But the City's budget has been restrained. School taxes have increased dramatically. Burlington doesn't build sufficient new housing, which has the effect of increasing valuations and thus taxes.

Erhard Mahnke: Can any of the Federal infrastructure or "Build Back Better" funds be used for some of the items on the list? Mayor: We expect and are assuming some of the Federal funds will be used. Burlington has some shovel-ready projects that positions us well to compete for additional funds.

Ad Hoc Redistricting Committee Update and Input - Richard Hillyard (W1) & Anne Brena (W8)

Upcoming meetings include 2 public meetings [Nov 17 and Dec 6] plus a public survey. New boundaries will not be on the March 2022 ballot, but a vote is now expected in Nov 2022.

Keith Pillsbury presented comprehensive statistics that describe register voters and turnout across Burlington's wards. W8 has consistently fewer registered voters and consistently fewer votes in elections going back to 2015.

Comments / Questions:

The City Attorney estimates that if new boundaries are voter approved in Nov 2022 and confirmed by the legislature and governor in the 2023 session, the first town meeting day using the new boundaries will be in March 2024. The presentation accompanies these minutes.

Localvore coupons gifts - giveaways to two attendees

This month's Localvore raffle winners are Angie Chapple-Sokol and Kathy Olwell. Congratulations!

The meeting ended at 8:45 PM