

Minutes
Ward 2/3 NPA meeting
February 12th

645: Welcome and Introductions, Announcements

The floor was welcome to any announcements

Mary gave an announcement on Save Open Spaces, specifically mentioning the land behind Burlington College. There was a stand with brochures and literature that she invited guests to pick up on their way out.

650: TIF (Tax Increment Financing) Ballot Item

Nate Wildfire gave a presentation on TIFs and how they relate to the Burlington Mall Redevelopment plans. Wildfire gave a similar presentation last year for another TIF fund, which was for the Waterfront project and that received a 70% approval vote. He went on to explain that TIF is a financing tool that involves a TI District, which last year was the Waterfront district, and, when it's established, all the taxes paid in the district have a value. It is assumed that the tax will grow in value, and that increase is called the tax increment. We pay the bond/debt with the tax increment and we are only allowed to spend it on infrastructure. There is no impact on tax payers property tax, the income is coming from that areas tax increment.

Questions:

Where would the money go if it is not used for infrastructure?

75% goes to the state for future projects.

If and when this goes through, how much of the available tif would that eat up?

It would only be taken from the growth value after the mall is built.

7:00 Charter Changes on Ballot

Rachael Siegel, city counselor, gave a presentation on the proposed charter changes on the ballot.

1: Change the language in regard to the creation of Reserve Funds.

The current language is very restrictive as it limits the City Council to fund a Reserve Fund only in the month of July, only using departmental surplus from the previous fiscal year, and only for very limited purposes. As it is, August is when the books officially close, the July restriction for funding makes it very difficult to actual fund Reserve Funds. Current limitations on Reserve Funds use prevents us from utilizing these types of funds to the best advantage of the City taxpayers. As the City's finances improve, creating Reserve Funds, in an open and transparent way, it allows the City to financially plan for the future so as to reserve money for future known needs and for emergencies. Reserve Funds can prevent fluctuations in tax rates by allowing for such planning, and credit rating agencies and lenders typically like to know that a municipality has sufficient and appropriate reserves.

2: The Charter change will also change board terms to three years, currently it's anywhere between two to five, and it was decided to change the term to three years.

3: In charter it asks for political affiliation and it is done to balance political ideology but it doesn't really do anything b/c most say demorate to not offend.
The rule is no more than 2/3 of same party can

There is also a proposal that would allow Non-citizens to serve on boards and become department heads.

5: Referendum question for people that are non-citizens to be able to vote (IVOTEVERMONT) If this passes then so does number 4 because if you can vote then you can serve on board.

6. TIF

7. School Budget

7:15 Mayoral Forum

Greg Guma (I) Loyal Ploof (I) Miro Weinberger (D) Steve Goodkind (P)

Time allowed for four minutes of introductions by each candidate and then three minutes of question and answer

Greg Guma:

Guma asserted that he would make changes in how we do business in government, it's accessibility and equality. He mentioned that representation is far from equal on Burlington's commissions, which supervise departments and services. This leaves some

neighborhoods with less access. As government becomes more complex we should work to reduce inequality in power and access as well as wealth. Let's consider reforms like electing some commissioners. There are 22 people in the commission from Ward 6 that dominate it, which is an imbalance of power. He made a point that some things are lost by the Strong Mayor system and suggested electing some of the commission so it has a direct representation, such as a police commission. Guma also wants to re-fund the NPA's. They have been underfunded, severally, only receiving \$400 a year. Guma believes that \$5000 per year is the minimum funding of NPA.

Loyal Ploof:

Ploof made a point on the disconnect of neighborhoods. He urged that the city has been building market rate housing but forgot about affordable housing. First thing he wants to do is get rid of bans on church street to make it for everyone. Wants to find a way to keep students on campus, more apartments or bars or clubs on the campus.

Steve Goodkind:

Goodkind would like to protect our neighborhoods and open spaces and wants mixed use/income/development. Also wants to have more affordable housing and wants UVM to house more of their students. Goodkind is in support of a south end connector but stress he has a better plan for it. Wants to have more control of Burlington Telecom and that money should be used as an economic tool. We need to purse fair alternative to the property tax. We need to change from propetual tyope of city governing, one that brough big money to politics and remember that we're a small town and that Burlington is not for sale.

Miro Weinberger:

Weinberger stated that in an 18 month period they have done 61 park projects like roosevelt park. Weinberger said that they have made a start to rebuild the 8 mile long bike-path in order to make it wider and safer. Weinberger's adiministration has broke ground on the northern part of waterfront renovation and started building the skatepark and getting rid of high voltage wires to make it a less of an eyesore. Weinberger said he wants to make Burlington more affordable and thinks it to be one of the most important issues.

Q: How do you differ from current/pass administration

Weinberger:

Weinberger is the current incumbent although promises to avoid raising property tax, which the TIF projects will have no effect on.

Guma:

Guma asserts that his administration would be much more about dilliburation and that we have many projects that we are just trying to push through but, "whats the rush?" Guma stated that It's very easy as an urban planner to present the illusion of choices and thinks that is happening with Plan BTV. If a hotel is put on the waterfront then that will change everything. He insists that zoning restrictions are also a big deal and would change everything. In modernizing the city we are alienating ourselves from each other. We would have more transparency and involve people in a much more participatory way, Guma said.

Ploof:

Ploof recounts on the life experiences that he has that others don't. Ploof was homeless for a year. We are not respecting everyone in the city. Doesn't want to use the southern connector but instead wants people to decide what to do with it, possibly housing? Makes a point that he wants to maintain roads and sidewalks and not just rebuild them.

Goodkind:

Goodkind said he would stand for the interest of the working people and ordinary people of Burlington. He wants to take the city government and modernize it and make it more accessible to the citizens. If you have fewer departments and fewer commissions then it will help people to access them. Goodkind asserted that he has a plan for Southern Connector, use the one already built and connect it to bottom of pine street, finish it and be done with it. Actively pursue job creation that Goodkind reminds us that we are a giga bit city and we should capitalize on that. Want to end campaign style of always looking for money and donations.

Questions

7:35

Q: I live on Lakeview terrace. You said you were proud of development in North End, and that you are for affordable housing but i heard that it wasn't as affordable. I've been told many time that the amount of affordable housing built was not how much planned due to cost?

Weinberger said that they actually built five affordable housing units, which was one more than planned for the affordable units.

Guma insisted on rent stabilization and raising minimum wage. Guma criticized Weinberger's 17 point plan.

Goodkind stressed that the best way to stabilize housing is if people can own their houses. Ownership is key to keeping housing costs in line.

Ploof: Wants to get landlords together and find a way to affordability.

Q: Lets presume that redevelopment goes forward, what are doing in vetting developers to organized crime. We saw a lot of the work done in the hospital was done without code enforcement so how are we sure it will be done in this multi-million dollar development?

Guma: We need to revisit with our already current partners, such as UVM. These others partners that we are beginning to work with then we need to be wary of their job policies and environmental policies. We need to discriminate between positive and negative building. We do not need to hurry to develop, need to go slow and be sure we're making the right decision.

Ploof: We have to work together.

Goodkind: Anyone who we partner with we need to do our manner of due diligence. We need to make sure anyone we partner with will provide liveable wage.

Weinberger: Due dilligence is important, this is without a doubt, but another important aspect to development is getting the agreements right with well structuring and understanding the risks and how to avoid them.

Paul Snobel-Q: There is a rise in the proliferation of cell antenas on buildings and they are being built near day cares and senior centers without community consent. These towers are regulated in europe and you can't build a tower like that near a day care or senior center. In europe they know long term EMF radiation exposure has health consequences. How would you protect our community?

Ploof: The problem is that we don't have open government here. I was opposed to smart meters because of the health risks with those and if we all work together more, things like this wouldn't happen.

Goodkind: Must look at state level and see if it is receiving exception. I agree that in the dense populated area there needs to be a different way at looking at it.

Miro: Local zoning doesn't regulate these telecommunication towers and they are actually regulated by the public service board.

Guma: In a way, it's not under the city's control. We have one of the most centralized governments.

Q: As independents what challenges do you see in building an administration

Guma: I have good relationships with people in the other parties. I would reach across party lines, trying to go across the lines of party bickering. The more difficult task for someone like myself isn't the hiring of good staff, my concern is a democratic mayor with a democratic majority. As mayor, yes it would limit me but this is necessary for stimulating discussion, I believe government should take their time with important decisions like this and not rush into anything and this sort of slow deliberation

Plouf: I have experience working with all political ideologies. The problem would be the council working with me because it wouldn't be as fast as it is in cases of democratic mayor and council but that's what I want anyway.

Goodkind: Filling positions with good people is important to all of us. I want to hire local people that are skilled and not looking across country, you'll find people just as good

Weinberger: It's not about partisanship but about finding good people for the job. Initiatives take time and so do administrations to bloom.

Last question: Miro you said you would want to get rid of inclusionary zoning because it's difficult to make money but that type of zoning makes affordable housing possible.

Miro: We were able to build onsite inclusionary zoning, 4 instead of 5. Inclusionary zoning hasn't been working because it hasn't built that much housing.

Goodkind: I support inclusionary zoning and that it's important but it needs to be modified.

Guma: It is not a question of grow or not but instead, how. Avoid gentrification and has been working with open space to address issues much more aggressively. A mayor shouldn't be a CEO.

Plouf: If we can get the colleges on board then we can make housing cheaper. There are not enough pet friendly apartments. We aren't doing anything for the homeless.

All Loss: 8:18

8:15 Ward 3 Council Candidates

Sara Giannoni (P)

Sarah McCall (D)

Opening statement:

McCall: She has made a commitment to public service. She has worked to empower women/young people and LGBTQIA+. She also launched Emerge Vermont to inspire women to politics.

Giannoni: She has worked for the Wards 2 & 3 Neighborhood Planning Assembly, the COTS Family Shelter, Burlington Lead Program, Mercy Connections, Burlington Restorative Justice Program, and the ONE Neighborhood Safety. Giannoni has been a resident of Vermont for over 10 years.

Q: I was homeless for 11 years, and COTS and others didn't care. How will you keep corruption out of these organizations such as managers allowing drug rings?

Giannoni) I worked in COTS and never experience this. The city doesn't have much jurisdiction on how organizations run.

Q: Public safety, what is the status of it in the old north end and how you have worked on those issues?

McCall) I spoke to District attorney and he wants to direct energy on public safety.

Giannoni) A solution that was used was the use of "eye" flyers which represent that people in the community keeping an eye out for each other.

Q: What is your primary interest? Qualifications?

Giannoni) I worked in CEDO for the Lead program. I have been a resident for ten years. I also worked with operation snow shovel, which provided shoveling of pathways for elderly citizens.

McCall) I moved here for the quality of life because I viewed it as a safer city. I had a tough time finding a place to live so the issues I'm focusing on are about the affordability of living.

What is your vision of the future ownership of Burlington Telecom.

McCall) We've come a long way with it and for me I think it is very important to keep it as strong as can be. Burlington telecom will add to Burlington's future

Giannoni) Really similar answers. Really interested in co-op model and willing to see if it works.

Previous experience in the position of leadership? Example?

McCall) Executive director of emerge vermont, bring in diverse group of stake holders. Commitment to diversity.

Giannoni) Work at COTS. Woken up in middle of night due to fire in microwave, an example of quick response to crises because she kept a cool head.

End at 8:44

8:45 Central District Council Candidates

Jane Knodell (P)

Ron Ruloff (I)

Ruloff:

Ron Ruloff said he was homeless for over 11 years and understands the internal workings of organizations such as COTS. if you're qualified, run for office regardless of gender/race/etc. city is facing bankruptcy in 5-10 years this is without debate.

Knodell:

One of the ward 2 city counselors, small business development, etc.

There was a question and answer period where the candidates had the opportunity to ask each other one question.

Jane Knodell asked Ron Ruloff : Would you be in favor of rent control?

A) God no, to set that up would cost a bunch of money. Very small number of people that would be considered rent control tenants, and this would burden land lords further. City can't afford it.

Ron Ruloff asked Jne : You never did anything about the email I sent you about a drug dealer overdosing and the manager of this food shelf being a domestic violence offender and alcoholic coke addict. Then in response to this incident, all that was done was that there was a reciprocal installed in the bathroom for the disposal of opiate needle, why?

A) I support the instillation of reciprocals to dispense heroin/opiate needles.

9:05 Central District School Candidates

Brian Czina

Charlie Giannoni

Charles Giannoni introduced himself as a past candidate of Ward 3.

Brian Czina announced his success in finding a new super intendant. Czina further gave examples of past success in his career.

9:30 Close