

Ward 6 Neighborhood Planning Assembly
Minutes from Meeting on December 4, 2014

The meeting began at 7:05 pm. Approximately 21 in attendance.

Minutes from October and November were adopted as amended. The amendment consisted of correcting the number of new beds to be added to central campus at UVM in their plan. It should read 450-650 beds.

Deborah Pereira, Health Care Navigator with Vermont Health Connect, distributed information on the coming period for signing up for VT Health Connect, which is Nov. 15 through Feb. 15.

Brian Pine of CEDO discussed recommendations on affordable housing contained in the city's draft "Housing Action Plan: Building a More Affordable, Livable, Walkable, Sustainable and Vibrant Community." The plan is on the city's web site. Its recommendations include reducing regulatory barriers to housing, developing strategies for purpose-built student housing, exploring the Housing First concept to address the housing needs of the homeless, and increasing options for senior housing. Audience members asked how the city calculates the income-to-rent ratios used in the report which indicate that on average, city residents spend 44% of their income on housing. Additionally, audience members wondered if the plan called for greater density in residential neighborhoods as well as the downtown core and what the impact of reducing required parking for downtown housing units might be on surrounding residential areas. Pine responded that it was clear that residents were spending a high proportion of incomes on housing and that this was a problem cited by area employers as they sought workers. He also said that Champlain College and UVM were increasing the number of students housed on campus which should ease some of the pressure on housing for non-students. UVM juniors and seniors however want to live downtown and aren't required to live on campus.

John Caulo of Champlain College reviewed construction activity on campus, indicating that the media center was proceeding as planned. He said that Champlain's master plan seeks to house all its 2000 undergraduates in campus housing, half on its 32 acre campus, half in college housing elsewhere. This fall 275 new beds were added on campus. The Eagles Landing and Ethan Allan Club projects are part of that plan and the approval processes are on-going.

Lisa Kingsbury representing UVM and a consultant from Biddison Hier Ltd. presented UVM's master plan designed to cover the period up until 2026. The assumption was that at least 60% of undergrads would be housed on campus, with a target of 9,800 students enrolled. Any additional students enrolled would be matched one-for-one with campus housing and such housing would be available for transfer students who wished it. College policy requires freshmen and sophomores to live on campus. The plan calls for enlivening the campus via a Green Mountain Pathway project and more lively spaces for students to congregate so as to make campus living more attractive. Emphasis will be on enriching the first year experience with new dorm construction at the campus core focused on the needs of freshmen. Juniors and seniors want independent housing downtown. The city is a lure for applicants, but also creates issues. Obsolete housing will be taken down, existing housing enhanced in many cases, and first year

students will be brought to the center of campus. The Trinity campus will be used for special purpose housing--graduate students and upper class persons. The CBW complex of buildings now housing 391 will be removed and between 450 and 650 beds will be created plus dining facilities and parking. This will be a Silver LEEDS project in terms of environmental values. UVM is looking for a developer to fund and manage the project while the college will handle student services. Opening for these new dorms is scheduled for Fall 2017. Temporary housing would be leased at Quarry Hill and the Sheraton during construction. In answer to a question, the UVM team said there would continue to be some triples but less so in Spring semesters but that students don't object to them.

Q. Would the college house non-students?

A. No.

Q. Is alcohol consumption forbidden in college dorms?

A. The national sorority system forbids alcohol. The national fraternity system does not. So students 21 and over can drink in dorms, affiliated off-campus housing, and fraternity houses.

Councilpersons Norm Blais and Karen Paul gave an update on Council activity. Paul indicated that there were three vacancies on the BT board of advisors. Those with experience in telecommunications, business, marketing, and other related fields should apply. Potential buyers of BT say they want to keep the city as a partner. The process of raising money to refurbish the Moran plant continues. The new owner of the Burlington Town Center plans to invest up to \$250 million in upgrades, including four stories of underground parking and mixed-income housing above the retail spaces. He has provided 150,000 dollars to the city for planning studies and is committed to a planning process that includes public participation. One hundred plus jobs would be created. Right now there is a vision, not a plan. Starting in January, there will be opportunities for public input. Blais reviewed charter changes on the March ballot. These included items that ask voters if they want to allow noncitizens on boards and commissions and on council and whether membership on boards and commissions should continue to be tied to political affiliation or be nonpartisan.

Q. Waterfront activity? A. Paul indicated that land grading and path work continues and a MOU has been signed with the sailing center and an ECHO project has been approved.

Q. Has the Democratic Party caucus been scheduled?

A. Blais said yes; check Front Porch Forum.

Q. What's the advantage of retaining a city stake in BT?

A. Karen Paul said it gave the city a chance to recoup some of the \$17 million loaned to BT and many in the city want to keep a municipal share.

Blais indicated that the next benchmark for the Moran project is January when more firm commitments from tenants will have to be shown.

Stephanie Seguino of the School Board gave an update. Howard Smith, previously of the Tarrytown and Canton, NY. School systems, has been appointed interim superintendent and started last week. A recent audit report confirmed that the budget procedure and its policies lacked consistency. There is now in place a budget freeze on all non-essential items. If the new budget is to keep the present level of services, it is anticipated that a 4.4% increase will be needed next year. There will be budget hearings held at BHS Nov. 17 and 18. Seguino said she feels optimistic with this new interim leadership and that given the high quality of applicants for

this job, she expects good applicants for the permanent superintendent position to start in July. Interviews to start in January.

Q. Is the salary competitive?

A. Collins was paid \$132,000. The new position is offered at \$145,000 with some flexibility. The fact that UVM has inflated the salary range for administrators has been “demoralizing.” But a good CEO can get more out of a budget and is worth the salary. The city is also a strong attraction, not just the pay. Candidates see the city with its diversity as a “social experiment.”

Amy Barcomb presented the plans for celebrating the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Burlington. It will take place Feb. 21, 2015 in Contois Auditorium. New chairs and other furnishings will be in place. The city’s logo is being redesigned and there will be a voting process.

Audience Questions and Comments:

Comment: I fear that the reconfiguration of Pine Street to slow traffic there will have an adverse effect on traffic on Shelburne Road.

Response: Paul indicated that Chapin Spenser could address this and Keating said that we’d try to schedule him for the Feb. NPA meeting.

Q. How can I find out more on parking issues?

A. Keating: See parkburlington.com, which has a site map. You can add comments there.

There will be no January meeting because our meeting day falls on New Years Day.

A motion to adjourn meeting adjourned was moved and accepted at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Charles Simpson