

Ward 6 Neighborhood Planning Assembly
Minutes from Meeting on February 5, 2015

The meeting began at 7:05 pm. with approximately 62 in attendance (standing room only). Peter Keating officiated.

1. Lisa Kingbury representing UVM provided an update on pending construction projects. The STEM project is in the permit stage and we are about to apply for Act 250 approval. A developer is being considered for the CBW project which will replace existing student beds at about an equal number with rooms to be leased off-campus during the construction phase. The permit process for the Alumni House has been started and meetings with the Summit Neighborhood Association held. Q. Will parking be increased at the Alumni House? A. Some will be added and UVM will use a shuttle system from remote parking for major events at the Alumni House.
2. Peter Owens (CEDO) and Don Sinex (BTC owner) provided information on the planning process for the Burlington Town Center. The City would participate in implementing the goal of enhanced street connectivity. CEDO and Mr. Sinex are working together following the Plan BTV outline on BTC and it is a public/private process involving TIF participation (tax increment financing). The public will continue to be involved. Council approved the planning process in December 2014. On February 18 there will begin a four day planning workshop focused on the mall including all-day workshops on 2/15 and 2/16 which will look at design, traffic impacts and public amenities among other aspects. Sinex stressed that the process of redesigning 5 acres of land in the middle of downtown was public. The present mall configuration is single-purpose, shopping, and his hope is to move toward mixed use. Initial public suggestions are posted on the city website and CEDO website where additional comments can also be posted. He is also available to meet with the public in his office. Q. Have you carried out such a public planning process before? A. No. Usually projects simply comply with zoning requirements. The more public input the less likely the DRB will turn down this project. Owens added that the project will still go through the normal regulatory process. Sinex: the property was bought not for its present configuration but for its potential. The timetable aims at completing plans in early to mid-summer, then the Act 250 process, then the DRB, with a construction start-date of winter 2016.
3. Nicole Losch (DPW) and Diana Colangelo (CEDO) presented information on the downtown and neighborhood parking studies underway. These are in the early phases but a draft is on the city website. The goal is a March date for submission of the final recommendations. Residents can comment online at via the City DPW website. Q. I understand you're recommending a fee for residents to park on local streets; do people agree with this? A. At a recent meeting on the subject, 2/3rds said they'd be willing to pay as much as \$10 a year for a parking sticker for otherwise unmetered city street parking. Q. How many were at that meeting? A. 100. Q. What is the incentive for people to support this possible system? A. On-street parking is a limited public resource. It is a privilege to have access to a space in front of your house. Q. Will permits be sold to out-of-towners? A. Yes, but we haven't thought this through yet. Q. Why go in this direction? A. To fund the program and to administer it. Q. Why not fund parking administration out of taxes and fines? A. Some would be. (Peter Keating): the details are still amorphous. Q. Prior to resident-only parking on my street there was a constant stream of cars at peak hours with people backing into my driveway to turn

around when they couldn't park; with resident-only parking this went away. A. The study is still in its initial phase; I'm taking notes. Q. What drives these suggested changes? A. We need a clear structure to guide the implementation of the resident-only parking system. Q. Why target our area for the study? A. CEDO, DPW and businesses began to look at our system a year ago. It wasn't working. We hired a consultant 7 months ago and they did parking counts. They found that 50% of the downtown spaces are private and in times of peak demand, these aren't fully utilized. City garages also had vacancies at those times. We were looking at the potential of complementary space users--an office using spaces during the day and a hotel at night. Private parking wasn't fully utilized. And we wanted to look at how to encourage people to walk to work or take buses or bikes. We want to work with private asset owners. In March there will be another public forum on parking: see parkburlington.com. Q. I understand you wouldn't be requiring developers to provide parking? A. Developers know the amount of parking they need and now regulations may be mandating more parking spaces than they actually need. Q. I was a member of a volunteer citizen group that studied exactly the same problems as did your consultant. This was 5 or 6 years ago. Have you read our study? A. No. Not me personally. Our consultant did. Q. What did you pay the consultant? A. \$90,000.

4. Karen Paul (Candidate for City Council, Ward 6) provided updates on Council activity. The Board of Finance audit for last year is done and will include a management letter with the annual report. Under Miro Weinberger we have a strong finance partner. We're addressing the pension process, with negotiations moving forward successfully. The BT lawsuit is behind us; there is now an advisory board and a better BT website. BT has 5,000 subscribers. Plan BTV is the reason we have Mr. Sinex here (in the city). We are moving forward with the Moran Plant and Waterfront changes and library planning. The next coffee-with-Miro will take place as scheduled. (Michelle Mraz, an Inspector of Elections): We need an additional Inspector of Elections in the Ward. We have two at the Edmunds School polling place but need three for subsequent elections. You can write in your name on the ballot to be considered as a candidate. We're especially looking for non-Democrats to add diversity. (Peter Keating): There will be a public meeting on residential parking February 10 at 10 am, at City Hall. There will be a series of public meetings on PlanBTV-South End Feb. 11-14. See City website.

At this point the Candidates Forum began, starting with mayoral candidates taken in alphabetical order.

5. Steve Goodkind: I've worked for the City for 32 years in various capacities, including Public Works Director. I'm offering a different vision based on five principles. 1) a neighborhood focus; 2) enhancing efficiency in what is a creaky city government; 3) approaching development in an organic, incremental way; 4) pursuing alternative income to the property tax; 5) open government, not one in continuous campaign mode. I would stop the South End Connector and seek an alternative. I'd slow the pace of development. CEDO needs to work on job creation and promoting affordable housing. Market-rate housing will take care of itself but there'll be no trickle-down effect (from it) helping affordable housing. It is not the time to sell BT. We should keep it and get back our investment; it's our money. We need to restructure city government as we did the Department of Public Works when I was there. "Burlington is not for sale."

6. Greg Guma: I'm an independent candidate. I ran for city council twice in the past and was endorsed then by Peter Clavelle, Howard Dean, and Bernie Sanders among others. The city's major partner is UVM and we need to recognize that. It seems to me that we are returning to the development policies that characterized the 1970s. Five or six acres are now at issue with the Burlington College campus and this development plan has been a five year process. I would bring together the stakeholders, not leave the decision to be made by the market. The creation of City Market is the model for city participation. I can say that as for the condition of roads and bridges, "I wasn't involved." I see the city on the verge of big changes. People say that gentrification is a threat; we need to think about imposing limits to growth and keeping community values. We need to preserve open space and avoid deals being made that we don't know about. Plan BTV is more a pitch than a plan. Notice on page 113 that it mentions adaptive reuse for a waterfront building and in another place labels this as a hotel. This idea was rejected 30 years ago and now its coming back. Look at zoning changes ZA-15-1 and ZA-15-2. These will allow housing in the South End which is not a good idea. There is the call for an arts complex in the discussion; we need to know more about this prior to the election. Back in 1976 I introduced the idea of neighborhood planning assemblies when I worked under Mayor Paquette. It didn't actually happen for many years but now it has lost its funding component. NPAs used to give grants to neighborhood projects. I would restore a budget of \$5,000 per NPA. We've gone too far in consolidating power in the office of the mayor. City heads answer to the mayor. We need to rethink lines of participation. I'd have the Police Commission elected on a ward basis to reflect city diversity and reduce alienation. A mayor can be a manager which is what a CEO is; what we need is community and growth isn't the most important mayoral task; it is one of many values.
7. Loyal Ploof: I'm a dog-walker, a film maker. You should never be asked to vote for any referendum more than twice. I was homeless 2 years ago until a landlord gave me a break. There is not enough affordable housing in this city. I'd make sure UVM makes it so that it's students want to live on campus. The Marketplace isn't for everyone. The smoking ban keeps out the homeless who do smoke. I'd bring back affordable stores. Let's make Burlington for everyone. Seniors have no place to meet with their friends (downtown). The Burlington College land sale shouldn't happen. We should fix Memorial Auditorium via a fund raiser. The same with roads and sidewalks. The pedestrian crossing lights are not long enough and light changes catch people half way across. We need more "no turn on red" designations. I support making the city council part-time. Council people should take the summer off and get recharged. Each committee should have clearly articulated goals. We need more surveys and open processes. On the Parkway, I say we need a public process and other ideas; let's put (that) public land back on the tax rolls. As for BT, I'd create a co-op so it stays public but without the taxpayers holding the bag. I'd lower taxes. Let's get away from government growth.
8. Miro Weinberger: Three years ago we were in challenging times, our bond status near junk level, projects stalled, our parks in trouble. People had lost trust in city hall. Now we have turned things around with parks, with our credit rating. Our bike path is being rebuilt, we're investing in sidewalks. Due to transparency and good management, we can lift our eyes to the horizon, to the future. I see a city that is affordable, walkable, bikeable, with a vibrant economy, one of inclusion and opportunity for all. While other peer cities have grown, we have lost out on downtown growth. There has been very little new housing downtown. The

conversion of our post-industrial waterfront is still incomplete. The city mall is still a problem. For 12 years we produced only a few new rental units that weren't subsidized. The average resident is paying 43% of their income on housing. We can compete in the global economy with a culture of entrepreneurship and the city can accelerate this. Memorial Auditorium leased its basement to a non-profit and this is now a hotbed of innovation, including Airshark that's building drones to photo orchards and making parts with a 3D printer. Burlington is poised to create jobs. We will be rolling out details on our attack on poverty involving an early learning initiative and high quality child care.

9. Questions of the candidates for mayor: Q. We know that storm water runoff is causing pollution. Will you work on a long-term plan? (asked of all candidates) A. Yes (from all). Q. Several discussion groups in the city are reading Naomi Klein's, *This Changes Everything*, which argues that we need a moratorium on growth. I urge everyone to read this or go to one of the several discussion groups. Q. Four years ago, Public Works didn't seem responsive to citizen input (addressed to Goodkind). Why would you treat people differently now? A. (Goodkind) We made customer service more responsive. The process is still incomplete and involves record keeping on 160 different things. I'm the most accessible department head the city has ever had. Q. How much development do we need? (Addressed to Guma and Weinberger). Weinberger: The on-going parking study pleases me; it is creative, open, and looks at a system now deeply flawed. There is underutilized parking in city areas and you paid for those areas. The fund to repair garages was empty and we had maintenance overdue. Our process led to money flowing in without a lot of controversy. Another example, the waterfront discussion related to the TIF process and how to allocate those funds. This took place after a public debate which allowed us to get consensus so the plan would have public support. Seventy percent voted for the plan. Guma: The Sinex process for public comments will take place largely during the weekdays when it's less accessible. We need to present development plans in plain English and not bring in outside consultants if there's local talent. Rebalancing power as well as wealth is important by re-invigorating the NPAs to make them more able to initiate change. I'd look for local solutions first and build employment into it.
10. Joan Shannon (candidate for City Council for South District - Wards 5 and 6). I'm a resident of Ward 5 but have in the past lived in Ward 6. Our daughter goes to Edmunds School. I've been on the City Council since our daughter was a baby and I'm now Council President. It is a pleasure to work with Mayor Weinberger; he listens. And it is a pleasure to work with Karen Paul who has raised the bar for constituent services. In the summer I'm a sailor. I'm a dog rescuer, an activity that started after Hurricane Sandy stranded pets. I've dealt with the Southern Connector and the plans there. I'm sensitive to Ward 6 issues. You can email me anytime. I listen. I want to make Burlington a better place. Q. Do you support charging residents for parking? A. I'm not familiar with that plan. (Weinberger answers): The parking plan is a process and it's not that far along. Q. We are approaching an election; what's your position (on parking)? A. (Weinberger): We are doing the study, a \$90,000 study for downtown and we don't want any changes to have negative effects on the residential neighborhoods. I don't have a position now but we may need tools to regulate parking.
11. Karen Paul: Speaking of parking, I spent much of the afternoon answering emails on that subject today. Here's my brochure which is available even though I'm running unopposed. Everyday it is an honor to be your city councilperson. I have three children who

went through Burlington High School. I'm a fifth generation Burlingtonian. My father was an alderman. Nothing is more important than effective finances and restoring the city's credit rating. But small problems are also important to me, such as fixing a resident's problem by adjusting street levels to better meet with driveways. I worked with Senator Leahy's office to limit truck traffic on South Willard Street, which took national legislative changes.

12. Stephanie Seguino (Candidate for School Committee, Ward 6): When I was first a candidate a year ago we found that there was a \$2.5 million deficit in the school budget and shortly after the superintendent left as did the finance director. We hired replacements for both and helped build a sound budget. The next budget will have a 1.7% increase. Kids shouldn't pay for adult mistakes. We will soon announce a permanent replacement for School Superintendent. The board is now cohesive. Four thousand children are in our schools. I'm running again, unopposed. I'm chair of the diversity and inclusion committee and we work to accomplish that goal. I want to work with the new superintendent to look at indicators as we go along step-by-step to see if we are achieving our goals.
13. Miriam Stoll (Candidate for School Committee, South District - Wards 5 and 6): I'm running for the district seat and I'm now a Ward 5 member of the board. We have made excellent progress. I have three children in the Burlington schools. I'm a school psychologist (in another district) and work at the Stern Center. Inclusion has been an interest of mine long before I came to the board. While serving, I've gained understanding. The next two years are important as we find if the bedrock we've built so far will pay off, educationally and financially. That's why I want to return to the board. I'm not afraid to ask the hard questions. I'm persistent and that's what the board needs. I'm a super hard worker. I synthesize information well. I want kids to succeed. I'm running for the South District seat. I will have a breakfast meeting at The Spot soon, which will be announced on Front Porch Forum.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:20.

Respectfully submitted, Charles Simpson