

Ward 6 Neighborhood Planning Assembly Minutes, Meeting of September 3, 2015

NPA 6 thanks Champlain College for the use without cost of the beautiful Morgan Room in Aiken Hall.

Approximately 24 people attended.

Meeting began at 7:05 pm. Peter Keating moderated; Jeremy Partyka videotaped for CCTV, Channel 17.

1. Minutes from the June 4, 2015 meeting passed without amendment.
2. Lisa Kingsbury presented news of recent changes on the UVM campus. Five hundred households will be given welcome bags and a letter from college administration and the student association as part of a good neighbor outreach. Dorms in the central campus are now demolished and the STEM project is underway. New student housing will be ready August 2017. This construction coincides with hospital construction and efforts are being coordinated with Ward 1 to minimize disruption. The Miller Farm on Spear St. has new barns and construction on Virtue Field has necessary permits. Slade Hall on the Redstone Campus will be renovated in late winter. The alumni house renovation is underway including tree removal for the new pavilion. Other trees were removed to make way for a circular driveway and parking area or because they were diseased or invasives. Faculty and students participated in the replacement landscape design. More trees will be planted than were removed. Meetings with neighbors on Harrington Terrace will continue. Question (Q): You need to bring back trees of appropriate size. Answer (A): We understand this. We now have 2500 trees on campus. Q. Why are invasives bad? Answer from audience: In the case of Norway maples, they outcompete sugar maples. Q. Cutting wholesale isn't proper; I'll never see fully mature replacement trees. There should be a phase-in, phase-out. Q. I expected a fully professional replacement landscape, as Champlain College has done. This is an historic building. A. We did have professionals working on the design as well as students and faculty. I don't have the name at hand. Q. You have too many hydrangeas and the Chinese elms are a weed tree. Q. There's been a big controversy on Front Porch Forum. The artist rendering on the web site is deceptive. I can't understand this error. A. The rendering was done for fund raising purposes prior to construction and is a conceptual plan. Q. Will UVM apologize to the neighbors? A. I apologize and will take the matter to the Foundation to update the rendering. Q. We need to re-define "invasive" to account for managed landscapes. A. I agree. We'll consider larger trees once Harrington Terrace has responded to the plan. In the meanwhile there'll be a temporary hedge along that border.
3. John Caulo discussed changes at Champlain College. Students have returned. Q. (Welcome) events should start at 10 am, not 8 am. The entire campus area is jammed up. A. Students are moving in. We have opened the new academic building on Maple and we appreciate the patience of neighbors during its construction. Q. There's a parking problem on Willard with cars there all day long. I've warned drivers. This is a 24 hr. zone but only residents in the midnight to 6 am time period. To whom should I call to complain? A. This is a public street and there's only so much we can

do. It could be cars of construction personnel. We will work to address this. Q. Some were faculty that should be in CC-designated areas. I expect you to follow up. A. We will; call 865 5470. This is my number. Q. I want to thank CC for the “art show” at Eagles Landing, please remove it. A. Yes. I want to introduce Donna Swartwout, Director of the Office of Student Conduct. Q. Who do we call about loud parties? A. The police. A. From Council member Karen Paul: I’ve had calls about cars blocking driveways. I call the landlord when you let me know. But you need to call the police and have the complaint logged on; they pass those to me and I contact landlords. This works.

4. David White of Planning & Zoning on Plan BTV South End. This is a sister plan to Plan BTV Downtown and Waterfront. We intend to address the entire city in such a planning process. While the plan includes the Enterprise District, it is much larger. It is in draft form and we will take comments from the public until October 1, 2015. Use the on-line comment form or send comments directly to my office. We want to preserve what’s unique here. This area contains jobs and innovative businesses as well as being an incubator space for the arts and entrepreneurs. We think of the area in parts, each being distinct. The plan is intended to promote thought and generate discussion. Among our goals is the improve interconnectivity of streets. The traffic conditions on Pine need to be improved and this is a framework in which to do it. Storm water issues are huge, especially with lake pollution issues with phosphorous from roadways and roofs. Please check out the plan on-line. Q. What happens at King and Maple and Pine? A. There will be signals. Q. Given Superfund pollution issues, how can you sell park development here? A. The toxics are underground or under a membrane and contained. We want to keep the integrity of this EPA approved solution. Any development of the Barge Canal site for a park will require a new planning process. Q. Will that include a Pine-to-bike path link? A. There is none now short of Lakeside and that’s a challenge but we want one. A. Won’t rents go up and studios be displaced if you add housing to the EZ? A. Housing has a tendency to increase rents. We want to preserve studios. Maybe we can use housing as leverage to preserve maker spaces. Now retail and offices are already driving up rents. For example, Citizen Cider has a retail component. What tools can we use to protect artist spaces? That’s our question. How may or may not housing be such a tool? Q. Will soil toxicity preclude housing. A. Yes, but soil contamination is limited and contained. You can’t have housing on such sites so we are looking at other areas, including outside the EZ. Q. Won’t housing encourage gentrification? A. Yes, if we just let it happen all over the South End. We are asking, are there ways to use housing as leverage? This should be part of the conversation. Q. The Champlain Parkway has been on the books for 50 years and its gets redesigned to be slower and slower and have components for bikes and walkers. At the same time you are neglecting Shelburne Road where there is no attention to the needs of walkers and bikers and cars travel at high speed. A. Yes. We need and are considering a joint plan with So. Burlington to address issues on Shelburne Road.
5. Genese Grill of the South End Alliance on Plan BTV South End. SEA is a group of business people, artists, manufacturers and craftspeople concerned about planned changes in the South End. Why should you, the larger city, also be concerned? While David White said the plan is just a document that asks questions, in reality it is the

basis for policy decisions. SEA focuses its attention on the EZ, the Arts and Enterprise Zone. This area is 4% of the city but contains 92% of the city's industry and more than 20% of all jobs. Business has moved there based on affordability as well as the absence of housing. Even with manufacturing-only zoning, some businesses now face complaints from residents in nearby housing. Ninety-six percent of the city is available for housing, as are surrounding towns. We are convinced that mixed-use in this industrial zone will lead to its destruction as a manufacturing area due to rising costs for rent and property. Housing brings in greater profits; any mixed use will soon disappear. All rents will go up. The second problem with mixed use is incompatibility. Residents complain about manufacturing in immediate proximity. Third, there is a manufacturing renaissance going on in the United States. Businesses there now want to grow. We have spoken with more than fifty businesses and that's what they tell us. Yet they have only 4% of the city in which to locate. The city's own study says that a naturally-occurring cultural district is destroyed by housing and once that happens, you can't bring it back. But that conclusion was left out of Plan BTV South End. For this reason, we are also concerned about the planning process itself. It is supposed to be participatory. Yet many of the businesses we spoke to hadn't heard of this plan. The city's own paper trail shows that their intent was to change to mixed use prior to the beginning of the participatory planning process. The technical consultants hired to facilitate public participation posted three alternative visions back in February of 2015, but each included housing in the EZ. They didn't get this idea from the people. Not a single one of the fifty businesses we spoke with told us they wanted housing here, yet they are important stakeholders being ignored. They ask us, where is the push for housing coming from? We need a study of the toxicity of soils. If there is indeed a housing crisis, we need an inventory of the number of affordable units needed as we plan. Yet without such a study, we see new housing being built all over the city. What's needed and what SEA has proposed is a steering committee of stakeholders to work over six months to a year on revisiting the south end plan. We have asked the Planning Commission to do this and include the fifteen or so organizations and individuals we see as stakeholders and experts. We want your help in telling council members you want this to happen as well. We need a revised impact study of the soil on the parkway right-of-way since the last EIS was done in 2006 and given the recent Leddy Park soil debacle. SEA asks for the process to be slowed down so that business and the arts can weigh in. We have a web site, southendalliance.org. Q. to White: What happens Oct. 1st? A. We will assemble the comments and devise a recommendation which will ultimately go the city council. Q. to White: Do other cities have much larger manufacturing-only zones? A. Yes, and sometimes they find their zones are too large. This creates an opportunity to do amazing things. We have case studies of other cities with such zones in our plan. Q. to White: Given the debacle of PCB-laced soil dumped in Leddy Park and originating from the bike path/Moran Plant/skate park area, are you taking soil samples looking for PCBs in the South End, specifically related to the Champlain Parkway? A. We can expect toxicity in disturbed areas of cities as well as naturally occurring lead and arsenic. These may be at different levels. There are state requirement to monitor this at Leddy. We are working with the state to better understand any threat and deal with background conditions in any site. Q. Are PCBs

part of background contamination? A. I don't know. A. Have you spoken to the school district about increased population in the South End in that the Champlain School is at capacity and students are now being relocated to Edmonds School? Some there are being relocated to Hunt Middle School. A. The School District will have to look into this issue. A. Comment by school board member Miriam Stoll: This hasn't been looked at yet. Q. If the city can introduce mixed-use zoning in a manufacturing district, what's to stop them introducing it in a residential district? Comment from the audience: Ward 5 will meet on Wednesday at 7 pm at DPW on Pine St. to discuss these same issues with some of these same speakers. Comment by Grill: Ward 2/3 will meet on the 10th at the McClure Multigenerational Center on No. Winooski to also discuss the South End Plan with these same speakers.

6. Council update: Karen Paul said her newsletter should arrive in mailboxes tomorrow. Topics include the Cliff St. sidewalk and the Willard St. roundabout. The first is halted awaiting components for a retaining wall. The Town Center project continues and TIF will be involved. A ballot item on this downtown TIF will go to voters in the spring. Burlington Telecom has a positive cash flow and 5300 subscribers as well as 34% of the potential market. Negotiations on city pensions are making headway. The Waterfront project components are moving toward approval at various rates, with the sailing center the most advanced. Council approved a component of the latter on Tuesday. Noise is an issue in Ward 6. I'll post on Front Porch Forum a number to call. I contact landlords every Monday about noise. If tenants comply informally they can avoid a \$300 fine when the police are involved. The Residents-Only Parking Advisory Group meeting has been postponed. Their input has helped the city understand that parking needs to be addressed city-wide and not in isolation downtown or just in the neighborhoods. DPW is empowered to set the rules but council has asked that they also have a vote on any plan. The new police chief has moved into a home on So. Union in Ward 6. Introduce yourselves. He'll have a coffee hour at The Spot soon as will the Mayor. Dates to be posted. Q. What's the status of the city-UVM agreements? A. They are up for review but with a new UVM president, we have postponed formalizing new agreements. The relevant council committee on this has met only once. Q. Norm Baldwin (of Public Works) tells me he's looking at a redesign of Lower Ledge Road. Pedestrian crossing from the Greek Church to the school is impossible. We need flashers. Can you get them? A. There's news about the roundabout for that spot in my newsletter. I agree. Rapid flashers have been well-received. But they cost \$10,000 a set. The city needs a policy on them. There are potential grant sources and I've asked DPW to explore this. They would be a temporary solution until the roundabout is done. I'll work on it.
7. Miriam Stoll, Burlington School Board: School is back in session. There's a new elevator in Edmonds. We have a new superintendent who is fabulous. Visa costs were more than we expected but with new fiscal systems in place, we know what things cost and where the money comes from. I'll invite him to a coming NPA. Q. What costs are involved? A. We budgeted \$40,000 for the search and used \$25,000. Another \$15,000 was spent on obtaining the visa and another \$15,000 went for legal expenses. This came from money set aside for legal work. Q. What will happen if there are additional legal expenses? A. That won't be a problem if we are careful. Q. Isn't the candidate responsible for legal costs or obtaining his visa? I read the

contract and that's what it says. A. No, only for his moving costs. Q. Please check this out and get back to me (from audience member). A. Yes I will. In addition, we are spending \$75,000 to hire help formulating a 10 year capital plan. Our facilities are close to capacity. We need to take a coordinated look at our buildings, including high school needs. Q. I met the new superintendent and was incredibly impressed. He's worth it. A. The hiring committee had 17 members and included board, community, and staff members.

8. Audience member Ibnar Avilix announced that a CCTV discussion of the Leddy Park/bike path soil issue with State employee and expert Hugo Martinez Cazón is available on <https://www.cctv.org/watch-tv/programs/development-brownfields-urban-living>
9. Motion to adjourn was approved at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Charles Simpson