



# Neighborhood Planning Assembly Minutes – Full Notes

**Date of Assembly:** 9/9/2015

**Start Time:** (*Commence*): 7:05 PM

**Finish Time:** (*Adjourn*): 9:10 PM

**Location:** DPW Building, Pine St.

**Notetaker:** Nate Orshan

## **Steering Committee Members in Attendance:**

Alec Bauer  
Bill Keogh  
Hans Manske  
Abby Mattera  
Elisa Nelson  
Nate Orshan

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### **(1) Construction Plans - Chapin Spencer, Director, Department of Public Works**

Announced that the city Council has approved construction plans for the intersection at Pine and Lakeside streets. "It's a home run". Scheduled for this fall for into the winter.

Q: Any recommendations for Pine St. roundabouts?

A: They were determined not to be feasible. We're improving this signal to be consistent with the future plans for the Champlain Parkway.

### **(1) City Market CoOp South End Proposal - Pat Burns, Project Manager for Store Expansion; John Tashiro, General Manager**

#### **Summary:**

Presented initial plans for new grocery store on Flynn Ave. Said that they're beginning to seek input from the community and will return in late Winter for more input.

(Project manager Pat Burn's the former general manager.)

We'd like to seek your support for building the store.

We're at beginning of the process. We want to seek input. We want to meet the needs of the community. We'll come back in late Winter to seek more input.

The location's not currently zoned for a grocery store.

We've been looking to come down to this area. Market studies three years ago indicated that 60% of people coming into our current location were headed back to this general vicinity (i.e., the South End). We spent a time looking at the Morton parcel on Sears Lane, but there were a lot of legal issues that made it difficult.

Our lot's about 4.1 acres and encompasses the salt sheds. It stops just before where Petrocliffs is. It currently is an antiques store.

The new store would be a little bit bigger than our current one. We need to work with Planning and Zoning department and understand the process. We'll appear before the Planning Commission to ask for a zoning change.

Phase 1 & 2 environmental studies: We're starting the research already.

Third phase: community engagement. We want to ask, "What kinds of services would you want us to offer?"

There are currently 60 tons of rock salt in the shed, so we can't even take possession of property until June 2016, even if they use all the salt. They're working on a facility in Shelburne that'll be more effective.

Our current store is 12K sq ft of retail.

We'll be able to have ~100 parking spots.

Q: Get 2 houses south of property?

A: No! It's probably about 1.75-2 acres that we need to figure out what to do with. My primary focus is the grocery store.

Q: I love the stores that are there and it's a beautiful façade. Is there a way in this conversation to retain them? There's a lot of character.

A: Wish I could say yes, but the requirements of the store and the lot are pretty prohibitive. There's still stuff "to be determined"

Q: My concern is that this might set a precedent for how we treat these old industrial buildings in the south end.

Q: How will the traffic be handled on Flynn Ave.?

A: A new stoplight.

Q: This seems like it'll have a good parking lot but not great public transportation. A: We have bike path access. CCTA's shed's right across the street. But it's a great question, and we have to work on it.

Q: These buildings are blighted. I walk by every day. Will this happen at same time as parkway.

A: They're projecting they start pkwy in 2018, so...

Q: It'd be great if the entryway from the street could accommodate bikes coming in & out in a safe way.

A: We know Briggs St will need to be improved. We'll certainly try to accommodate it.

Q: How many tractor-trailers/day, & when show up?

A: Typically 6 am, done by 11 am. We have many more vendors that are small deliveries, so typically it's 8 tractor-trailers/day maximum.

Q: I'm concerned about the traffic light and traffic timing. It's a challenge if you start putting more traffic down Flynn.

A: We're initiating a traffic study now.

We're hoping to draw people FROM the current store to the new one.

Q: how big is the green square in the picture?

A: About 2 acres

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### **(3) PlanBTV-SE Presentation & Questions - David White, Director, Planning + Zoning (P+Z)**

#### **Summary:**

Presented current draft plan of proposed zoning changes in the South End, stressing that the plans are "aspirational". Said that P+Z is taking public comments through October 1, after which the Planning Commission will create another draft of the plan, followed by another period of comments. Then the final, revised draft will be forwarded to the city Council with a recommendation.

We did a master plan for Downtown and Waterfront. This is our first effort to dig into greater detail and understand what's going on, what are the challenges, what are the opportunities, and what's the consensus for the future?

What's the next place to get a handle on? The South End's an obvious example. It's evolved from traditional manufacturing to industrial and other artisan activity and the retail services that support them.

We did a fair amount of data collection. Spent better part of 8-9 months looking at traffic & transportation, development & real estate markets, brown fields and superfund sites (the history of contamination goes hand-in-hand with these types of places), and stormwater (Important issue for city & region, i.e., understanding impact of urban development on runoff. What's state of city's infrastructure? Opportunities?)

Key principles:

- Preserve what's unique and authentic
- Preserve and expand affordable studio and maker space
- Reinforce and grow the SE as a center for innovative biz and institutions
- Improve access to the lake, parks, and bike path
- Enable underutilized places (e.g., the barge canal site) to be repurposed in

- Improve conditions related to traffic, bike safety, and the walking environment
- Improve stormwater management

We hope the South End will continue to be center for biz and innovation. It's an important part of Burlington's & Chittenden County's economy.

Re transportation: Every time you give someone a new option, it diffuses car traffic, spread its out, & encourages people to use non-car transportation.

(Encourages redeveloping the parking lot across the street)

Plan is broken into components.

Most controversial thing is conversation about housing. We know there's a huge need. The plan asks, Is housing appropriate in, around, and outside of the Enterprise Zone? Today, zoning doesn't allow for housing. Are there opportunities for certain types of housing that would address that kind of demand? Can we use the market force of new housing to create new housing for, e.g., the artists. The fact that we have an informed and intelligent conversation about it is important.

The plan that emerged from the February process: Break EZ into four separate areas.

#### **Arts Hub between Maple St. and Locust St.**

There is a high concentration of artists' work spaces. The focus is on preserving affordability.

Blodgett property's up for sale: We identify that area as great for Lake parkland.

Barge canal: It's a superfund site. It still gets used by a lot of people, which is not what the EPA wants to hear about, because they're concerned about public health and threats to the integrity of the current safety measures.

Now, there *are* examples where these kinds of sites are carefully and successfully managed. We have a chance to appreciate both the natural and the cultural history of that area.

#### **The "maker'hood" between Locust St. and Sears Lane**

Lots of surface parking lots that could be redeveloped and create opportunities for re-use and better stormwater management. The area's currently not friendly to walking. Public parking would "absorb" a lot of the car parking. This is also an area where we could zone for housing (and there are pros & cons).

#### **Englesby: Sears Lane to Home Ave.**

Could we ask some higher-density housing stock, e.g., on St. Anthony's property?  
Note: city Market would be between Champlain Parkway and the train tracks.

(How we treat Shelburne St. is important, and we've included it for a future study in conjunction with So. Burlington.)

### **Industrial Pkwy south of Home Ave.**

There are current manufacturers who might be interested in expanding. If they shared a parking structure, that would free up their current parking lots.

Now: We're looking for sense of priority. These plans are aspirational. They present a vision for how zoning could be, and give us a chance to establish priorities. E.g., is it to preserve arts & creative community? We put things in here that might happen in next 5 years...or 50.

A good example of this is the fact that the Downtown & Waterfront plan showed Pine St. "breaking through" the Mall. Nobody thought it might actually happen. But within a year of it being adopted, the new owners looked at the plan and said, "That's a vision I'd like to create."

We're taking public comments through 10/1. Offer comments online. We want to hear from you. After 10/1, The Planning Commission will consider all comments, then put their own stamp on it. And then there'll be ANOTHER draft of the plan, followed by another period of comments. Then the final, revised draft's forwarded to the BTVCC with a recommendation.

Q: Oil tank area? It's a low-value property.

A: At end of Flynn Ave? It's been zoned for residential since 2008.

Q: How much runoff comes from a parking lot? Internet says a person uses 80 gals water/day.

A: The question is, are there opportunities to reduce stormwater? When you put up a new building, you have the opportunity to start *managing* the water in an entirely different way than just by having it run off the impervious surfaces in sheets.

Q: Where does money for parks come from?

A: Development increases value of land, which increases, in turn, the city's tax base. That new revenue can be turned around into, e.g., new parks, sidewalks, etc.

Questions include, "Do we have the resources *today* to acquire land for parks?" Q: Is there current funding for, e.g., barge canal cleanup?

A: Not currently, but we'd end up talking to EPA, which might have money to help alleviate some of the capital expenses.

Q: What's medium vs. low density?

A: It's the number of dwelling units/acre.

- low: 7 units/acre
  - medium: 20 units/acre
  - high: 40 units/acre
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#### **(4) Position Statement/Presentation on PlanBTV-SE & Questions**

##### **(a) Genese Grill, South End Alliance (SAE)**

**Summary:**

Presented position of SAE, stating that, while it is in favor of housing in other parts of the South End, city, and neighboring regions, it opposes zoning changes that would allow housing development in the Enterprise Zone. Said that the SAE is asking city to create new committee of diverse stakeholders to better assess the PlanBTV recommendations.

SAE represents artists and small businesses.

The Enterprise Zone (EZ) is 4% of city but 92% of industrial space, virtually the only part in city where it occurs. If we take parts of it out, that's shrinking the industrial opportunities.

We were concerned when push to do housing came up. Where was it coming from? We suspected and learned from talking to experts (e.g., Bruce Seifer), that when you bring in mixed-use, the artists leave because the rents go up. Housing earns developers much more money than mixed use, so, if they've the choice, they'll always go for housing.

We are in favor of housing in other parts of the SE & the city and in neighboring regions (which hinges on better public transportation). We're glad to hear (i.e., from David White) that there are pros *and* cons!

We're hoping to move forward in this process and in city plans. At the February PlanBTV workshop, planners came to a "public participation process", but all the plans already had housing in the EZ and the parkway. It didn't seem like much of a choice.

Even after hundreds of comments on the first web tool, the draft plan came out with pretty much the same suggestions as were presented before. It became clear that it did not reflect most of the comments on the web tool.

We're hoping for a better process. For example, we were told that businesses wanted housing for employees. But Charles Norris-Brown {see below} and I talked with people. Not a single business, small and big, said that they'd asked the city for housing. One large employer asked, "Who or what's behind this push for housing?" We said, "We heard *you* are!" Most of businesses didn't talk to the city and didn't even know what PlanBTV was.

We're asking for city to make a committee of diverse stakeholders. We don't only want them to have a voice for the sake of saying that there's a process. For example, in Ward 6, if they don't know that the schools are at capacity, then they can't do a good job of ascertaining whether we can handle more students. It's about having a planning process that takes into account more sustainability.

Our sense is that the city's starting to hear the public outcry, but there's a long way to go. We're asking for...

- Real, open discussion
- Studies of what effect of changing zoning would be
- Addressing concerns about the barge canal
- A discussion about ameliorating the Champlain Parkway plan

The thing is that there's been a huge missed opportunity, because there are local experts that could have been used, but they haven't been utilized.

Please DO comment on PlanBTV; the planning commission does use it!

Visit us on SouthEndAlliance.org.

To the Ward 5 NPA steering committee: I hope you'll consider an NPA resolution on preserving the EZ!

**(b) Amey Radcliffe, SAE**

Reporting on planning commission last night: We didn't get the most favorable response to our request based on the timing. We were heard out. We think it's a valid idea to incorporate a new group of diverse community members.

I got sense from members that there's more appreciation for preserving the EZ. If there's a lot of other place that can be built first, focus on *those* for housing and leave the EZ alone.

Re housing: Yes, there's a housing need in Burlington for affordable and belowmarket-rate housing, e.g., for section-8. If that is the need, then that is what should be built. It's messed up that only 15% of a new development would be affordable. How could we re-design the codes to build what is really needed?

**(c) Charles Norris-Brown, SAE and Vermont Community Alliance  
for Public Transportation**

With better public transportation, we could start moving housing outside the city, for example, the K-mart property. We'd like to empower the EZ.

We've met with almost every business here. We see the makers as part of the sustainable economy. Burlington could become a model for the country. One way: Make the EZ do what it does now...better. Focus on industry and creative economy.

## (5) Open Questions and Moderated Discussion on PlanBTV-SE

### Summary:

Many attendees voiced opposition to "rushing into" policy changes that would allow housing development in the Enterprise Zone and exacerbate the potentially-negative effects of gentrification.

Charlie Messing showed pictures of the historic South End and advocated to put PlanBTV on hold and get more input.

Councilor Joan Shannon emphasized that adopting PlanBTV would not be the same as changing the zoning. Announced that she and Councilor Chip Mason (also in attendance) would be willing to put a resolution forward at the next City Council meeting to remove from PlanBTV-SE the recommendation for new housing in the Enterprise Zone.

Q: Is there a specific recommendation from Goody Clancy to change zoning? David Smith: The plan says: In certain places and in certain situations, yes, some types of housing. But it's not a one-size-fits all approach. Re artists area, it talks about work/live housing. Some artists like that.

Amey: On p.24 (?) it shows a dotted line around Burton & sign "housing prohibited", but the rest looks like it's OK. So I'd say that constitutes a proposed zoning change to allow housing!

David: But it doesn't make any recommendations.

Q: I live on Ferguson. In my neighborhood, we're concerned about the scale of that St. Anthony property development. When I look at that document, I feel divorced from other policy goals we might be trying to achieve. It'd be great for there to be a process for us to understand. Are there affordable & senior housing needs being addressed? My address to planning is to try to contextualize the recommendations.

David: I appreciate it! Here in Burlington we have an inclusionary zoning percentage, but I heard Amey say, What about folks who need workforce housing?

Genese: We've been asking for a context. How many units of what kind? Q: And how would it contribute to the housing need?

Erik Eskilsen, Lyman Ave: I appreciate David's comments re what are our priorities. It's obvious that we have so many problems in the EZ today! E.g., fixing Feldman's access. What's the rush for housing?

Joan Shannon, Burlington City Council: Adopting the plan isn't the same as a change of zoning. Personally, I don't think it's a good idea in the EZ, and that's a change of opinion for me from years ago. At the same time, we can't glorify the EZ as being divorced from residential. There's no great wall of China between the EZ and our homes. (For example, the recent kerfuffle re Zero Gravity wanting to have live music, and Birt)

In 2007, we allowed offices. If we didn't have some gentrification, we couldn't have all the things we like, for example, New World Tortilla.

This NPA years ago had a vision for a mixed-use plan in the EZ!

Comment from resident: Gentrification has a negative connotation.

Joan: We may like things the way they are, but things *are* changing.

Erik: The changes that many of us like have already created consequences that we must deal with. I don't like the way traffic's moving up and down Pine St.

Amey: I agree. Maybe PlanBTV's too aspirational and we're not dealing with the problems we're already having. Re Zero Gravity: Had zoning thought about creating a buffer zone between housing and a noxious fume generator, maybe they shouldn't have been there. That was a chance to exercise a restriction. *That's* the kind of careful stuff, working with the stuff we have right now.

Joan: What you perceive as the middle...is our back yard.

Alec Bauer, Ward 5 NPA Steering Committee: Many of these spaces have been quiet for years but had industrial history. Now residents are coming to terms with new industrial uses.

Comment from resident: In industrial days, if you lived behind a factory, there'd be no sympathy. That kind of approach isn't acceptable today. Today, resident's expectations are diff than what they used to be.

Alec: Right, we have to choose *some* of this.

Q: I've lived here since '73. I'm a photographer, and I had a business in Howard Space. There used to be worker housing for factories (in the 1920s). I'd like us to put it together to stop talking about housing in the EZ. Why can't we just eliminate Goody Clancy's idea?

David: We're going to have another draft of this plan.

Q: My impression from last night's planning commission meeting was that not a single person on the commission was in favor.

Charlie Messing: (shows pics of historic South End and a book that appears to be a prior incarnation of the PlanBTV) "'Maker'hood'? Somebody "makered" that up! (Mocks a lot of the PlanBTV statements.) We need to put the plan on hold and get more input.

David: Without housing, there'll continue to be adaptive re-use of the existing buildings.

Q: Where did PlanBTV SE come from? Who brought this to the fore?

Genese: We keep hearing the mayor saying "the South End needs to change". We can look at the way gentrification is good and is bad.

David: The question is, does the community like where it's headed? When you talk about ratcheting things back, that goes directly to, e.g., City Market. We have to understand where are the balancing points here.

Q: Are we trying to re-zone this neighborhood? I don't wanna have a multitude of traffic in my neighborhood

Alec: All this are comments that P&Z needs to hear from you.

Joan: Chip & I would be willing to put a resolution forward at next City Council meeting to remove housing from EZ from PlanBTV SE. We've heard from people about this, and we realize it's becoming a distraction.

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**(6) NPA Related Open Forum and Closing**

Two Birchcliff-neighborhood residents complained that a recent request from Zero Gravity on Pine St. to begin offering indoor and outdoor entertainment was inappropriate due to the business' proximity to the residential neighborhood.

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**Action Items for the Steering Commission:**

None.

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