



## **WARD 5 NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING ASSEMBLY MEMBER'S HANDBOOK & BY-LAWS**

Revised: 8/1997, 1/17/2002, 5/16/2019

“The Neighborhood Planning Assemblies shall... help provide citizens with information concerning City programs and activities; help obtain citizen views of City needs, and help provide citizens with an opportunity to participate in making recommendations with respect to governmental decisions, including the allocation of revenues.”

Burlington City Council Resolution September 1982

### **WHAT ARE THE NPAs?**

Neighborhood Planning Assemblies (NPAs) are grassroots, neighborhood organizations that were established in each of Burlington's Wards to encourage resident participation in City government. Working as neighborhood advocacy groups, NPAs improve communication between the residents of Burlington and City government through regular meetings scheduled in each Ward. NPAs serve as organized, democratic forums where neighbors can learn about public issues that affect them, and advise the City of their concerns and needs. From stop signs to major development projects, the NPAs offer you an innovative way to get involved in neighborhood and City issues and make your opinions heard.

This handbook, intended for NPA members, or anyone interested in learning more about the NPAs, contains a short description of what the NPAs do and how they function. At the back is a copy of the By-Laws for your Ward.

### **WHAT DO THE NPAS DO?**

#### **Resolutions**

NPAs are able to influence public policy in several ways. One of the most effective ways they can express their sentiments and concerns is in the form of a resolution. These resolutions are distributed to the

Mayor, City Councilors, and appropriate City Departments, ensuring that elected officials and Department Heads know how their constituents feel about issues while projects are formulated and final decisions are made. It is customary for NPAs to share their resolutions with one another so that everyone is kept informed about prevalent opinions on issues or projects of public concern.

### Community Development Block Grants

In addition to their advisory role, NPAs are also involved in decisions regarding community development and participate directly in the allocation of Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds by electing representatives to sit on the CDBG advisory board. CDBG funds are used to support many critical human service, housing, neighborhood, and community development needs in Burlington.

NPAs are also called upon to elect representatives to serve on various advisory groups and task forces in the City, particularly those related to future infrastructure projects. Such involvement is important because it assures that residents, representing the opinions of their Ward, are participating in public policy decisions.

### Community Engagement

Many NPAs serve an educational function as well by sponsoring candidate debates or presentations on current issues and, at certain times, may meet together to address issues that affect larger areas of the City. Online postings, video streaming of meetings, and block parties have been additional ways some NPAs have helped foster involvement and a feeling of community in their neighborhood.

Each of Burlington's neighborhoods has its own unique history, resources, and problems to be solved, and the Neighborhood Planning Assemblies reflect this diversity. Because many of the NPAs grew out of already existing neighborhood groups, each has a different character and a different approach to resolving issues. What the NPAs share, however, is the power and resources of their members and the ability to involve people in the process of City government. The more active and committed the members are, the more powerful your NPA will become.

## **Ward 5 Neighborhood Planning Assembly By-Laws**

### **PREAMBLE:**

New England has been called the cradle of American democracy because it is the home of town meeting government. These community gatherings reflect a unique heritage of spontaneous decision-making, volunteer activism, and grass roots constituency vital to the character of the State of Vermont. The Neighborhood Planning Assemblies make it possible for the residents of Burlington to participate in this tradition in a municipal setting, where citywide meetings are not practical.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES:**

The Guiding Principles of the Ward 5 NPA are that:

The NPA will provide a safe and welcoming forum where **all** residents can actively share their voice about issues that matter to them, and where they can learn from the voices of others.

The NPA will cultivate involvement by a diverse spectrum of community members through active outreach and through eliminating barriers to participation.

The NPA will operate in a manner that models respectful, inclusive, and culturally and economically aware practices.

The NPA will be a fun, creative, and vital organization that values & benefits from the multitude of perspectives shared by those who participate.

The NPA will be non-partisan and will make no endorsement of political candidates.

With these goals and principles in mind, and in accordance with the City Council resolution establishing the Neighborhood Planning Assemblies, we, the residents of Ward 5, hereby adopt the following structure and By-laws.

#### **ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP**

All Ward 5 residents who are 14 years or older have a voting membership in our Neighborhood Planning Assembly (NPA). To facilitate attendance at NPA meetings, meeting places must be accessible to all. The NPA will work to accommodate member needs, such that all Ward 5 residents are able to attend NPA meetings.

#### **PARTICIPATION.**

At every meeting, the Steering Committee shall provide a sign-in sheet on which all attendees will be asked to provide their name and address. Whenever practicable, every meeting agenda shall also include time for attendees to introduce themselves to the NPA.

Every eligible member may:

- a. Participate in meetings of the Ward 5 NPA;
- b. Cast one vote on all matters properly put before the membership for consideration;
- c. Nominate and participate in the election of the Steering Committee; and
- d. Serve on the Steering Committee if chosen.

#### **PARTICIPATION BY NON-MEMBERS.**

Non-members may attend and participate in NPA meetings, but may not vote. If both members and non-members are seeking to participate in a meeting, preference may be provided to members at the Moderator's discretion.

#### **ARTICLE II: STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The Assembly will elect no less than three (3) and no more than seven (7) Steering Committee members to serve at any one time. They will be elected at a regularly scheduled meeting between March 1<sup>st</sup> and April 30<sup>th</sup> of each calendar year.

TERMS. Terms will begin May 1<sup>st</sup> of that year and end April 30<sup>th</sup> of the next year. Steering Committee members will serve for one-year terms. After a Steering Committee member serves for five consecutive one-year terms, they must step down from the Steering Committee for at least one full year before becoming eligible to serve on the Steering Committee again, except as set forth in Article III with respect to filling vacancies.

QUORUM. A majority of the members of the NPA Steering Committee shall constitute a quorum for any meeting of the Steering Committee, provided that all members of the NPA Steering Committee have been notified at least 48 hours in advance of any scheduled meeting. Absent such prior notification, a quorum shall not be possible unless all Steering Committee members attend.

VOTING. All decisions of the Steering Committee shall be decided by a simple majority of members present at a meeting of the Steering Committee, a quorum having been established.

DUTIES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE. The Steering Committee shall be responsible for the general management of the affairs of the NPA in accordance with these By-laws, including carrying out the following duties:

- a. Meeting Management: arranging, advertising, convening, coordinating, and facilitating regular and special meetings of the NPA, including the setting of the meeting agendas, the booking of meeting space, and the scheduling of meeting guests and speakers.
- b. Neighborhood Outreach: sharing of information, meeting schedules and NPA activities with NPA members, Ward residents, and the general public.
- c. Municipal Monitoring and Oversight: paying regular attention to actions and plans of City Departments, Commissions, the City Council, and the Department of Planning and Zoning, for the purpose of keeping Ward 5 informed of events, investments, and proposed projects that might affect the lives of people living there.
- d. Proper Recording: taking of meeting minutes, recording of all Votes and Resolutions, proper distribution of all Resolutions, and coordination with the Community and Economic Development Office on recording of meeting minutes.

#### KEY POSITIONS WITHIN THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Members of the Steering Committee shall appoint from among themselves at least one person to each of the following positions: Moderator, Neighborhood Liaison, Engagement Coordinator, and Representative to All Wards. Any member of the Steering Committee may be appointed to any one of these positions, except that a current member of the Burlington City Council may not be appointed as Moderator. These appointments can rotate between meetings.

#### DUTIES.

- a. Moderator. Facilitate most regular and special meetings of the NPA. To serve as a Moderator, the Steering Committee member should have some formal training or other relevant experience in being a moderator.

b. Neighborhood Liaison. Receive and review agendas of the City Council, Commissions, and Boards. Attend meetings of these municipal bodies, as necessary. Keep NPA members and Steering Committee members informed on municipal issues and actions affecting the Ward. Keep the Community and Economic Development Office and other City departments informed about projects, decisions, and concerns of the NPA.

c. Representative to All Wards. Regularly attend meetings with the steering committee members from all other wards (“All Wards”); stay informed of all issues taken up by All Wards. Keep NPA members and Steering Committee members informed of actions and decisions of All Wards. Vote on behalf of the NPA, representing the NPA’s interests and the Ward's interests before All Wards.

d. Engagement Coordinator. Advertise regular meetings to the community. Ensure technology is available to stream regular meetings, and monitor any video stream for questions from the public. Take minutes of regular meetings and meetings of the Steering Committee.

### **ARTICLE III: RECALL OF STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS & FILLING VACANCIES**

Any elected member of the Steering Committee will be subject to recall proceedings on the written petition of ten (10) members of the Assembly, explicitly stating the nature of the complaints. This petition will be presented to the Steering Committee for consideration of the membership at least ten (10) days in advance of a regular meeting. The Steering Committee shall place the recall question on the next regular meeting agenda, and the question will require a majority vote to effect a recall. Should a Steering Committee member be recalled and the recall results in there being no Steering Committee members, a replacement can be elected at the same Assembly meeting.

Except as set forth above, any vacancy will be filled by election no sooner than the next regular meeting. Members will be notified of the vacancy in accordance with the warning provisions of Article IV. A vacancy may be filled by a member who is term-limited pursuant to Article II.

### **ARTICLE IV: MEETINGS**

Regular Meetings will be held no less than four times a year for the purpose of discussing and acting on the Agenda, making decisions, hearing assigned reports, discussing new business, and conducting the general business of the Ward 5 Neighborhood Planning Assembly according to its By-Laws.

Steering Committee Meetings will be held between each regular meeting, or as needed, for the purpose of setting the next meetings agenda, planning future NPA meetings or activities, and carrying out other duties of the steering committee.

All Meetings will be open to the public and minutes will be recorded and made available at the meeting immediately following. City officials, department heads, commissioners, and other resource people may be called as required to aid NPA deliberations at any meeting.

Warnings will be given at least ten (10) days in advance of any meeting and the warning will be widely advertised.

A Quorum of voting members must be present at regular meetings for decisions on Ward 5 business to be made. A quorum is achieved when voting members who are not on the steering committee

outnumber Steering committee members present. For example, if two steering committee members are present, there must be at least three voting members present who are not on the Steering Committee.

If the Moderator finds that a quorum is not present, they may take measures to obtain a quorum. A motion to contact absent members **to** ask them to attend would represent such a measure.

Agenda. The agenda for a NPA meeting is created by the Steering Committee prior to the NPA meeting. The agenda is published as part of a meeting's warning. The agenda for a meeting is made up of items proposed by:

The Steering Committee, based upon input from NPA members and the community;

Items requested by the Mayor, City Officials, department heads, commissioners, and/or resource people;

A majority vote of the City Council; or

Petition of at least ten (10) Ward 5 NPA members, provided the petition is delivered to the Steering Committee at least ten (10) days in advance of any meeting.

At any regular meeting, any member of the Ward 5 NPA community may add an item to that meeting's agenda, provided such a proposal receives a majority vote.

A reasonable period of time will be provided on the agenda as an open forum to encourage members to frankly express their views and concerns on the management of the Assembly and on topics of public interest and need.

Voting on all financial matters will require a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote. All other votes, except by-laws' changes, will require a simple majority. Voting will be done by a show of hands. However, voting can be by secret ballot if requested and approved by a majority hand vote. Proxy Voting will not be permitted.

#### **ARTICLE V: AMENDMENT**

These By-Laws may be amended at a regular meeting. Written notice setting forth the proposed changes must be warned at least 20 days before the meeting.

A vote of two-thirds of the members of the Ward 5 Neighborhood Planning Assembly present and voting will be necessary for amendment to these By-Laws.

#### **ARTICLE VI: MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS**

**NON-DISCRIMINATION.** In accordance with the guiding principles of these NPA By-laws, the Ward 5 NPA will promote and work to sustain an inclusive participatory environment that does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, veteran status, or disability.

**COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC MEETING REQUIREMENTS.** The Ward 5 NPA must act in compliance with all public meeting requirements. See the City Attorney's Office for a listing of these requirements.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST. Members of the Ward 5 NPA have a responsibility to their NPA to fairly review and vote on matters directly affecting their Ward without prejudice or bias. If a NPA member believes that a conflict of interest could exist with any agenda or voting item, that member should take the responsibility to disclose this conflict, and address the issue with the NPA. If upon disclosure, the quorum wants to include this member in the discussion and/or voting process, the NPA must have concluded that no conflict of interest exists. Failure of a member to disclose a potential conflict of interest could result in a null/void vote or cause the need for further discussion or re-vote on a particular issue affected.