



CITY OF BURLINGTON, VERMONT
**CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT &
NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE**
:/o Community & Economic Development Office
City Hall, Room 32 • 149 Church Street • Burlington, VT 05401
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Councilor Adam Roof, Chair, Ward 8
Councilor Sara Moore, Ward 3
Councilor Karen Paul, Ward 6

Attendance: Chair Adam Roof, Councilors and Committee Member Sara Moore and Karen Paul, Councilor Richard Deane, Councilor Dave Hartnett, Councilor Sharon Bushor; CEDO staff Marcy Esbjerg, Gillian Nanton, and Ian Jakus; Burlington Police Department (BPD) staff Lacey-Ann Smith; Jonathan Chapple-Sokol, Caryn Long, Stephen Marshall, Alex Friend, Erhard Mahnke

Thursday, November 16th 2017
6:00 – 7:00 PM
City Hall Conference Room 12 (CR 12)

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

1. Review Agenda (5 minutes)

- Meeting called to order at 6:00 P.M.
- Councilor Moore moved to approve the agenda, Seconded by Chair Roof and Karen Paul.

2. Public Forum (10 minutes)

- Caryn Long stated that the community meeting on December 7th for the Neighborhood Project is on the first day of Hanukkah.
- Chair Roof responded that he had been in touch with CEDO Assistant Director Gillian Nanton and the schedule was being adjusted to better accommodate for this.

3. Approval of Minutes – 10/18 (5 minutes)

- Councilor Moore moved to approve the minutes, Chair Roof seconded.

4. Homelessness Strategies, Old and New: Discussion on the state of homelessness and Burlington's role in combating it including encampment enforcement – Marcy Esbjerg, Assistant Director, CEDO and Lacey-Ann Smith, Community Affairs Liaison, Burlington Police Dept. (35 minutes)

Ms. Esbjerg reviewed [a presentation](#) that summarizes key points on efforts in Burlington to address homelessness. The presentation is posted on the [CDNR Committee website](#).

- The Chittenden County Homeless Alliance is responsible for overseeing this Continuum of Care (CoC) and getting funding. Chair Adam Roof asked if it is typical that the city is the applicant for the CoC?
- Ms. Esbjerg responded that it used to be Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS), and the City is the recipient since 2012.

- The issue of concerns about safety in the emergency shelters especially for LGBT populations was raised
 - Councilor Moore asked if the alliance takes a role in addressing issues with discrimination in emergency housing
 - Lacey-Ann Smith, Burlington Police Department, Community Affairs Liaison, responded that the only true emergency shelter is the Way Station. That you can appeal any decision that the state has made where you are not qualified for a hotel voucher, but that opportunities to redress issues at shelters are limited.

- Ms. Ann-Smith continued that coordinated entry has helped house the most vulnerable in permanent supportive housing. Now they are trying to reach out to the people that are not chronically homeless but they're definitely experiencing homeless – and these people are harder to reach.
- Ms. Esbjerg stated that there are still many people who have not taken the assessment tool that are not being taken into account. The different services that are now available were reviewed such as showers, meal sites, and the Day Station.
- Ms. Ann-Smith clarified that staffing is the issue with meal sites, not a lack of food and that they don't serve on holidays, but CVOEO is trying to address this issue. As part of the interagency team meetings the top priorities that have been identified include:
 - The Day Station has requirements that limit accessibility for some populations
 - There's not enough emergency shelter available
 - There is a need for lockers
 - There is a need for bathroom access
 - There is a need for locations for people to congregate during the day

- Chair Roof asked how other communities handle people congregating in public space?
 - Ms. Esbjerg responded that low barrier shelters are handling it, but that there is a changing approach where sobriety is not required to use the shelters; instead the focus is on behavior within the shelter.
 - Councilor Moore responded that the Public Safety Committee brought up the idea of a low barrier shelter during the day.
 - Ms. Ann-Smith explained that if the expectation is just safety rather than sobriety there usually are not issues because people will rise to the occasion. Typically there have not been issues in low barrier shelters because they would prefer to have a place to be and sleep. However, there are a decent amount of people that would prefer to camp and they have found spots where no one will bother them at, but this is not the majority.
 - Councilor Bushor asked if the library be where people congregate? She stated that she did not think what we currently allow makes sense.
 - Ms. Ann-Smith responded that historically the library has been used this way but that over the past few years this has changed dramatically.

- Councilor Paul added that there were concerns over safety in the library, and use of the bathrooms for concerning behavior but that now generally people that are there and are not using the space actively are well behaved.
- The topic of the point-in-time homeless count was raised, and the fact that the count is done once per year in January.
 - Erhard Mahnke said that the term ‘precariously housed’ is a subjective category and includes couch surfing and that the Dept of Education has a better definition.
 - Stephen Marshall stated that ‘precariously housed’ means if someone is in danger of losing their housing and would become homeless if that happened.
 - Councilor Paul asked if it would make a difference if the count was done at a different time of the year.
 - Mr. Marshall explained that the shelters are pretty much full year round, but in the summer many may choose to live in a camp, as he did. People tend to get housed in the winter or leave the state, and that may effect the count.
 - Mr. Mahnke stated that the VT office of economic opportunity tracks folks who have been housed in shelters that are funded through the office of economic opportunity and that the average length of stay is longest it has been, indicating a growing lack of affordable housing.
 - Councilor Bushor asked how many families are counted in the point in time survey versus individuals in families. Ms. Esbjerg said she would follow up.
- Ms. Esbjerg stated that the State focuses more on individual men, but in Chittenden County its more families. Efforts in Chittenden County have started with chronic homeless in 2014. These folks are most heavily using other parts of the system like the emergency rooms. There is a lot of funding available for permanent supportive housing. In the last three years a low barrier shelter was opened. Some people are spending up to 180 days in shelters.
- Ms Ann-Smith discussed the policy regarding encampments with the following points.
 - There exists a coordinated citywide policy where the DPW, Mayor, City Attorney etc... are involved when an encampment meets a certain threshold based on these 4 criteria:
 - Location (environmental)
 - Health and safety of the site
 - Legal violations
 - Interference with the intended use of the site
 - The Howard Street team and Lacey-Ann does an initial assessment and if it doesn’t meet one of those criteria then there’s no reason to move. If it meets the criteria then they make a request to move – but the first notice isn’t dated. Outreach is done to let people know why they need to move before the cleanup. The city attorney gives an assessment if they should move forward. Cleanup starts if the order to move is not heeded.
- Mr. Erhard explained that some cities out west have sanctioned encampments, providing toilets and safety. He asked could we do this in Burlington?
 - Mr. Marshall responded that anywhere encampments are established you are trespassing which automatically makes them criminals. If the city were willing to create managed properties that prevented hoarding that would be helpful because 4 dump truck loads of materials were taken out of sears lane. It should be a priority to help people to live within the law and allow them to be community minded.

- Councilor Roof stated that during last year talking about tiny homes the Committee did look into the zoning to see what space could accommodate this a camp site.
- Ms. Ann-Smith added that the only place where camping is actually not allowed is in parks for the police because they do not consider or enforce zoning regulations, but zoning doesn't allow for encampments.
- Councilor Moore suggested that we can change the law to allow encampments, that it is within our authority.
- She asked when you first go into an encampment, if there is a conflict, is there an effort to address that and help the people living there address it?
 - Ms. Ann-Smith responded that she talks to them about the nature of the complaint and let them know the successful practices for camping.
 - Oftentimes interpersonal conflicts are the reason that encampments are asked to vacate. Oftentimes the campers are asked if they want to engage in a mediation effort and it is up to them if they want to do this. This was tried at Sears Lane but it didn't work out.
 - Oftentimes what they want is for the person causing the problem to leave, but they don't have any ability to evict an individual without making the entire group move.
- Councilor Paul asked what are the things that people experiencing homelessness want to be doing during the day? And what would a second low barrier shelter look like? What do we need to have in making this work with behavior versus sobriety? These are big issues we need to think about.
- Councilor Roof and Councilor Moore asked about the draft homelessness policy, and when did the city council take action on that. They suggested it should be looked at again.
- Mr. Marshall had a final comment that homelessness is really a regional issue, that the homeless in the City are not limited to Burlington residents, therefore anything we do is just a stopgap measure.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:20