



**CITY OF BURLINGTON, VERMONT
CITY COUNCIL TRANSPORTATION, ENERGY &
UTILITIES COMMITTEE**

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Councilor Maxwell Tracy, Chair *WARD 2*
Councilor David Hartnett, *North District*
Councilor Joan Shannon, *South District*

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Transportation, Energy and Utilities Committee of the City Council

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES:

Wednesday, December 7, 2016 at 5:00 PM

**Burlington Department of Public Works – Front Conference Room
645 Pine Street – Burlington, VT**

–Meeting Minutes–

Members Present: Max Tracy, TEUC
Joan Shannon, TEUC
David Hartnett, TEUC

Other Councilors Present: Kurt Wright, Ward 4
Adam Roof, Ward 8

City Staff Present: Chapin Spencer, DPW
Laura Wheelock, DPW
Norm Baldwin, DPW
Dave Allerton, DPW
Nicole Losch, DPW
Martin Lee, DPW
Kirsten Merriman Shapiro, CEDO

Residents Present: See Attendance Sheet

Max called the meeting to order at 5:06 pm.

1. Agenda

Max moved for a motion on the agenda, Joan moved to adopt the Agenda and Dave Seconded. All in favor.

2. Public Forum

Councilor Tracy outlined guidelines for the public forum and requested that everyone be respectful.

Refer to the Public Comment Sign-In Sheet for a numbered list of residents who provided comment. Following are paraphrased summaries of the comments received during the public comment period:

Residents #1 and #2 presented together regarding an alternative plan and vision for City Hall Park. For details regarding their presentation material see the document labeled "City Hall Park Poster Presented by Residents on 12-7-16." The presenters are in favor of a park design that has differences from the City Hall Park design being developed by the City. Tree removal is a concern. Fountain changes are a concern because the fountain should be closer to the middle of the park. The new park should be a sanctuary. Paths should be curving through the park to cause a calming effect. The park needs to be kept clean. The park should be beautiful.

Resident #3 spoke later in the presentation. The resident noted a need for having a throughput study for Main Street as part of the Great Streets project. Parallel parking slows down traffic. Bus pull off would be good on Main Street. City Hall park should not be a place for big events. The park should be a destination space and not a pass through. A central fountain is good and should be better than the current fountain. Game tables should be part of the proposed park. Restrooms should be provided and they should be supervised. Cost is important to consider and he thinks that \$3 million is a lot when we are dealing with other tax burdens. He does note that there is \$1 million contribution to the park project from a local philanthropist.

Resident # 4 is against someone from North Shore desiring to open the gate. The gate should not be opened and the justification listed by the people in favor of opening the gate are not valid, for example: emergency vehicles will not have better mobility to serve the neighborhood if the gate is open, carbon footprint will not be improved if the gate is open, traffic will not be improved if the gate is open.

Resident # 5 stated that all efforts shall be made to keep traffic off local streets and not to keep them on it. This resident spoke again later and stated that the gate was put there at the request of the Fire Marshal and emergency vehicles do have ability to open the gate if need be.

Resident # 6 has done car counting that indicates opening the gate will be beneficial. Star Farm Road has the same width as River Edge, so the width of the road should not be an argument for keeping the gate closed. He thinks the gate should be open to remove traffic from North Ave and Turf Ave. It is Not fair to keep the gate closed.

Resident # 7 stated that a compromise should be considered to open the gate; make the road one way and add traffic calming.

Resident # 8 stated that many walkers and bikers use the corridor where the gate is closed. Through traffic would not be very safe for the ones that live there and walk there.

Resident # 9 offered a compromise to opening the gate. Put in a red light so someone can get through in an emergency. Don't allow traffic but allow emergency vehicles.

Resident # 10 referenced an email sent on November 10th that includes details of his opposition to opening the gate. Speeding traffic erodes the quality of life. Traffic calming is happening elsewhere in the City so opening the gate would be contrary to those efforts.

Resident # 11 stated that emergency vehicles do have a key to open the gate. The resident questions the expense necessary to study the idea of opening the gate

Resident # 12 is against opening the gate because the road does not have curbs, drainage is poor and pavement is thin.

Resident # 13 handed out an excerpt from a permit and the electronic file of this document is called "Rivers Edge Condominium Association Permit Excerpt Presented by Resident." The conditions of the permit state that the gate will prevent through traffic from North Ave to Plattsburg Ave.

Resident # 14 is against opening the gate because pedestrian traffic is prevalent. They bought the property with expectation that the traffic will remain low and the gate will remain closed.

Resident # 15 is against opening for all reasons mentioned by other residents. There are ways for an emergency vehicle to access this neighborhood even if there is a physical barrier on North Ave. traffic will be an issue in new areas if the gate is opened.

#16 - Emily from Local Motion thanked the City on rigor of process that has gone into the planBTV document. Good comments have gone into the PlanBTV document. Local Motion is in favor of the plan. Local Motion did submit comments on the plan.

Resident # 17 stated that health and safety issues have been cited as an argument for opening the gate. The resident has questioned whether the police and fire department have been contacted to validate these concerns.

Resident # 18 stated that the Rivers Edge Gate issue has come up 3 times over the 30 years that he has been a resident in the area. The gate was installed 25 years ago. Why does this item keep coming up?

Resident # 19 offered a story about traffic backing up on North Ave during snow storm this week. Emergency vehicle could get through during this high traffic event. Opening gate could increase environmental impact by contributing additional contaminants running off into the river and lake.

#20 - Councilor Kurt Wright is against opening the gate because it is unfair to add traffic to that neighborhood.

Resident # 21 would not have bought a home in that neighborhood if gate is opened and they may move if it does open.

Resident # 22 is against opening gate. Also against the North Ave Pilot Project continuing.

3. Minutes of 9/15/16

Max moved for a motion on the minutes, Joan moved to approve the minutes and Dave Seconded. All in favor.

4. Rivers Edge Gate Decision –

a. Norm Baldwin, P.E. DPW Presentation

Norm reviewed the items that are included in his packet and the electronic file for the packet material is called “Rivers Edge Staff Recommendation Packet.” Norm received a petition from a neighbor to initiate this process. The resources necessary for doing a study to open the gate are not known at this time. The disadvantages stated in the memo are preliminary comments and further study would be needed to evaluate the existing condition of the road.

The starting point of Norm’s work was to evaluate whether the gate should be closed or whether there should be further evaluation to open the gate. Norm has mostly heard from residents that are opposed to opening the gate. Norm has recommended not moving forward with this study and Norm recommends keeping the gate closed.

Councilor Shannon asked Norm whether emergency services have been consulted about this decision. Norm said not yet. Councilor Hartnett stated that emergency services are not concerned about accessing this neighborhood in an emergency, even with the gate there.

b. Julie Hill – Petitioner to keep gate Closed

The content of the presentation for keeping the gate closed can be viewed in the electronic files called “Document from Presenter Against Opening the Rivers Edge Gate,” and “PPT from Presenter Against Opening the Rivers Edge Gate.”

c. Joyce Walsleben – Petitioner to Open Gate

The content of the presentation for opening the gate can be viewed in the electronic file called “Document from Presenter For Opening the Rivers Edge Gate.”

d. Councilor Comments

Councilor Hartnett Comments – Everyone was thanked for coming. He does not have an issue with keeping the gate closed. He stated that emergency services do not have an issue. The new permit document brought by MaryAnn is new information for Councilor Hartnett. He thinks that there is little benefit for the cost of evaluating the gate opening. The pros of opening the gate are small. Councilor Hartnett is opposed to opening the gate.

Councilor Shannon Comments – The neighbors continue to maintain the road even though it is a City owned road. Other City streets in Burlington like Front Street and Hyde Street have been turned into a dead end street. Cut through traffic is a concern in many other streets throughout the city. Councilor Shannon has a story about her neighborhood being shut off on occasion by physical barriers in the road and her neighborhood also has a gate for emergencies. The Rivers Edge gate is not unique and there is not a good reason to open it. Emergency Services should be consulted about whether they have concerns. Is there a way to bring closure to this item? The existing permit condition shows that this item should not be further pursued. People buying a house in this neighborhood should know that the existing traffic pattern is not going to be changed.

Norm stated that permit condition may not be valid since it is now a City Street.

Councilor Shannon does not think moving ahead with a study is necessary.

Norm said, Current Council cannot bind future Council from future decisions according to City Attorney's Office.

Councilor Tracy Comments - Max mentioned that ITE guidelines in presentation are not familiar. NACTO guidelines have been brought before Council in the past.

Norm said that guidelines are not requirements. Engineering judgement needs to be used as well, especially in a scenario such as this Rivers Edge Gate item.

Councilor Tracy is opposed to opening the gate. He is concerned about safety and he has not heard about safety concerns from emergency services. Opening the gate and adding new traffic would likely decrease safety on this road. Rivers Edge residents are clearly against the gate opening and that is meaningful.

Councilor Hartnett asked Norm about process of hypothetically opening Front Street.

Norm said that a petition is needed and then we move forward with a public process.

Councilor Shannon stated that the municipal map has changed for Front Street so that is different than Rivers Edge.

Councilor Hartnett is seeking a way that we can come to closure on this item so we do not need to come back to address this issue in the future.

Councilor Shannon asked why TEUC needs to vote on this item.

Norm says the TEUC is voting on recommending a motion to the City Council. Norm read the draft motion for the Councilors:

- I recommend that the City Council Transportation Energy and Utilities Committee (TEUC) approve the following motion: To recommend that the City Council deny the request to study the concept of opening of Rivers Edge Drive Gate and deny the request to open the gate.
- I further recommend that the TEUC sponsor and support the following City Council motion: To deny the request to study the concept of opening of Rivers Edge Drive Gate and deny the request to open the gate.

Max moved for a motion, Dave moved to approve and to add the motion to the City Council Consent Agenda and Joan Seconded. All in favor.

5. PlanBTV Walk Bike Update – Nicole Losch, DPW

Nicole provided a verbal overview of the status of the PlanBTV Walk Bike document. For more information on this item please refer to the electronic file called “Plan BTV Walk Bike Packet Material for TEUC.” Comments received to-date, are included in the packet. Currently DPW is taking comments from the public. Nicole is soliciting comments or feedback from the TEUC at this time.

Councilor Roof and Councilor Kurt were asked to add comment also.

Councilor Roof has met with Local Motion and he feels there is a lot of common ground between DPW and Local Motion. Councilor Roof is in favor with this collaboration.

Resident stated that access to Leddy Park is an issue. Access to the Intervale is difficult because the road does not have a sidewalk. 2-inches of snow on the path is not fair to pedestrians

Councilor Tracey believes that it would be good to have more done in the short term. Councilor Tracy wants a bundled approach to PlanBTV documents to help with connectivity between the different areas of the City. Councilor Tracy does not want to study everything to death; some items do warrant further study but not everything. Tactical urbanism approach to many items will help things move quicker; over engineering everything makes progress slow.

Councilor Hartnett asked about Leddy Park access.

Nicole said that the recommendation will be an advisory lane marking on the shoulders of the existing access road to provide an area for bikers and walkers. A sidewalk would likely require tree removal.

Councilor Shannon asked about recommendation for snow pack on bikeways.

Nicole said that this recommendation helps with traction for bikers. Further evaluation to see impacts to pedestrians is needed.

Councilor Wright said that there is a bike path to Leddy Park and there is also a sidewalk from the shopping center into the park. Kurt believes there are multiple ways to get direct access to the park.

Councilor Tracey thanked Nicole for the presentation.

6. Great Streets Update – Main Street and City Hall Park Conceptual Plans, and City Standards Update – Laura Wheelock, DPW

Laura presented the Great Streets BTV update. Kirsten Merriman Shapiro from CEDO is present. Meagan Tuttle is another project manager from Planning & Zoning and she was not present.

For details on the content of the presentation, see the electronic file called “Great Street Packet Material for TEUC.” This project brings together past public planning efforts.

Councilor Shannon has a question about whether the new proposed streets are included on the plan. Laura confirmed that they are on the plan.

Laura stated that these standards being developed now, will apply to all future projects big and small in the Great Street area.

A cross section of a Great Street was presented and compared to the existing conditions along the planning corridor. The right of way on Main Street is 99 feet, some areas have small encroachments into the City right of way.

Parking on Main Street will change from diagonal to parallel: 73% of parking will be maintained from Winooski down to Battery.

Councilor Hartnett asked for an example of parking spaces being removed and asked if business know about this. Laura presented the relevant table in the presentation. Kirsten stated that property owners have been notified and meetings have been held with property owners. Some are for the changes and some are against the changes. There will be a trade off because we will lose stormwater and mobility improvements if parking is not

changed to parallel. Kirsten stated that parking removal as planned is key to keeping Great Streets consistent throughout.

Laura stated that there is a large group of people at public meetings who have not made their mind up on parking removal and they have productive questions. These questions are being used to help improve the project, such as better signage being needed to direct motorists to alternative parking locations.

Kirsten stated that this project is intended to compliment the businesses and make the businesses more appealing to visit.

Garden, terrace and deck are proposed at bumpouts by intersections. Stormwater treatment is proposed in the garden spaces. Terraces can be used for art, bikes, tables, chairs, etc. The deck can provide a map and kiosk for pedestrians.

Project goes from Union Street down to Battery Street to provide connectivity. A plan view of the proposed changes was presented as well as some images of proposed amenities.

There is a connection between Great Streets and the City Hall Park project and the presentation shifted to presenting the new City Hall Park Conceptual Plans.

Historical plans of City Hall Park were presented. Important historical elements of the park have been defined.

Public Survey Responses were presented.

2012 conceptual plans for the park were presented.

Impervious area has been calculated. Tree inventory has been performed. Some trees are in decline due to the way the park is being used and some trees need to be removed immediately regardless of this project advancing.

The current water fountain has some issues. The pathways are being worn down.

The new park provides a new fountain, new pathways that meet accessibility standards and new benches. The farmers will be placed on the outside of the park to alleviate stress to other parts of the park. Logistics still need to be worked out with farmers market vendors. Farmers market administrators feel the current amount of vendors is too high by between 10 to 20 vendors

Public comment for Great Streets and City Hall Park will be open until December 16, 2016 to allow for a longer comment period.

Councilor Hartnett had a comment about the message he hears from residents. Residents feel that removing parking is another concern for car drivers and New North End

residents who are more likely to drive into the downtown. Councilor Hartnett is skeptical about parking spaces being removed and he feels that cars will continue to be necessary. Burlington is an aging City and cars are important.

Councilor Shannon has a question about the street cross section and why the 8' pedestrian area is not pervious. Laura stated that a non-pervious surface is easier to maintain and to clear snow from.

Councilor Shannon thinks the 5' frontage may not be enough and it would be a good time decide what space should be leased to the businesses in the future, if any. Councilor Shannon does not want to lease out too much City space because pedestrian mobility is important.

Councilor Shannon shared some of Councilor Hartnett's concerns about traffic. Additionally, removing bumpouts will remove protected turning movements and increase traffic. Laura said that the design consultant is looking at traffic impacts very closely to come up with a recommendation. Kirsten stated that intersections are being evaluated on a case by case basis.

Councilor Shannon asked about the block between South Winooski and Church Street; is it possible to keep diagonal parking there? Laura stated that there is not currently space to do this. Councilor Shannon thinks this could be a tradeoff to consider.

Councilor Tracey thinks that we should be open to alternative modes of transportation as we look at this plan. Covered bike parking is important to this plan because this will lead to real gains for the businesses.

Carolyn Bates likes the new Great Streets concepts. Currently driving downtown is difficult and alternative methods like walking downtown are enjoyable.

Carolyn handed out her proposed plan that was presented at the beginning of the meeting called. The electronic file is called "City Hall Park Poster Presented by Residents on 12-7-16".

Councilor Shannon asked if this alternative plan presented by Carolyn Bates is responsive to the public survey.

Carolyn stated that it is not completely in-line with the surveys but it has been done with thorough research and evaluation of the recent conceptual plans.

Councilor Shannon asked about the trees being proposed

Carolyn stated that they are presenting a concept that may require different trees. The tree placement will be used to create different areas presented in the plan.

Councilor Shannon asked about proposed events such as a community showing of World Cup Game

Carolyn said Small events that will accommodate small groups and will last less than 4 hours should be accommodated. Big events such as the farmers market should not be accommodated.

Councilor Shannon pointed out that the farmers market is important according to the survey.

Carolyn stated that the survey is 5 years old and the location of the surveys was likely during a big event.

Clarification was made that the surveys were publically available and was not sent to special interest groups.

Councilor Shannon asked about the fountain location.

Carolyn stated that there is a proposed splash pad in the children's area.

Councilor Shannon asked about safety concerns in park.

Carolyn said that solar or LED lights similar to St Albans should be used to illuminate all pads and walkways. Also Christmas lights should be used during the holiday season. Carolyn stated that the fountain should be central to match historical designs of many parks in Vermont. Game tables should be added in the park. Single unit bathrooms should be used that are not attached to City Hall. Art work should be added throughout the park.

Councilor Tracy asked about the fastest route through the park.

Carolyn said that this park is a place of sanctuary and it shouldn't be a thorough fair. Curving paths calm people.

Councilor Tracy asked about preventing goat paths.

Carolyn said that there will be park guides present in the park.

Councilor Tracy said that curved paths are not historical.

Carolyn acknowledged this and said that she is open to straight paths. The curved paths are being proposed to accommodate mental health folks.

Councilor Hartnett has a vision of the park being more like an extension of Church Street and he is open to the space being paved over and St. Paul Street being closed off to traffic. Councilor Hartnett thinks that Carolyn's vision of the park is more in line with

the Waterfront park where quiet spaces are present. Councilor Hartnett is leaning more in favor with the current design being developed by the city versus Carolyn's vision.

Kelly from the Burlington Business Association (BBA) stated that the City's Park design does have paths with some curves. A lot of input has gone into the City's design process. The current park is not enticing for most people. There will be community gathering events in the park. Kelly is supportive of the City design and she thanked the councilors.

Councilor Roof thinks the park needs to be balanced between throughway and gathering space. Councilor Roof thinks there are too many different concepts presented by Carolyn but he appreciates the effort that has gone into it.

Councilor Roof thinks that cars are going to be a reality with regard to Great Streets. There needs to be a balance. Stormwater impacts and improvements would be good to present to show the proposed benefits. Either designate a bigger frontage space or don't designate it at all.

Lynn Martin who presented with Carolyn Bates earlier wants to remove all of the farmers market. Most of the trees will be removed as part of the City's proposed plan. Big events should not be accommodated at the park. The park should be a sanctuary. The park is recognized as a historic park. No more commercialization should be brought to the park. The stage area should be removed from the City's proposed park. Different types of trees should be planted in the park and it can be an educational experience.

Kelly from BBA had a comment about parking and there will hopefully be a study completed which will be informative to the impacts of the proposed design.

Councilor Shannon had feedback on Carolyn and Lynn's plan. Councilor Shannon does like the central fountain and the City's proposed fountain is no longer a focal point in the park. Councilor Shannon thinks that the park is calming but it still needs to be part of the transportation network. Concerts in the park probably are not a good idea. Other community events such as watching a World Cup game could be a good fit.

Laura stated that tables and chairs next to RiRas is not envisioned to be leased by RiRas and it will be open to the public in general.

Kirsten clarified that the patio where the tent is presented is not a band shell; it is an open space that does not include any permanent structure above ground.

Councilor Shannon stated that the paths do not radiate out in her opinion which is one of the historical features identified for the park.

Laura said that the conceptual plan is going to the DRB to get feedback now.

Laura showed where the kiosk is located on the plan and clarified that there are no bathrooms there.

Bathrooms have not been finalized but proposed bathrooms will accommodate daily use, not special event use.

Councilor Tracy is hesitant about proposed vendors and commercialization. Councilor Tracy is definitely opposed to the RiRa space which has already been removed. Councilor Tracy does like wifi, public art and recognizing historical elements of the park like the fountain. Councilor Tracy sees the history of the park is defined in an abstract way and does acknowledge that there will be an informational panel.

Councilor Hartnett says that the fountain is the most important defining part of the park.

Councilor Shannon does not disagree but states that the existing fountain is unsanitary.

Councilor Shannon thinks that vendor carts could be good in the park and Councilor Hartnett agrees.

Councilor Tracy states that a built in kiosk is problematic especially in the winter.

Councilor Hartnett likes the idea of having a Christmas tree with lights at the park. Councilor Hartnett asked about the possibility of having ice skating in the park.

Councilor Tracy thanked meeting participants for engaging in the conversation for this agenda item.

7. Downtown Parking & Transportation Partnership Agreement – Chapin Spencer, DPW

Chapin Spencer, Director of Public Works, provided a brief overview of the proposed partnership between DPW and BBA. More details of the partnership are available in the electronic file called “DRAFT Partnership Workplan & Deliverables COB and the BBA.” There will be a 2 year proposed pilot in the plan. This will be a public private partnership to move forward under the goals defined in the Downtown Parking & Transportation Management Plan. Chapin is preparing to go before Council in January regarding this plan.

Councilor Hartnett asked if we are already doing this partnership elsewhere.

Kelly from BBA said that this will formalize the process for where some partnership already exists.

Chapin said that Traffic fund revenues are funding this.

Kelly said that creating a downtown improvement district is a goal.

Councilor Tracy likes that bike elements are in the plan.

Kelly will meet with Local Motion prior to going to City Council in January.

8. Councilors Updates

None given.

9. Adjourn

Dave motioned to adjourn and Joan seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm