



CITY OF BURLINGTON, VERMONT
CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT &
NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
c/o Community & Economic Development Office
City Hall, Room 32 • 149 Church Street • Burlington, VT 05401
802-865-7144 VOX • 802-865-7024 FAX • www.burlingtonvt.gov/cedo

Councilor Selene Colburn, Chair, East District
Councilor Tom Ayres, Ward 7 (absent)
Councilor Adam Roof, Ward 8

Tuesday, June 21, 2016
6:00 – 7:45 PM
Fletcher Free Library
Community Room

Proposed Draft Minutes

In addition to the Councilors noted above, the following people were in attendance: Alicia Freese (Seven Days), Rita Markley (Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS)), Chris Brzovic (Burlington Housing Authority/Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity), Cory Dawson (Burlington Free Press), Stephen Marshall, Michael Monte (Champlain Housing Trust (CHT)), Councilor David Hartnett (North District), Emily Velush (Pathways Vermont), Erin Sheehan, and Todd Rawlings (Community & Economic development Office (CEDO))

1. Review Agenda – At 6:08 PM Chair Colburn started the meeting and began with a review of the agenda. Councilor Roof made a motion to amend and approve the agenda to add Item 5.1, a discussion of the work plan for the Committee, seconded by Chair Colburn. Motion approved.
2. Public Forum
Stephen Marshall commented that the tiny home discussion should not be limited to homeless individuals and that it is a solution that should be considered for others in need of housing. Chair Colburn agreed and expressed that the Committee intends to look broadly at the idea of microhousing in the context of accessory units as mentioned in the Housing Action Plan. She restated her wish to hold a public event around microhousing.
3. Approval of Minutes – Councilor Roof made a motion to approve the May minutes as drafted. Chair Colburn seconded the motion. Motion passed.

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contact Marcy Esbjerg at mesbjerg@burlingtonvt.gov

4. Discussion of Tiny Homes and Homelessness

Chair Colburn summarized the history of the tiny homes discussion. She described that a local, philanthropically-minded businessperson approached various Councilors about the idea of tiny homes as a possible solution to homelessness in Burlington. In the first CDNR meeting that addressed this issue, the committee looked at various examples across the country. The second meeting looked at how this solution might work in the context of planning and zoning ordinance requirements.

Councilor Roof commented that he thought that, based on conversations with City staff, this was a viable option. He expressed the desire to review an inventory of City land and have the Committee explore a pilot of the idea. He mentioned that one idea that has been expressed was the possibility of using the campground at North Beach during the winter.

Chair Colburn understands from Parks Director Jesse Bridges that there is very little suitable land that is not park. She said another idea that has been suggested is a winter warming shelter with tents at North Beach. She suggested that the idea of tiny houses as a solution to homelessness needs to be looked at from the Fair Housing perspective and that the Committee should work with the Continuum of Care on this idea. Chair Colburn would also like to see a public lands inventory.

Stephen Marshall noted that the Continuum of Care's correct name is the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance (CCHA), not the Continuum of Care.

Rita Markley suggested that the CCHA and form a work group to explore the tiny home idea.

Chair Colburn read an email from CEDO Acting Director Marcy Esbjerg. The email described the idea that the CCHA would like to do a focus group for homeless individuals. CCHA is requesting a joint session in August and the suggestion is a breakfast meeting on Saturday since there is no breakfast provided in our City on Saturday. They have the funding and would help get the folks there. The idea might be going to one of the churches but maybe the library would be fine as well.

Stephen Marshall commented that CCHA would like to do story gathering around safety and well-being. He suggested that the discussion around solutions to homelessness be broadened and not go immediately to tiny homes.

Councilor Roof agreed that tiny homes are one tool in the tool box for safety, security, and stability for homeless individuals.

Councilor Hartnett said that he has had discussions with members of the business community who are concerned about the homeless individuals in Burlington. He suggested that whether or not the City sanctions the encampments, they will and are happening anyway. He has spoken with homeless individuals and they want tiny homes. He believes that tiny homes have been successful elsewhere and thinks the City should try it.

Chris Brzovic asked: what vision we are committed to in Burlington? He asked: why not get homeless individuals in housing, and then once housed, get services to them and help them with sobriety? He said that tiny houses are just an extension of the shelter model.

Rita Markley suggested that the focus should be on creating more options for people who are homeless. She cautioned against just making tiny homes available to homeless individuals only and she urged making tiny homes available to young professionals and others who need housing. She suggested that tiny homes should be part of a broader strategy on homelessness.

Michael Monte described CHT's research on the attitudes of prospective homebuyers about small, energy efficient homes and many were not interested. He wondered if using tiny homes as a solution for homeless individuals had been successful in a cold weather climate. He also wondered whether it was proposed that tiny homes would replace tents. He described CHT's approach of buying motels and providing the spatial equivalent of a tiny home (200-400 square feet).

Councilor Roof commented that physical structure is part of the issue, but services are critical. He agreed that this solution cannot be separated from overall housing strategy as described in the Housing Action Plan (HAP).

Chair Colburn mentioned that the HAP has a section on homelessness and she affirmed the City's commitment to the Housing First model. She expressed that some anecdotal evidence suggests that some homeless individuals do not want to live inside.

Chris Brzovic suggested that that was not his experience and he would like objective data on how common that belief is.

Chair Colburn expressed that tiny homes are one option and that safety of encampments is key. She discussed different approaches that different cities (specifically Los Angeles and Seattle) have concerning homeless encampments. She described a variety of safety and security strategies for tiny home villages: some are self-governing, some are managed by one individual, and some are managed by a non-profit. She expressed that it was exciting how quickly these tiny house villages have been funded and built elsewhere.

Councilor Hartnett said that it was important to house those most in need of housing first.

Chris Brzovic added that having rental subsidies available is critical.

Stephen Marshall suggested that the two main issues here are safety and dignity. Sustainability is not the first priority: homeless individuals need potable water, latrines, and safety immediately. He suggested that people be given the power to create their own homes through free materials or kits. He said that if given the opportunity, those who want to move inside, will. He suggested that when we move homeless individuals into housing, we also move them out of their community. He believes that these folks should have our respect and love.

Rita Markley commented that the City's response to the encampments should be

somewhere between that of Los Angeles and Seattle.

Michael Monte expressed that CHT has a spectrum of housing opportunities from motels to homeownership. He offered to contact the person in Seattle who has been involved in the distribution of tents.

Councilor Roof suggested that quick fixes are acceptable as long as we are not complacent and they become long term solutions.

Stephen Marshall disagreed with the idea of centralized camps. He said does not want to overburden neighborhoods and he wants increased opportunities for homeless individuals to engage the community.

Rita Markley commented that many communities allow organic placement of encampments.

Stephen Marshall noted that the next meeting of the CCHA is July 7. He suggested that the Committee draft a letter to the BPD around encampment safety.

Chair Colburn summarized the next steps for the Committee:

- Need an update from BPD and the administration about their approach(es) to encampments
- Continue the conversation with Parks regarding public land
- Investigate a working group between CCHA and CDNR.
- Michael Monte will share CHT's tiny home research findings.

5. Fireworks Discussion

Chair Colburn expressed that the Ordinance Committee has had discussions about fireworks and that she felt that it was appropriate to discuss the issue at CDNR. She explained that fireworks are regulated in City parks but otherwise not specifically mentioned elsewhere in the City ordinances. She would like the Committee to discuss whether fireworks should be called out specifically in the noise control or "social noise" ordinance. She felt that police are more empowered to enforce the noise ordinance for social violations as opposed to fireworks violations.

Councilor Roof agreed that this idea should be brought to the Ordinance Committee. He felt that education as a strategy has been successful with social noise. He would like BPD to be more empowered to enforce noise violations for fireworks, but he recognized that enforcement can be challenging given that these violations typically occur in public spaces as opposed to private homes.

Chair Colburn will draft a memo to the Ordinance Committee regarding this issue. The memo will address the issue of fireworks only being mentioned in the context of the City's parks.

5.1 Work Plan Discussion

Chair Colburn summarized the draft Work Plan for the Committee:

- Housing Action Plan Work:
 - Get targets for various housing types
 - Make progress on the Neighborhood Stabilization Program
 - Continue to work on the evaluation of the Inclusionary Zoning ordinance
 - Review of accessory dwellings
- Continue discussion of microhousing and homelessness
- Revisit Four Unrelated Persons ordinance (late summer/early fall)
- Maintain CDNR as a clearinghouse for quality of life issues
- Focus on encampments and safety

6. Next meeting – July 26, 2016 – Fletcher Free Library. Councilor Roof made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Chair Colburn seconded that motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:48 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Todd Rawlings
Housing Program Manager
CEDO