

Public Safety Committee Annual Report
March 2014

Prepared by Councilor Jane Knodell on behalf of the Public Safety Committee (Councilors Knodell, Blais, Decelles)

The Public Safety Committee met on May 8, May 29, June 27, August 10, and December 10, 2013. The Committee appreciates the outstanding staff support it received from Richard Haessler, Assistant City Attorney.

Most of the Committee's work centered on the Neighborhood Safety Initiative (NSI), a collaboration of the Burlington Police Department, the Community Justice Center, UVM's Office of Student and Community Relations, Champlain College, and residents. The Committee received several updates from Karen Vastine (CJC) and Kristin Olofson (BPD), and participated in a community meeting on June 27 to recruit members of the community into the effort. The Chair of the Committee attended monthly planning meetings of the NSI throughout the year, acting as liaison to the Public Safety Committee. NSI conducted a city wide community safety survey, and reported the results back to the community at NPA meetings in December and at a city council meeting. This project is on-going and will require the on-going engagement of the Public Safety Committee.

The Committee received status updates over the year from Chief Schirling on illegal drug trafficking and Community Impact Teams, incidence statistics and call volume for Summer 2013, and on the implementation of the Church Street Marketplace District Trespass Authority ordinance.

The Resolution relating to a charter change to prohibit assault weapons and high capacity clips, adopted in early 2013, included a referral to the Public Safety Committee, asking the Committee to "convene a series of public hearings and work together with the Burlington School Department, Burlington Police Department, Howard Services, and State Attorney's Office and other relevant organizations to make our schools and City as safe as they can be." We started by requesting a report from the BSD in writing, through Assistant City Attorney Haessler, describing the safety and emergency-event procedures in place at all of our schools. We learned that the BSD has been working with the BPD for many years on lockdown drills, used in the event of a threat inside a facility, and on modified lockdowns. Each school has an active safety committee which reviews emergency response procedures regularly. This report satisfied the Committee that the District had a sound plan in place, so we did not pursue this further.

Finally, we had a request from the Charter Change Committee to explore the wisdom of prohibiting weapons in bars (not just guns); we determined that this issue was best explored after we learn the outcome of the proposed charter change prohibiting guns in bars.