

Shoot First, Ask Questions Later  
My Turn  
Mayor Bob Kiss  
February 15, 2010

Readers of the Free Press deserve complete and balanced coverage of Burlington Telecom. This valuable City asset meets the telecommunication needs of businesses, the City and residents now and into the future. Burlington Telecom is also a key to building a green infrastructure and economy. Competitive and high quality broadband access is no longer a luxury, but a necessity.

Last year, when the big investment banks drove our economy off a cliff and suddenly stopped lending, the City was denied its usual sources of credit. This economic downturn was unlike anything since 1929 and it severely limited the City's ability to refinance Burlington Telecom. The City's ability to weather the economic downturn without reducing services or increasing costs to residents, in contrast to numerous cities across the country, was due to prudent resource and budget management. This administration has a proven track record of building sound budgets and addressing infrastructure needs in the long-term. Since last year, this administration has been working to find a sustainable and cost effective way to preserve Burlington Telecom and make it stronger. .

Unfortunately, the Burlington Free Press prefers to create news rather than report the facts. Instead of keeping residents informed about BT, all too often, it distorts the facts, sensationalizes issues and polarizes the community unnecessarily.

On February 11, the Free Press led with the headline "Kiss Tries to Alter BT Report." Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the Blue Ribbon Committee, in the mutual spirit of working together, invited my administration to comment on its draft report. For the Committee to solicit comments and suggestions from the administration is completely appropriate. The Committee has asked for information and feedback from a variety of sources. Its final report is undoubtedly its own. While I do not agree with all of the Committee's conclusions, I respect and appreciate its work.

In a follow up story on February 12, the Free Press does suggest that its original story may not have been accurate and that there may be another side to its original coverage. Yet despite what is reported in its own paper, the Free Press editorial of the same day repeats the allegation that the administration "tried to make changes" to the Blue Ribbon report against the wishes of the committee.

This administration will continue to look for a solution that preserves BT as a City asset. But no matter where you stand on the issue, we all agree that the public deserves full, fair, and accurate information. We cannot rely on the Free Press for the facts or for thoughtful opinions based on facts. The City has established a section on its website with information and documents related to Burlington Telecom at: [www.ci.burlington.vt.us/mayor/bt](http://www.ci.burlington.vt.us/mayor/bt). You can read things like the Blue Ribbon Committee Report, consultant's reports, and Burlington Telecom's public business plan

on this page.

The Blue Ribbon Committee and consultants unanimously cite what an important and valuable system the City has in BT. We all agree that we need to preserve Burlington Telecom. I encourage you to stay informed and get the facts.