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City of Burlington

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**REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2012
CONFERENCE ROOM 12, CITY HALL
5:30 – 6:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Mayor Weinberger; Councilors Siegel, Decelles, and Bushor; City Council President Shannon (arrived at 5:40)

ALSO PRESENT: Interim CAO Sisson; City Attorney Blackwood; Jay Appleton, Planning and Zoning

1. Agenda

On a motion by Councilors Bushor and Decelles, the agenda was adopted unanimously as presented.

2. Public Forum

No one came forward to speak.

3. Approval of the Redistricting Committee Minutes

a. August 27, 2012

Councilors Bushor and Decelles made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Update on District Builder Resource and Alternatives

Jay Appleton, Planning and Zoning, stated District Builder was built for states and the plan was to adapt the software. However, that is not working. The documentation is difficult to understand and not successful. The plan B would be to use PDF maps and the website.

Councilor Bushor inquired if PDF maps are easy enough for Councilors to use to move boundaries around. If there were a few different proposals, would it be possible to view them both and make changes. Mr. Appleton stated the PDF map will be the final product. The software used to move the boundaries is called GIS. It lays out census blocks on the screen and allows grouping of them with a running total of the population. It is then possible to add more people to get the correct number. At the end it produces a PDF map. Councilor Bushor stated she

would like to use natural boundaries when drawing these districts. She inquired if it would be possible to see the numbers. Mr. Appleton stated it is possible but it is very tedious and slow.

Councilor Decelles stated when they did this for the State, it was possible to just move lines by street. He inquired if that software is available. Mr. Appleton stated the City does not have the software. He stated he is using what the City already has which is GIS Maps software. It is a little slower but the ultimate map is superior. Councilor Decelles stated the maps were not that good, but it was easy to move the lines.

Councilor Bushor inquired if there is money that could be used to purchase this software if it is too slow and tedious using City software. Mayor Weinberger inquired what the cost is. Mr. Appleton stated it is between \$1,600 and \$2,000 depending on the number of licenses. It is more interactive. Mayor Weinberger stated if there were one license everyone could sit in the room and look at the maps together. Councilor Decelles stated for Redistricting Committee they were able to move the lines and see the numbers very quickly. Mayor Weinberger requested more information on pricing. Councilor Bushor inquired if the State could share the software that they own. Mayor Weinberger stated they own a license not the product.

Councilor Bushor inquired if there were other ideas for how to streamline this process. Mayor Weinberger stated this has been done before and they have been accomplished with software we already own. He stated he could see a benefit for spending a couple thousand dollars. Councilor Siegel stated a constituent contacted her about software. Mayor Weinberger stated they will do more research on what the mapping options are.

5. Adoption of Formal Goals of the Committee:

- a. Equal-sized Wards**
- b. Number of Councilors/Wards?**
- c. Engage the Public**
- d. Keep Neighborhoods Intact**
- e. In Place for 2014 Election Cycle**

Mayor Weinberger stated items A, C, D, and E have large agreement. The real question that should be discussed is B. This determines how the whole process will go. There is a mix of opinions. The committee will need guidance from the full Council.

Councilor Bushor inquired if the School Board and the Council have to be the same structure. Mayor Weinberger stated the City Attorney's Office has stated they do need to be the same.

City Council President Shannon stated it would be a bad idea to have different districts for School Board and City Council. It is not in the City's interests to be drawing boundaries around seats. The discussion should be more about keeping neighborhoods together and having fair representation. There could be a single member ward if there were a reason to do that. Councilor Bushor stated there could be a ward with one Councilor but two school board members. City Council President Shannon stated it is important to have representation reflective of the populations.

Mayor Weinberger stated it will be difficult to begin the process until it is decided how many Councilors and Wards there will be. Councilor Siegel stated most people have said they do not want to change the number but would be open to it if it worked out better that way. Mayor Weinberger stated he would like to change the number and some Councilors had said they are open to it as well. Fourteen Councilors is a large number. It may not be smart for the administration to spend as much time as it does with Councilors. On the other hand, there are many ways of doing things.

City Council President Shannon stated she does not necessarily want a smaller Council, but can see some advantages to it. She suggested that the full Council should weigh in. She would not feel right asking the Council about it at this point. Much of this has to do with how natural boundaries fall. It would make sense to decide if the Committee is open to it, is strongly in favor of it, or is strongly opposed to it.

Councilor Decelles stated it should be discussed now before the full Council weighs in. It not only changes how the City is governed, but it will change the sub-committees, the way Councilors are paid, and how the workload is spread out.

Councilor Bushor stated she likes that Burlington has a three party plus independent Council and does not want that to change. With a smaller Council, it adds more work because there are fewer people. There were times that it was difficult to keep up with the work when she first joined the Council because she was part of a working family. Having working people brings an important voice to the Council. Having diversity in the Council is important. It may be easier to have a smaller Council, but that should not be a motivating goal. She is open to a smaller Council if it makes sense, but it does add more work. She suggested consulting the Council to see what they think about the number.

City Council President Shannon stated this lends itself to a discussion or worksession for Council feedback. The Council Committees are more in line with individual departments than they have been in the past. It is difficult for Councilors to handle the workload. However, it could make sense to have Councilors serving on commissions and bringing that voice to the Council rather than Committees. It is difficult for departments to coordinate with both commissions and sub-committees. It also makes the commissions feel that their work is being re-done by the Council. Councilor Decelles stated this would give Commissions more power. Councilor Bushor stated this will depend on the dedication of the individuals on the Council. That structure can be examined and there is some value in it.

Mayor Weinberger stated it sounds as if people could be open to another number, but the Council cannot be asked to do more work. If there were a way to balance a reduction with a shift in the workload, it may work. He stated that he would like to reduce the size but will not fight it if people really want to leave it as is.

Councilor Decelles stated there are times when agendas are so large that meetings take a long time. Every Councilor feels a need to weigh in. A lot of people get frustrated because meetings take so long. In addition to that, Councilors have to answer calls from constituents on their own

time. He stated he is not convinced that smaller is better.

City Council President Shannon stated they need to determine if they would like to make this decision or allow the Council to weigh in. She stated she has a lot of the same concerns, but is in favor of bringing it to the Council.

Mayor Weinberger stated the options are to keep the wards as they are or to explore further options for reducing the Council size. Councilor Decelles stated they could at least hear the Council's opinion. Councilor Bushor stated they should see if the Council is open to the change, and if they are they can be presented with options. If they are open, there could be a worksession to discuss the details and engage the full Council. Councilor Siegel stated the Council should weigh in, though she is not sure what the best format is. Councilor Bushor stated they could discuss it at the October 15 meeting.

City Council President Shannon stated more Councilors are open to it if it does not mean more work. They will want to know what the alternatives are and if this will result in disbanding the sub-committee system. The Council needs to look at the Commissions that are in place and seeing how they overlap with sub-committee functions. It will also be important to look at other Councils and see how they interact with departments. There are still certain committees that will have to remain intact.

Councilor Decelles stated this is a lot of work to accomplish by the end of the year. One group could look at maps and another could look at restructuring. Mayor Weinberger stated they will schedule one more meeting to discuss the idea of a three district plan. There would be three districts with three Councilors on three year terms.

Councilor Siegel stated reducing the size would result in too much work. Mayor Weinberger stated they could write a memo examining what a reduction would look like. This would allow people to begin thinking about it. Councilor Bushor stated there are neighborhoods that would be homogenous in issues, like the New North End. Other areas, particularly in the Center City, have more diversity in issues and a reduction might now allow the voices of the neighborhoods to be heard. She would entertain a reduction but has concerns. Mayor Weinberger stated the New North End might not make up a whole ward. Mr. Appleton stated a four ward scenario would capture the New North End nicely.

City Council President Shannon stated it would be worth spending some time on this scenario. There are divisions even in Ward 5, particularly over the Southern Connector. It is worth having voices on both sides of that issue on the Council. She has to be much more objective as a City Councilor than as a regular citizen. There could be very small wards that capture smaller neighborhoods, or larger wards with broader representation. Councilor Siegel stated she might be in favor of a four ward proposal with twelve Councilors. Councilor Bushor stated the School Board may not like this. City Council President Shannon stated there is research out there. Councilor Siegel stated she would like to see more information about how other municipalities do this and have it presented to the Committee. Mr. Appleton stated he can look at other municipalities in Vermont. Councilor Decelles stated it may make more sense to look at other towns with the complexity of issues that Burlington has with an Airport, Electric Company, and

Institutions. Councilor Bushor stated there are certain towns where Councilors are paid more.

Councilor Siegel inquired more about the benefits of a smaller Council. Mayor Weinberger stated the Council is a full partner in City finances and making appointments. It is positive that there is a broad consensus, but it is a lot of work. With one Mayor and fourteen Councilors, it takes a lot of time to meet with each one when there is a contentious issue. It prevents the administration from addressing issues they would like to. It is difficult for the Attorney's Office to respond to each Councilor and draft resolutions. By having that many Councilors, there is a multiplication of work. It is not appropriate to make this a major priority, but it is worth discussion. He suggested it would be worth taking a couple of weeks to do some research on other communities, what would it look like to have a four ward proposal, and what governance changes could go with a reduction of size.

The Committee discussed the schedule going forward. City Council President Shannon stated she would like to take the time to do this right. Mayor Weinberger stated the longer the current wards are used, the more exposed the City is to legal action. City Attorney Blackwood stated the more elections held under the current system, the more exposed the City will be. Mayor Weinberger inquired what the risk would be. City Attorney Blackwood stated they could question any election held by ward. Mayor Weinberger inquired how seriously the March deadline should be adhered to. If it is important to use that deadline, it is important to pick the most direct solution. City Attorney Blackwood stated she does not know right now but will provide an answer.

City Council President Shannon stated Burlington's population has not changed much. She inquired if this process began because of the census change or if it was because the redistricting process brought this problem to light. Councilor Bushor stated it came from changes in housing in Ward 1. City Council President Shannon stated that 7 wards may not be the right number. She stated she would like to look at having 12 or 14 Councilors. If there is an opportunity to look at the governance structure, she would like to look at this as well. Councilor Decelles stated that time is limited and they should look at 12 or 14 person proposals. Councilor Bushor stated this if this is to be done in a timely fashion they will have to look at 12 or 14 Councilors. However, it is worth looking at the governance structure in the future and change the number within the new boundaries that have been drawn. If there is a better way, that should be done.

6. Date of Next Committee Meeting

The Committee discussed the date of their next meeting and agreed to meet on October 16.

7. Any Other Business

City Council President Shannon inquired if there is a number of Councilors proposed in a four ward districts. Mr. Appleton stated there is not. City Council President Shannon stated there would have to be a different number using four ward districts. Mr. Appleton stated there has to be equal representation. His proposal was just to show what it would look like and was attempting to make cohesive wards. There could be any number of Councilors within those wards. Bigger wards will last longer because they have more people in them. This means they

are less likely to change in numbers. When UVM added 400 beds, it affected the number of people in that ward.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm.