

Third Sector Associates

Assisting nonprofits and their communities to succeed.

- grantwriting
- public participation
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Report of the Burlington City Council Retreat

June 20, 2013 – 6:00-9:00PM, Rock Point School

Participants: Bryan Aubin, Tom Ayers, Norm Blais, Sharon Bushor, Paul Decelles, Jane Knodell, Chip Mason, Karen Paul, Joan Shannon, Rachel Siegel, Max Tracy, Kevin Worden, Diane Meyerhoff (facilitator). City Staff (For Item II.1: Meetings): Eileen Blackwood, Bob Rustin, Scott Schrader. **(Bold items within the text represent action items)**

I. Review Objectives for the Retreat, Review Agenda, Ground Rules

All agreed that the objectives for the retreat are: *To get to know one another better, identify and discuss Council internal issues, to discuss the possibility of a group priority(ies) for the upcoming year.* The group agreed on a set of ground rules, including:

- Use first names
- Listen and pay attention to others
- Don't interrupt
- Be respectful
- Monitor your air time
- Quiet cell phones
- Act as "normal, rational adults"

II. Discussion of Members' Internal Council Issues

The group worked from a previously prepared list of items, and these were discussed in turn:

- 1) Meetings
- 2) Councilors' Time Commitment
- 3) Council Committees
- 4) BT Communication
- 5) PSAs through Channel 17

1) Meetings

a) Deadlines for Council Resolutions/Agenda Items and Amending Agenda on the Floor. City staff discussed the difficulty in preparing Council agendas in a timely manner with the current deadline structure, and the volume of Resolutions required to conduct day-to-day City business. **Staff will draft a recommendation for a delegation of authority regarding agenda items, formatting guidelines for submissions, deadlines, and the amendment process. Sharon, Joan, and Jane agreed to work with staff to develop a recommendation for full Council review.**

b) Civility

There is a desire among the members to maintain a level of civility in public meetings.

2) Councilors' Time Commitment

There was concern expressed about the time commitment of the budget process and the commission appointment process that ran concurrently this year. **The group decided to keep the processes the same, but make some changes to the budget work sessions: shorter presentations by departments (perhaps 15 minutes) and improved notification to Councilors about the schedule of department presentations and postponement of presentations.**

The group will revisit the commission appointment process in November when surveys will be collected from those involved in the process. At that time, the Charter Change Committee will also discuss the system for notifying those who were not appointed to a Commission.

3) Council Committees

The committee system was discussed. It was decided to keep the current system in place and that Councilors be notified of committee meetings when the agenda includes an item of joint interest. **Committee members agreed to work together to write and adopt committee mission statements with follow-up by Chairs. It was requested that outgoing committee members create a list of ongoing issues for hand off to new committees.**

There was discussion of the conflict of interest policy regarding committee members, and it was decided to keep the current system, being sure that the full Council is aware of instances of conflicts.

4) BT Communication

The group expressed the need to be informed of BT news prior to reading it in the newspaper. Timely updates are important; the group appreciated the special work session on Monday. The group discussed the frequency of notification and decided that there should be **monthly BT updates at Council meetings (10-30 minutes) in executive session if required, updates from BTAB Council members, and public updates every 4-5 months. The Councilors will encourage the Administration and the BTAB to have a Town Hall-style public meeting soon.**

5) PSAs through Channel 17

The group discussed a "loose" rotating schedule for PSAs. **Joan will clarify with Channel 17 regarding the content of these PSAs (can PSAs express an opinion about "political" issues?) and create a schedule.**

III. Discussion of Council Members' Shared Priorities for the Upcoming Year

It was decided that a substantive discussion of possible priorities would be more appropriate at a Council work session, which is scheduled for July 15th at 5:00PM. Diane will provide Joan with a list of individual priorities from Councilor meetings. Councilors should contact Joan with any additional items they would like to add to the list for consideration.

IV. Meeting Evaluation

Two and a half hours maximum for session, invited staff should address Council issues only, appreciate the facilitator reaching out to Councilors ahead of the session, agenda process went well, liked the space (although it was difficult to see each other), Sugarsnap was great, good level of participation.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45PM.