

PARKS, ARTS & CULTURE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – August 11, 2026 (Draft)

Meeting conducted in person and via Zoom

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at **12:09 PM** by Chair Councilor Allie Schachter.

Technical difficulties occurred at the start of the meeting regarding room audio and Zoom connections; these were resolved before proceeding.

Attendance

Committee Members:

- Chair Councilor Allie Schachter
- Councilor Carter Neubieser (Zoom)
- Councilor Becca Brown McKnight (Zoom) [[PACC Trans...pt 8.11.26 | Word](#)]

City Staff & Presenters:

- Mary Danko (Fletcher Free Library)
- Jeff Nicholson (City Data Analyst)
- Phil Lewis (BPRW)
- Doreen Kraft (BCA)
- Jackie Esperiti (DPW)
- (name?) BFD
- Jessica Brown (CA), via Zoom
- Hayley McClenahan (CA)
- Jennifer Zakaras
- Samantha McGinnis (CSMP)

Members of the Public:

- Chris McGrath

Approval of Previous Minutes

Chair Schachter noted that **four sets of meeting minutes** were sent in advance and posted on Civic Clerk. She requested a motion to adopt them as a group.

- **Motion:** Councilor Neubieser

- **Second:** Councilor McKnight
- **Approved unanimously**

Public Forum

- One attendee, **Chris McGrath**, introduced himself and shared no specific concerns.
- No additional public comments in person or online.

Presentation – Fletcher Free Library Hotspot Strategy & Safety Staffing Update

Presenters:

- **Mary Danko**, Library Director
- **Jeff Nicholson**, City Data Analyst

Overview

Mary Danko introduced two major strategic changes implemented at the library to address increasing challenging behaviors:

1. **Embedding a Howard Center Street Outreach Team member** at the library.
2. **Transitioning from contracted security to in-house security staff.**

These changes were implemented with mayoral support.

Library Trespass Ordinance & Data Background

Mary provided context regarding the **Library's specific ordinance**, established pre-COVID, defining the library as a **limited public forum** and detailing rules for behavior and graduated trespass levels (Classes A–D).

Mary and Jeff Nicholson presented data showing **monthly trespasses, types of trespasses, staff time spent**, and **behavior-related incidents**, noting significant decreases following implementation of outreach + in-house security staffing.

Key Data Trends

- Clear decline in total trespasses after outreach specialist and security guard started.
- Reduced frequency of severe incidents (Class A).
- Staff time spent per trespass decreased.
- Howard Street Outreach specialist able to intervene before situations escalate.
- Library staff report noticeable improvements in workplace experience.
- Summer 2024 saw a peak of **60+ incidents in a rolling 30-day window**.

- Security currently covers **7 days/week**.
 - Howard Center outreach position covers **Tuesday–Saturday**.
- Mary hopes to expand outreach coverage to **7 days/week**. She is seeking grants and has mayoral support.

Discussion – Barriers to Public Space Programming & Event Permitting

Chair Schachter introduced a conversation stemming from June budget discussions.

Purpose: Identify barriers for outside groups who wish to program public spaces, with goal of expanding activation across Burlington while balancing staff capacity and budget constraints. Recent launch of **OpenGov** event portal noted as a developing tool.

Committee Member Perspectives

Councilor McKnight

Raised two key questions:

1. How can Burlington **increase outside-group programming** so the city provides space but external partners take on staffing and production?
2. How can the city ensure proper **permitting and enforcement**, especially for informal or pop-up events?

Councilor Neubieser

Asked for clarity on:

- Economic goals of expanding events (revenue vs. cost vs. saturation).
- ROI of city-sponsored activation.
- How Burlington's level of support compares with other municipalities.
- Budget implications of increasing or shifting city involvement.

City Staff Contributions

BCA (Doreen) Comments

- Staff capacity is extremely strained; large festivals require major administrative workload.
- Some fee restructuring at Waterfront Park successfully increased bookings.
- Need clearer priority setting from Council to focus staff strategy.
- Suggested shared Google Doc for cross-department barrier identification.

Parks (Phil Lewis)

- Waterfront Park bookings strong; weekends nearly full.
- Impact fees for events were recently adjusted based on producer feedback.
- Battery Park remains challenging due to safety environment and staffing limitations.

DPW (Jackie)

Outlined DPW involvement:

- Parking signage and meter bagging (requires 24-hour notice).
- Street closures require coordination with BPD and DPW Streets Division.
- Large events (e.g., marathon) require trucks, barricades, water department involvement.
- Scale of event determines necessary permitting (e.g., tent inspection by Fire Marshal)