

PARKS, ARTS & CULTURE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes –10/06/26

(Draft)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Councilor Schacter at **12:04 PM**. The agenda and minutes from the previous meeting were adopted without amendment.

- **Attendance**

Committee Members Present:

- Councilor Schachter (Chair)
- Councilor McKnight
- Councilor Neubieser

City Staff and Participants:

- Director Phil Lewis, Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront
- Director Kara Alnasrawi, CEDO
- Samantha McGinnis CEDO
- Director Mary Danko, Fletcher Free Library
- Director Doreen Kraft, Burlington City Arts
- Zach Williamson, Burlington City Arts
- CAO Katherine Schad, Mayor's Office
- Owen Milne, Community Sailing Center

- Members of the public

1. Community Sailing Center Presentation

Owen from the Community Sailing Center presented an overview of the organization's mission to expand equitable access to Lake Champlain, including programs serving BIPOC community members and individuals with disabilities. He highlighted ongoing barriers for residents who bring their own kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards, and introduced a proposal to restore **watercraft storage** on city land within the Urban Reserve.

Owen noted that:

- The project is **fully funded** by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.
- The proposal had previously received support from multiple city departments and the Planning Commission.

- Demand for storage remains strong: roughly **200 users** participated in the 2019 program, and recent market research continues to show unmet need.
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2. Burlington Watercraft Storage Project – Status & Delays

Councilor Schachter offered a detailed history of the watercraft storage proposal. Key points included:

- Initial delays arose from questions regarding **wetland classification** and zoning requirements.
 - The Conservation Board opposed the project in January 2025 due to wetland concerns.
 - Subsequent assessment by the Agency of Natural Resources determined that the wetland **is not contiguous with Lake Champlain** and would **not be regulated**.
 - Despite this finding, the City Administration has placed the project **on hold** pending completion of **Plan BTV 2050**, citing the need for legal clarity regarding the Urban Reserve and associated long-term planning.
 - Completion of the planning process could take **up to a year**.
 - Federal funding decisions will need to be finalized by **February 2027**.
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3. Committee Discussion – Sailing Center Project Planning Challenges

Committee members expressed concern about project uncertainty.

- Councilor McKnight voiced support for the project and questioned why resistance had Councilor Schachter late in the process.
- Councilor Schachter clarified that the administration is not opposed to the proposal; however, legal and regulatory frameworks governing the Urban Reserve require alignment through the comprehensive plan, expected to conclude in **late 2027**.
- Director Lewis noted additional complexities, including protection of turf areas, visual impacts, and the need for thorough community engagement under the Plan BTV framework.

Next Steps:

Councilor Schachter will follow up with the City Attorney's Office and relevant departments to identify possible interim solutions or alternative pathways forward.

4. Storage Demand and Data Review

Owen shared updated usage data:

- The 2019 program served **approximately 200 storage users**.

- Only **100 comparable storage spaces** have opened since, indicating continued and unmet demand for affordable public storage options along the waterfront.
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5. Discussion: Streamlining City Event Processes

The committee shifted to discussion of citywide event permitting and support systems. Councilor Schachter presented a draft memo outlining barriers and inefficiencies across departments. Key themes included:

Technology & Tools

- OpenGov now provides a clear front-end application process, but **backend workflows remain fragmented** across city departments.
- Staff cited challenges with **Civic Rec** and multiple systems that do not coordinate well.

Insurance & Security Requirements

- Outside groups often face significant costs related to insurance and security.
- Discussion on the burden on small community organizations and the need for consistent, predictable standards.

Role Clarification and Centralization

Councilor Schachter outlined recommendations, including:

- Creation of a **centralized event coordination role** to improve communication and reduce duplicative work.
- Expansion of OpenGov usage to support facility rentals and payment processing.
- Clearer standards for determining when and how security resources must be deployed.

City staff from Marketplace, BCA, Parks, and other departments shared feedback about ongoing workload pressures, interdepartmental coordination issues, and opportunities for improvement.

6. Event Security Process Improvement Recommendations

Councilor Schachter provided an overview of proposed improvements related specifically to event safety and management of non-city-hosted events. Recommendations included:

- Developing citywide standards for assessing security needs.
- Streamlining technology used for booking and communication.
- Ensuring small and large event organizers have accessible pathways to comply with requirements.

Councilor Neubieser requested more detailed breakdowns of recommendations, especially regarding food vendors. The committee discussed scheduling a **special meeting on October 20** to refine recommendations before presenting them to Council on **October 26**.

7. Next Steps & Adjournment

The committee will continue exploring the identified challenges, with future PAC meetings focusing on specific topics such as food carts, peddlers, and street artists.

The meeting adjourned at **1:14 PM**