



## DRAFT MINUTES

### CITY COUNCIL 19 OCTOBER 2026

**The South Burlington City Council held a regular meeting on Monday, 19 October 2026, at 6:30 p.m., in the Auditorium, 180 Market Street, and by Zoom.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** T. Barritt, Chair; E. Fitzgerald, L. Smith, A. Chalnack, Dr. B. Zigmund

**ALSO PRESENT:** J. Baker, City Manager; N. Storellicastro, Deputy City Manager; P. Conner, Director of Planning & Zoning; C. McNeil, City Attorney; I. Blanchard, Community Development Director; E. Towle, Public Works Director; B. McCreary, Water Resources; B. Miguez, Climate Action Manager; S. Crowley, T. Rizzo, A. Treston, S. Smith-Conroy, S. Julius, B. Sigrino, A. Caldwell, M. Jacobson, J. McCown, R. Moulton, P. Sallers, E. Langfeldt, A. Gill, J. McClory

#### **1. Pledge of Allegiance:**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

#### **2. Instructions on exiting building in case of emergency and review of technology options:**

Mr. Storellicastro provided instructions on emergency exit from the building and reviewed technology options.

#### **3. Additions, deletions or changes in the order of Agenda items:**

No changes were made to the Agenda.

#### **4. Comments and questions from the public not related to the agenda:**

Mr. Crowley of the Energy Committee drew attention to a recent article in the Journal of Bioscience regarding the destabilization of the earth's surface which affirms the work the City of South Burlington is doing and encourages doing more. Mr. Chalnack said he looks forward to the Energy Committee bringing proposals.

Ms. Treston, an East Terrace resident, said there is now a 25 mph sign on their street, which is good; however, the parking situation has gotten worse. Residents would like to hear a plan from the Council at its 2 November meeting.

**5. Councilors Announcements and Reports on Committee Assignments and City Manager's Report:**

Council members reported on recent meetings and events they had attended.

Mr. Storellicastro: Noted that Ms. Baker would be attending this meeting remotely.

As of today, there are 90 responses to the Budget Survey. The Survey will be up for 10 more days.

**6. Consent Agenda:**

- a. Consider and Sign Disbursements**
- b. Approve the allocation of \$11,190 of ARPA Inspired Fund Balance for the repair of garage bay doors at DPW**
- c. Award Williston Road Water Valve Construction Contract**

Mr. Chalnack moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Ms. Fitzgerald seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**7. Interview candidates to serve on the Development Review Board:**

The Council interviewed Jennifer McClory for the open position on the Development Review Board.

**8. Receive a Presentation from Brewer Parkway residents on the recent water main project:**

Mr. Storellicastro reviewed the history of the project, noting that its main focus was to restore the condition of hydrants. Since the project was done, residents

have noted issues with water pressure and flow. Mr. Storellicastro said the flow issue is the result of the size of the pipe, and this will continue until a second pipe is installed.

Other issues that have been raised by residents include site restoration, the planting of a tree, a property that has been using 1000 gallons of water per day (80 is the norm), and frustration with the project contractor.

Mr. Storellicastro said long term solutions include fixing the flow which would require replacing the existing line (\$820,000) or connecting to Spear Street (\$1,200,000) or both (\$2,000,000).

Mr. Barritt asked if there could be corrosion restricting the flow. Mr. McCreary said that is what they saw in a situation on Shelburne Road. He noted that this project did not replace the entire length of the water main.

Dr. Zigmund asked if there is potential mitigation at the top of the hill with pumps as was done in her neighborhood. Mr. McCreary said the City does not own or maintain those pumps, but he would check to see if that could be a help. He stressed it would be at the homeowners' expense. Mr. Smith there can also be pumps in homes and asked if that is allowed. Mr. McCreary said that is regulated by the State. He said he would look to see if there are options.

Ms. Fitzgerald asked if there are routine inspections and/or other neighborhoods with similar issues. Mr. McCreary said they inspect regularly. He could not recall any other neighborhoods with neighborhood-wide issues.

With regard to the home using 1000 gpd, Mr. McCreary said that has now stopped.

Comments from residents were then solicited and received as follows:

Ms. Smith-Conroy: Wanted to see the project completed correctly, back to the "original condition or better." That is not the case now. Water pressure should be what it was before the digging began. There are homes where toilets now can't be flushed, and residents can do laundry. Work also needs to be done on lawns where there are now sinking spots. The contractor never rolled uneven surfaces, just threw some seed and a lot of hay. Mr. Poulin said they would be back in October, but they have not been. It is not true that all work was done in

the City right-of-way. Some work was done half-way up her driveway. They were unsafe for 5 years, and now it's worse than before.

Ms. Julius: A wildflower garden that had been transplanted from her late mother's home was destroyed and a memorial bench was moved onto her neighbor's law with no notification. Poulin vehicles parked in her driveway. Mr. Poulin said he would seed the bank with wildflowers. He never did. The neighborhood is not like it was before the project. With a project that big, the City should have made sure there was better communication.

Mr. Sigrino: The street was known for its maple trees. Now there are only a few remaining. Poulin dug a 20 foot hole in his yard so that for 7 months he had to drive over the median to get out of the house. They also took away 2-3 inches of topsoil. He feels that these properties were degraded, not improved. He added that several loads of topsoil could help make him feel "whole" again. They were a "hometown" kind of place and would like to be that way again.

Mr. Caldwell: Thanked the City for restoring the hydrants. He has an architectural and planning background. He would like to see what the pre- and post-construction figures regarding water pressure and flow.

Ms. Jacobson: Lives at the top of Brewer Parkway. She read an e-mail from the water resources company. PSI is not the only variable in this situation.

Mr. Moulton: Meeting a legal standard minimum is nothing to brag about. The 6-inch pipe has to be replaced with an 8-inch pipe. He noted there is no timeline for this.

Mr. McCown: Had no problem with pressure before the project. They now have problems with the toilet, washer, and dishwasher. He questioned whether some particulate matter could have gotten loose during the project. Things are worse than before.

Mr. Barritt said he hears the issue of lack of communication with the contractor. Some damage should have been remediated. The Council will ask staff to look into this and to look into the flow issue.

Mr. McCreary said there is a water system Master Plan. They do flow checks at different times of day throughout the system and look at areas with issues.

Projects need to be prioritized. Mr. Barritt said that is a strategic plan, not a tactical plan.

Mr. Smith said the project seems to have been a perfect storm, and residents need an apology. Communication and effective remediation are vital.

Ms. Baker said she is responsible for operations of the City. This is a very challenging conversation, pitting residents against staff. She noted they have learned lessons from this project and will take what they have learned tonight and come back with more information. Ms. Baker apologized to the community. Mr. Storellicastro said he felt the City can follow up with the contractor.

Ms. Smith-Conroy said the contractor is very young. They made many mistakes and broke more pipes than they installed. She hoped the Council could provide a date when the remaining issues will be resolved. She also noted there should not have been 5 years with no functioning hydrants.

**9. Receive an Update on the Building and Thermal Implementation Plan and consider what actions to take parallel:**

Ms. Miguez noted that the City applied for and received a Municipal Planning Grant which is paying for much of the consultant's time. This company has worked in Vermont previously, particularly looking at electrification. They have completed the first few phases of the project and have begun the first public feedback of the plan. They will be addressing sequencing, affordability, staffing, etc. Staff's recommendation is to let the process go through. There should be a draft report in January with completion of the project anticipated in March. The City is also working with two people at VEI, a California consulting firm, who will be more involved with implementation.

Mr. Chalnack felt there are things the City should be doing now as this is "life support" for the planet. He then enumerated things he felt the City should do now:

- a. Understand the City's authority to do the things it needs to do
- b. Learn how to acquire any authority the City does not now have
- c. Investigate any City Charter changes needed to regulate building stock
- d. Acquire more data: how are the City's ordinances working? What portion of homes are electric? Can ordinances be improved?

Mr. Chalnack then requested that the Council instruct staff to investigate the City's authority to do things, and to get the needed data.

Mr. Smith agreed with Mr. Chalnack regarding timing and urgency. He said he hears people say "we're too small to make a difference," but this is an emergency and needs to be pushed. He also acknowledged the capacity of staff and the need to consider affordability for all.

Ms. Fitzgerald said she would continue to look for data, and it would help to build consensus with the community. She stressed the need to prioritize investments and act with deliberation not panic.

Mr. Chalnack said they need to know what codes they can adopt. Mr. McNeil said this is work that can be done if it is a Council priority. Mr. Chalnack asked if it would push aside other priorities. Mr. McNeil said it would keep him from working on something else. Ms. Baker reminded the Council that there is no Deputy City Attorney at the moment. She suggested hiring outside counsel. There is a budget for that. Mr. Chalnack said to do it. Mr. Smith wanted to see an RFP. Mr. Barritt said as this is totally unexpected, he asked to put it on a future agenda. Members agreed.

Mr. Sellers of Run on Climate said they are ready to help the City implement its plan. They have done work on policies in the country including energy audits at time of sale or for rental properties.

Ms. Rizzo, a UVM student also with Run on Climate said she supports the work the City is doing. She said a policy to consider is "energy use disclosure," knowing how much it will cost to heat a home when a property is bought or leased.

NOTE: The following items were heard out of order but are recorded here in the order in which they appear on the Agenda.

**10. Possible Action to approve public notice to institute proceedings re: laying out of right-of-way depicted on Official Map over 1720 Spear Street:**

Mr. Chalnack recused himself due to a potential conflict of interest.

Mr. Storellicastro reviewed the history and noted the City has been engaging with the property owner. The intent of this item is to warn a hearing to institute proceedings which will stop the clock.

Mr. McNeil said notice would go to The Other Paper. The proceedings would start on 6 November at a special Noon City Council meeting. The Council will then inspect the property and hear from interested parties. Discussions with the property owner will continue during this process.

Mr. Smith moved to approve the public notice to institute proceedings regarding the laying out of right-of-way depicted on Official Map over 1720 Spear Street, and to set a public hearing for 6 November 2026 at Noon. Dr. Zigmund seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Chalnack rejoined the Council.

**11. Approve the Step 3 Downtown application submittal:**

Mr. Conner said this will authorize the City Manager to submit the Step 3 downtown application which is ready to go. He was confident the application will be granted.

Mr. Chalnack moved to approve Resolution 2026-15 and authorize the City Manager to submit an application to Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development for a City Center downtown area. Mr. Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**12. Discuss the Old Farm Road Development Agreement and a potential CHIP application:**

Mr. Storellicastro said the purpose of this item is to refamiliarize the Council with the existing Development Agreement, to introduce the Council to the CHIP process, and to hear from O'Brien regarding a potential CHIP process.

In August of 2025, the Council approved an agreement to relocate Old Farm Road for traffic flow and safety benefits. It also unlocks potential for additional units and commercial development. The agreement conveys a strip of land to the O'Briens, relocates and reconstructs the road, conveys the new road to the City, and gives the rest of Old Farm Road to the O'Briens. A map of the area was shown indicating the current and future road.

Mr. Storellicastro then explained that CHIP (Community Housing & Infrastructure Program) has become law. It encourages housing development and is similar to a TIF with new incremental property tax revenue financing infrastructure. Unlike a TIF, CHIP can be used only for a single contiguous site and cannot be used within a TIF district. Mr. Storellicastro then showed the guidelines of the program, noting that it is the municipality that must submit the application. The debt must be incurred within 5 years with the increment retainment of up to 20 years.

Mr. Langfeldt and Mr. Gill, representing the O'Briens, noted that they are a 70 year old company very connected to the South Burlington community. Mr. Langfeldt reviewed what they own in the City. He then showed a rendering of the O'Brien Farm Project including the potential commercial lots. He reviewed what has already been built and what will go elsewhere on the property. They are now building a 100% fossil fuel free neighborhood which is being very well received by the market.

Mr. Langfeldt cited the rising costs of construction with the cost to build a home being up 45% since 2021. There is also a problem with trade labor and with interest rates which affect people's ability to purchase. Materials have gone up 6.7% in the past 12 months. All of this impacts their ability to deliver on the infrastructure requirements for the project.

The CHIP program which they are requesting would cover the re-orientation of Old Farm Road, a public park near the historic barn, the cost of the sidewalk to Hinesburg Road, and the rec path from Kennedy Drive to Potash Bridge on Route 116. Mr. Langfeldt said it is the perfect tool for their situation. There would be 43 homes, and will reduce the cost of those homes. The increment would be specific to those homes, but it would also open up another section of very dynamic residential/commercial development.

Dr. Zigmund expressed concern that this diverts education funding, and if the homes don't sell, the taxpayers pay. In addition, the City has learned that the TIF district is not growing at the rate the City had hoped. Mr. Langfeldt said it is the developer who takes on all the debt, not the taxpayers. If the homes don't sell, O'Brien is on the hook. He stressed that because of costs, nothing can now be built. This is bad for them and bad for the City as there is no Grand List growth.

Ms. Baker noted that TIF building is growing faster than the City had anticipated. She noted that the State will make the education funding whole. Mr. Langfeldt

added that South Burlington has an education impact fee, and each individual home owner is paying \$8,000 to \$12,000 per unit, so new homes are already supporting the local education fund.

Mr. Smith said he is skeptical and will need convincing. He asked the lot sizes for the proposed 43 homes. Mr. Langfeldt said they are all footprint lots, almost single-family condos on 7 or 8 acres. Mr. Smith asked the size of the units. Mr. Gill said they range from 1500 to 3200 square feet. They will range in price from a high of \$600,000 for an 1800 square foot home to \$1,300,000 for a 3500 square foot home.

Mr. Langfeldt noted they had built some “cottage concept” units (1500 square feet) which were lower in price, but they did not sell, so they are being rented.

Mr. Smith said he sees this as shifting the cost of development onto all tax payers, and it make it look like the home cost less than it actually does. He added that there are many homes with one or two residents in them. If there were a place for those people to move to, families could have those homes.

Mr. Langfeldt said those are valid points, but they have already delivered the affordable units required in the project at a significant loss per unit. There are 105 units in this phase, so the 43 is a small number. Early homes are not turning over for even more money. He stressed that new homes will never be priced for everyone.

Mr. Gill said Old Farm Road is an existing city road that they are required to move 150 feet through ledge. The development itself did not require the moving of that road. It is that situation which is driving this problem.

Mr. Chalnack said he is also skeptical. He felt they are taking money from some municipal fund and some money from the education fund to build 43 homes faster. He didn't see this as a good policy. However, there is also the possibility of building the commercial base more quickly. He would like to see figures on that potential.

Ms. Fitzgerald asked if the same electric model would be in the 43 homes. Mr. Langfeldt said it would. They are doing geothermal wells on site. Ms. Fitzgerald said there are elements of the proposal that address city goals (e.g. connectivity). There are also questions, and she wanted to hear more.

Mr. Barritt said if the City Council is cautiously optimistic about working with the O'Briens on a plan, he would support funding for just the moving of the road and the sidewalk. Mr. Langfeldt said they can isolate each element and present a variety of options. Mr. Barritt stressed that the moving of Old Farm Road is an impediment to the project. Mr. Smith questioned whether to move the road at citizens' expense.

Dr. Zigmund said there is a lot of commercial space on Market Street that is still vacant and said that is also a risk. Mr. Barritt said it is the O'Brien's risk, not the city's.

Mr. Barritt asked if the Council wanted staff to get more granular regarding costs. Mr. Smith said he needs to be convinced given everything in the City Plan. He was open to staff doing that.

Mr. Gill stressed that they can build the 43 homes without moving the road. The moving of the road opens up the commercial potential. With the CHIP, there will be a source to repay the loan by opening the commercial possibility. Mr. Langfeldt said the project will allow people to live their lives on one site, being able to age and move as needed. He added that Beta has significant residential needs as well as commercial needs. People will be able to live/work/play on the same site. That is the kind of development the city wants.

Mr. Langfeldt said they would like to parallel creating the application with providing information the city needs. Dr. Zigmund said she didn't favor starting the application now. Mr. Langfeldt stressed that they can do the modeling, but they can't interact with VEPC; only the city can do that. He asked to get on an upcoming agenda.

**13. Legislative Advocacy Agenda: Receive recommended areas for Legislative Advocacy and discuss Council priorities:**

Mr. Smith asked to move this item to the next meeting agenda. Ms. Baker asked members to send her anything they want for that item.

**14. Discuss placing wildlife-friendly bulbs (amber) in the lights at Hubbard Park and directing the hours of operation of the lights:**

Dr. Zigmund noted the lights are not yet in, and she wanted to discuss amber lights which are better for wildlife. Ms. Baker said there are related permit conditions. She will get information for the next meeting.

**15. Review the significant agenda topics for Council's 2 November 2026 City Council Meeting:**

- a. Receive and possibly approve a Housing Committee recommendation that \$200,000 be allocated from the Housing Trust Fund to the Champlain Housing Trust Dorset Commons project**
- b. Receive the Chittenden County Planning Commission Annual Report**
- c. Council requested conversation on housing trends and targets in the State, County and City**
- d. Town Meeting TV Annual Report and Budget presentation**
- e. Legislative Advocacy Agenda. Discuss Council priorities**
- f. Discussion on the Council's goals for a vacant building and graffiti ordinance**
- g. Process improvements for high-value (BBWTP, Bridge) and reporting**
- h. Standardize communication to residents who contact the City Council**

Mr. Chalnick asked to add discussion of the City's authority regarding thermal regulation.

**16. Other Business:**

Ms. Fitzgerald noted the Council has not received updates from GMT or the Airport in a long time. Ms. Baker noted that if Ms. Riehle has stepped down from the Airport position, the Council will need to appoint someone.

**17. Consider entering an Executive Session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3) for the purpose of discussing appointments to the Development Review Board: and**

**18. Consider entering into Executive Session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(1)(F) and (2) for the purpose of receiving confidential**

**attorney-client communications and discussing the negotiation of  
real estate lease or purchase options, specifically 1720 Spear Street:**

Mr. Chalnack moved that the Council make a specific finding that premature general public knowledge of:

- 1) The appointment, employment, evaluation of a public officer or employee; and
  - 2) Confidential attorney-client communications and discussion on the negotiating or securing of real estate purchase or lease options
- Would clearly place this public body at a substantial disadvantage. Mr. Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Chalnack then moved that the City Council enter into Executive Session under 1 V.S.A. Sections 313(a)(3), (a)(1)(F) and (a)(2) for the purpose of discussing:

- 1) Evaluation and Appointment of Candidates for the Development Review Board
- 2) Confidential attorney-client communications and the negotiating or securing of real estate purchase or lease options re: 1720 Spear Street

Inviting Mr. Storellicastro into session with the Council for discussion of the first topic; and inviting Mr. Storellicastro, Mr. Conner, Ms. Towle, and Mr. McNeil into session with Council for the discussion of the second topic. Mr. Chalnack will be recused from discussion of the second topic. Mr. Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The Council entered Executive Session at 10:16 p.m.

Ms. Fitzgerald moved to exit Executive Session. Mr. Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Council exited Executive Session at 11:05 p.m.

**As there was no further business to come before the Council Mr. Smith moved to adjourn. Ms. Fitzgerald seconded. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:06 p.m.**

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**Clerk**