

Resolution Relating to

DECLARING THE UNPRECEDENTED INCREASE IN SUBSTANCE USE A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS AND TOGETHER WITH DRUG ACTIVITY IN OUR CITY TO BE OUR TOP PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY PRIORITY, AND AMENDING APPENDIX B RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE CITY COUNCIL TO ADD A STANDING ITEM TO EVERY AGENDA

RESOLUTION 6.2.

Sponsor(s): Public Safety Committee:
(Paul, Grant, Doherty)

Introduced: 10/10/23

Referred to: _____

Action: adopted

Date: 10/10/23

Signed by Mayor: 10/13/23

CITY OF BURLINGTON

In the year Two Thousand Twenty-Three

Resolved by the City Council of the City of Burlington, as follows:

- 1 That WHEREAS, between January 1 and October 1, 2023, the Burlington Police Department (BPD) and
- 2 Burlington Fire Department (BFD) responded to a record 398 overdoses, far surpassing the prior year’s twelve
- 3 month total; and
- 4 WHEREAS, overdose responses increased by 75% between 2021 and 2022, and could increase as
- 5 much as 100% between 2022 and 2023; and
- 6 WHEREAS, across the City of Burlington, community members continue to struggle with substance
- 7 use disorder, lack of shelter, mental health challenges and other health concerns; and
- 8 WHEREAS, by every indication, we will lose a record number of Vermonters to accidental drug
- 9 overdose in 2023 and several counties in the State are experiencing considerably higher rates of overdose
- 10 death than Chittenden County, making this crisis a true emergency for the State; and
- 11 WHEREAS, Burlingtonians understand that substance use disorder is a disease and demands our
- 12 concern, compassion and support as a medical and public health issue; and
- 13 WHEREAS, since 2017 and earlier, this City Council has a long history of overwhelmingly supporting
- 14 medically assisted treatments and harm reduction, and has vigorously advocated for overdose prevention
- 15 centers (OPCs) and done extensive work to establish a designated site in Burlington; and this City Council
- 16 continues to express concern and support about the wellbeing of all community members; and
- 17 WHEREAS, the State of Vermont has not, since the end of the pandemic emergency in 2021, acted
- 18 with significant urgency to embrace all evidenced-based harm reduction strategies on a statewide level; and
- 19 WHEREAS, that despite having available funds, the Vermont Department of Health has been slow to
- 20 distribute the \$8.5 million in Opioid Settlement monies allocated in May 2023 as well as an additional \$15.0
- 21 million in State funds that needs to be allocated by the Legislature. While the City of Burlington has directly
- 22 received \$220,000 through Opioid Settlement agreements and has intentionally committed those monies
- 23 toward new and innovative tools to support community members struggling with substance use disorders; and

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I hereby certify that this resolution has been sent to the following department(s) on

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Approved....., 20

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Attest:

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24 WHEREAS, the overdose crisis must be addressed with the highest call of urgency; and

25 WHEREAS, drug distribution activity in neighborhoods, public drug use, discarded syringes, and
26 general discomfort at the level of despair is a most challenging and important issue, one that must also be
27 addressed with the highest call of urgency; and

28 WHEREAS, adding a standing item to the City Council agenda will ensure that attention is paid to the
29 drug crisis issue at each and every Council meeting, which is likely to contribute to greater progress being
30 made on the issue and will increase communication with the residents of Burlington, informing them of
31 resources being provided, data updates, legislative updates, law enforcement and other actions, as well as
32 ways residents can help;

33 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that it is with the utmost urgency that the City Council
34 declares the overdose crisis is our City and Vermont’s top public health crisis; and

35 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that it is with similar urgency that the City Council declares that the
36 increase in crime associated with substance use that endangers the safety of our community is our City’s most
37 urgent public safety issue and must continue to be addressed by our law enforcement personnel and
38 prosecutors; and

39 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the public safety and health approaches must go hand in hand, and
40 are all part of the holistic approach to fully addressing this crisis; and

41 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council, once again, reiterates and reaffirms its strong
42 and unwavering support for all evidenced-based harm reduction strategies, including overdose
43 prevention centers; and

44 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council affirms its strong and unwavering support for
45 drug checking programs; and

46 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council reaffirms that assisting those who struggle from
47 a medical disease requires medical treatment, just as those who suffer from any medical disease would be
48 treated and supported in their journey to recovery; and

49 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council extends heartfelt gratitude to and expresses
50 support for the staff of the City departments, including our first responders, members of the Police and Fire
51 Departments, community organizations, and residents who continue to serve on the frontlines of the overdose
52 crisis doing this work every day; and

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53 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council fully supports recruitment efforts to expand the
54 ranks of City employees, including our first responders, members of the Police and Fire Departments, and
55 community partners who dedicate their time and professional skills to this emergency; and

56 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council joins and supports the Administration's ongoing
57 efforts to work in collaboration with neighboring municipalities and community partners to urge and implore
58 the Department of Health to immediately disburse the opioid settlement monies allocated during the 2023
59 legislative session, to work to improve the health and safety of our communities by providing care, support,
60 treatment and recovery and harm reduction interventions to people who use drugs, and addressing the root
61 issues; and

62 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council calls on State leadership to increase the
63 availability of prosecutorial resources and the judiciary in Chittenden County with the hiring of additional
64 Deputy State's Attorneys and Superior Judges, better addressing any recruitment and retention challenges in
65 our State's Attorney Offices, and designating and assigning retired members of the Judiciary to sit in
66 Chittenden County to address the backlog of cases and see that cases brought to the courts are addressed in a
67 reasonable response time; and

68 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council requests that the Public Safety Committee,
69 together with harm reduction, health, school, fire and law enforcement partners and the private sector organize
70 at least two public forums for community members to talk directly with and learn from harm reduction
71 specialists, medical personnel who have a keen understanding of this crisis, along with the Chittenden County
72 State's Attorney, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Vermont, law enforcement personnel, and members of
73 our Legislative delegation, and the Senate Appropriations Committee, and Senate Health and Welfare
74 Committee, as well as the House Human Services Committee and the House Health Care Committee. and
75 leadership in the Governor's Administration, so the community can come together and participate in
76 conversation around the benefits of harm reduction in treating this disease, the status of necessary enforcement
77 and prosecutorial efforts against those engaged in the for-profit distribution of controlled substances, and their
78 perspective on this crisis and its impact on lives and our community by November 2023; and

79 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in addition to the two public forums for community members, the
80 City Council requests that the Public Safety Committee organize a forum for City employees to meet with
81 these same professionals so they may share their experiences and perspective on the work they do by
82 November 2023; and

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83 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council requests that in the interest of serving the public,
84 each monthly police Chief’s report include data on this crisis, including drug tip data, along with information
85 made widely available to the community on how it can assist City employees; and

86 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council requests that in the interest of serving the public,
87 the Fire Chief continue to provide data related to their calls for service (including heat maps) and input on new
88 strategies; and

89 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, in the interest of serving the public and helping to ensure public
90 safety objectives that the City Council shares with the Chittenden County State’s Attorney’s Office, the City
91 respectfully requests that the Chittenden County State’s Attorney’s Office provide the City with quarterly
92 reports setting forth the number of cases referred to it by law enforcement for certain categories of illegal
93 activity occurring within Burlington including firearm violence, illegal distribution of controlled substances,
94 burglary, automobile theft and retail theft, and if possible the number of prosecutions resulting from these
95 referrals, the current disposition of those prosecutions and the current number of backlogged cases; and

96 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council’s Public Safety Committee hears from our fire,
97 police and community-based public safety personnel that the responses we are currently employing to the
98 overdose crisis are not the solution, that we must try new approaches, pilot new responses, be bold and not be
99 afraid to test these approaches, that we must acknowledge that these approaches may not be perfect at the
100 outset and may need time in the field but we must get started now and any new approaches will give us needed
101 experience and data from which to further build strong innovative programs; and

102 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council requests that all City employees, community
103 members, the state legislature, and the Governor work with us to find these innovative solutions and asks that
104 development of these ideas be a part of the community and City employee forums as it is clear that this crisis
105 is a statewide and national issue; and

106 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and City Council respectfully invite the Governor and
107 members of the Vermont legislature to the City of Burlington so that they may see the effects of the crisis and
108 that members of the City Council travel to Montpelier to speak to the Governor and members of the
109 legislature; and

110 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Council Rule 16(c) Rules and Regulations of the City Council,
111 Appendix B of the Burlington Code of Ordinances be amended to add a standing item entitled “Public Health
112 and Safety Emergency Updates” to the Council meeting agenda, such that rule 16(c) shall read “(c) Climate

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113 emergency updates, **Public Health and Safety Emergency Updates**, information presentations, and
114 commission reports (also can adjourn to local control commission, board of abatement, etc.); and

115 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this agenda item is reserved for items of discussion related to the
116 public health and safety issues outlined herein that are not already on the meeting agenda such as: Updates
117 from the Mayor’s administration and Public Safety Committee on progress towards addressing this crisis,
118 updates from Councilors on initiatives they are working on related to this crisis and requests that the Public
119 Safety Committee continue to prioritize this crisis and discuss further ways to encourage coordination of all
120 resources to make this our City’s top public health and safety priority.

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123 PSC/JP/Resolutions 2023/*Declaring The Unprecedented Increase In Substance Use A Public Health Crisis And Together With Drug Activity In*
124 *Our City To Be Our Top Public Health And Safety Priority, And Amending Appendix B Rules And Regulations Of The City Council To Add A*
125 *Standing Item To Every Agenda*

126 10/10/2023

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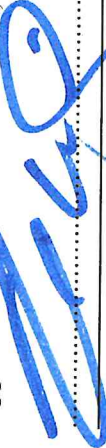
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Adopted by the City Council

October 10, 20 23

 Clerk

Approved October 13, 20 23

 Mayor

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