

Thanks for opening this document, and for planning to vote in the upcoming Burlington election. The election is on Tuesday, March 7th, 2023. Polls are open 7am - 7pm; you can register that day, if you have not already. [Polling locations here.](#)

All registered voters should have received a ballot that they can [drop off at a box](#) on or before March 6th.

Here's what you'll find on the ballot. There are a **lot** of ballot questions! [You can see sample ballots from all eight wards here](#), and find out who's running for open seats in your ward and district. Below is some analysis about each of the ballot questions, which are **the same across the city**.

For some more information about candidates on the ballot, [check out this article](#). There's more below about candidates, but **ballot questions are often neglected, so they're staying at the top here**.

1. Approval of the school budget **YES**
 - a. I'm not deeply involved with school issues, but have attended a number of NPAs at which school board reps are present. [Here's a one pager about the budget](#), compiled by the committed group of people who have worked hard to maintain a high standard of public education in Burlington. It's unfortunate that we have to pay for school budgets via property taxes, but you can also [file for a property tax rebate](#) if you're a homeowner. If you're a tenant and want to join the struggle for affordable rental housing, check out the [Burlington Tenants Union](#).
2. Implementation of a carbon pollution impact fee for large commercial and industrial buildings, and new construction **NO**
 - a. This is a "diabolically worded" (someone else's words that I'm borrowing, thank you!) ballot item to make it seem like voting yes means reducing carbon pollution. Really, this item is a go-ahead to keep calling biomass (energy derived from formerly alive stuff like trees) "clean" and "renewable," and cut down many many trees to feed the McNeil Generating station. McNeil pumps out lots of electricity for Burlington *and* should be replaced with more genuinely renewable energy production—but this ballot item is the opposite of that.
3. Charter change re ward boundaries (aka, redistricting of the 8 wards) **whatever**
 - a. This will pass. Redistricting needed to happen this year because wards must have population evenly distributed among them (they all have to be the same size). Burlington grew, and the 2020 Census confirmed that, so the City Council batted around a bunch of maps. [Here is the final map that we're voting on](#). I will probably vote yes; there are a few qualms with this map that will just have to wait till next time. They are:
 - i. The King/Maple neighborhood, one of the most economically and racially diverse in the city, will remain divided, which takes political power away from people who are often disenfranchised because of their identities.
 - ii. There's always a question about where college students go, since they have both the power to swing an election and a built-in short tenure wherever they live on

campus. Sharing the weight of campuses in Burlington across wards is a feat of mapmaking that nobody has quite nailed yet.

- iii. We need a better model - the system of having ward councilors and district councilors (N, E, S, W) means that power's consolidated, and often held onto by a long time, by the district councilors. Instead, it'd be great to have two councilors per district.

4. All legal resident voting **YES**

- a. This would allow all legal residents of Burlington to vote in local elections, and gain a meaningful avenue to participation in the community where they live, work, play, worship, and pay taxes.

5. Siting of polling places **YES**

- a. I don't totally understand what the implementation of this would look like, but it increases polling place accessibility, which is a good thing—especially when we have wards that are so spread out.

6. Ranked choice voting **YES**

- a. Adds the option to use ranked choice voting for school board commissioners, Mayor, and ward election officers. Ranked choice voting allows voters to make multiple choices when voting, which helps us stay out of the trap of voting for the 'lesser evil' candidate when we'd rather vote for the 'greater good' candidate. If you vote for someone who doesn't get enough votes to be a viable contender, instead of losing your vote, your vote is then reallocated to your second choice candidate.

7. Community control of police **YES**

- a. The original iteration of this proposal was passed by City Council in 2020 but vetoed by the Mayor despite tremendous community pressure. The demand for a community oversight body that would have disciplinary powers over the Burlington Police Department emerged from a Black-led movement active in 2020, and has taken its current form in this ballot question. Currently, the Burlington Police Department has no meaningful oversight, including in instances of police misconduct; this charter change would address that troubling gap in our public safety system. [You can learn more here.](#)

8. Proposition Zero **YES**

- a. Voter-backed initiatives are crucial to ensuring that we, community members and tax payers of Burlington, have agency over what happens with our public resources. Nearly every other city and town in the state allows voters to introduce ordinances, which is an important way to make our voices heard and raise issues that might otherwise go ignored. Passing this resolution will change that, and give us the access to direct democracy that nearly all other Vermonters have! [You can read more about the powers of Prop 0 here.](#)

Candidates on the ballot

Five seats are up for grabs—all the district seats (which are made up of two wards each, and correspond to the cardinal directions), and Ward 8.

- **North district** (Wards 4 and 7) Mark Barlow is running uncontested. *Will you run there next time?!!*
- **East district** (Wards 1 and 8) [Jake Schumann](#) (progressive) is running against Tim Doherty, who [accidentally copied and pasted](#) segments of Maea Brandt's campaign website onto his own. Tim's a fancy lawyer and Maea's a landlord. Vote for Jake.
- **Central district** (Wards 2 and 3) [Melo Grant](#), member of the [Burlington Police Commission](#) and local DJ, is running against Avery Muzikar. Avery seems to think people in this staunchly progressive part of town are going to vote for him out of "tiredness" with progressive representation. Vote for Melo.
- **South district** (Wards 5 and 6) is where it's the biggest relief to have ranked choice voting. FaRied Munarsyah, who's behind People's Kitchen, the mutual aid hot food extravaganza that manages to always be serving where the action is, is running. Vote for him! And, [Will Anderson](#) is running as a progressive, so you can rank vote for Will as well (order them as you please). Joan Shannon is the 20-year incumbent. To say the least, she doesn't need your vote.
- **Ward 8** site of much political strife in the last few years; Ward 8 residents are really ready to have some representation! Rhone Allison is running as a progressive, and they seem like a strong candidate to me. Hannah King is running for the second time as a Democrat, and looking to capitalize on residents' wariness of electing another college student.

This document was compiled by Lena Greenberg, who lives and works in Burlington.