

THE WORK SESSION OF THE CITY OF BURLINGTON COMMON COUNCIL, COUNTY OF BURLINGTON, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, WAS HELD ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2025, AT 7:00 PM, IN THE CITY HALL, 525 HIGH STREET, BURLINGTON, NJ, PURSUANT TO THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT.

This meeting was called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Law. This meeting of October 14, 2025, was included in a list of meetings notice sent to the Burlington County Times and the Trenton Times on January 6, 2025, and advertised in said newspapers on January 10, 2025, posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building on January 6, 2025, and has remained continuously posted as the required notices under the Statute. In addition, a copy of this notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the office of the Municipal Clerk.

Cindy A. Crivaro, RMC
Municipal Clerk

The Municipal Clerk advised the public of the location of the two fire exits: one on the left after exiting the Council Chamber and the other being the entrance to the building.

Governing Body Members present: Dave Ballard, Dawn Bergner-Thompson, George Chachis, Geneva Rijs, Suzanne Woodard.

Absent: Timothy Hutton, Richard Spaulding.

Also present: Mayor Barry Conaway, Administrator Johanna Conyer, Municipal Attorney Justin Strausser, Police Chief Ryan Elbertson.

SALUTE TO FLAG

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

PRESENTATION

Police Department Statistics – Police Chief Ryan Elberston

Chief Elbertson gave an overview of the Police Department public safety trends, operational updates and policy requirements, specifically: violent crimes, burglaries, calls for service, cases, arrests, MV crashes, summons, use of force summary report, NJ Attorney General Vehicular Pursuit Policy Purpose & Restrictions, body worn and in-car cameras, new hires.

Discussion ensued regarding perpetrators, staff, cameras, community policing, County Prosecutors Office involvement with the city, resources available, concerns with quads and electric bikes.

Mayor Conaway asked if there were any ordinances that would add a tool to the Police Department.

Chief Elbertson suggested an ordinance to prevent quads from getting gas in the City.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Chachis referred to Resolution No. 209-2025 as follows adopted on September 2, 2025:

“Given the ongoing backlog of code enforcement processing since COVID and its negative impact on the City’s development, Council requests that the City Administration issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to determine the feasibility of hiring a DCA approved contractor or contractors short-term to help resolve code enforcement issues”.

Councilman Chachis asked administration for a response.

BA Conyer suggested she had spoken to the Council President; it was thought that the resolution came about because Council thought that there was a backlog due to the inspections not done in 2020 due to Covid.

Councilman Chachis spoke of a prior presentation given by the Construction Official where he said he needed 3 more employees; spoke of a 20-business day process; it is taking too long, not efficient; asked how the hiring is going for this office.

BA Conyer spoke of advertising for the positions a few month ago for Code Enforcement; the candidates had no experience; the job has been posted again; spoke of Civil Service positions; there is no more hiring for the Construction Office, we have all the staff; spoke of time windows for appointments; spoke of the 20-day process after a completed application; we have one Construction Official and Subcode Officials; there have been no reports from the DCA or County Board of Appeals that the City has gone beyond the 20-day period.

Councilman Chachis suggested that the resolution refers to hiring DCA approved individuals.

BA Conyer suggested there is no such thing; DCA doesn’t license or endorse companies.

Councilman Chachis inquired about hiring a consultant or 3rd party.

BA Conyer spoke of licenses required.

Councilman Chachis requested that hiring a 3rd party be looked into.

BA Conyer suggested she would put out an RFP for a company that does Code Enforcement; they will be required to have all of the licensing; will also follow up with Civil Service; we already have a staff.

Councilman Chachis asked for an update on the fees for the EV stations.

BA Conyer said Bill Kirchner from ERI will be coming to the next meeting to discuss and answer questions related to the proposed EV Ordinance.

CP Bergner-Thompson spoke of the SDL system; asked for confirmation that the system will tell the public where their cases stand; will it inform them of reasons for delays?

BA Conyer explained that it will only show the status if there is a completed application; it only gives the disposition of the review.

CP Bergner-Thompson asked for confirmation that if items are missing to complete the application, the system does not provide that information.

BA Conyer indicated that is correct.

Councilwoman Woodard suggested creating a check list system.

BA Conyer spoke of an existing check list and a recent flow chart created.

Councilwoman Woodard asked that it be revised to be more comprehensible, tactile; saw the handout, it is complicated.

CP Bergner-Thompson suggested something similar to what the MVC has.

BA Conyer said she will send the link to what we have; the biggest issue is people not doing what they are supposed to do and/or not being aware.

Councilwoman Woodard spoke of correspondence in the last Weekly Packet from the Clerk's Office regarding a discretionary property tax grace period during the federal shut down; spoke of many people from the city who worked at Fort Dix and McGuire in the past, this shut down would affect them; the correspondence is recommending that we offer a grace period; suggested the City look at considering.

BA Conyer asked for the information to be shared for her review.

Councilman Ballard spoke of a resident who spoke at the last meeting claiming the DCA came to her property and was told that all she was being told to do by the Construction Office, she didn't have to do; asked if it can be verified.

BA Conyer said she has no way of confirming; the DCA can go to private homes, they don't give us a report of that; the DCA is a regulatory authority, if they found us in violation of something they would put it in writing; we have not received anything from the DCA; not sure if it would be appropriate for her to confirm whether or not the DCA went to a person's home

Councilman Ballard suggested if the resident's claims are accurate, it could be a learning experience for the employees.

Mayor Conaway said we would hope that they would send us a letter if they found anything.

VP Rijs asked if there is a replacement for Bill Harris, Director of Housing.

BA Conyer said not exactly; the job has been posted; had two candidates, not viable; hired Megan Stanley

for grants management, zoning, planning, FEMA, environmental activities.

VP Rijs suggested, except for the UCC Code portion and inspecting regulations in the Construction and Code Enforcement Offices, having someone to dedicate time to oversee those offices; spoke of concerns with the customer service aspect; there is only so much we can hear from the residents; we want to be user friendly; asked if there is someone that can coach the staff with how to handle issues; it has been over a year with complaints; we need to change the culture.

BA Conyer suggested that they can't answer questions for licensed professionals regulated by the State.

VP Rijs indicated, barring regulatory responsibility, it would be to assist with other issues not related to their license; spoke of office procedures and standards.

BA Conyer spoke of SDL software; the Mayor and BA meet with several people.

VP Rijs suggested things should not have to escalate to a meeting with the BA and Mayor; it is not a good use of your time; there should be practice where someone is in place to be a buffer and make things more streamlined.

BA Conyer suggested that Ms. Stanely is not a buffer between the Mayor and the BA; there is no such thing, she is an employee.

Mayor spoke of different cases; at the end of the meetings, the issues are mostly resolved; some things need a hands-on approach, for clarity.

Discussion ensued regarding the oversight, or lack of, over the Construction and Code Enforcement Offices.

Mayor Conaway spoke of working with the Township and Burlington County Historical Society on America's 250th Anniversary upcoming celebrations.

CP Bergner-Thompson asked for a flyer.

Mayor Conaway spoke of upcoming events.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon the motion of Councilwoman Woodard, seconded by Councilman Ballard, this meeting of October 14, 2025, was adjourned.

Cindy A. Crivaro, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Dawn Bergner-Thompson, President
Common Council