WHEREAS, for generations, state and local governments and community organizations across the United States have endeavored to address homelessness, panhandling, street dwelling, loitering, trespassing, and transience while also struggling to combat causal issues such as poverty, mental health, addiction, and substance abuse; and

WHEREAS, these communities are often mislabeled, “otherized,” stereotyped, and generalized, leading to further marginalization and a misunderstanding of how to intervene in the most effective manner; and

WHEREAS, the terminology “homeless” and “homeless community” are imperfect, and are used herein with the intention to be inclusive and refer to a diverse and complex community of people experiencing a range of issues for a myriad of reasons; and

WHEREAS, data, best practices and case study research calls for nuanced, multi-pronged, evidence-based strategies to support communities experiencing homelessness, poverty, and crisis; and

WHEREAS, not all interventions, legal, social, or otherwise, are created equal and the City of Burlington and its partners should strive to understand the outcomes of our investments, interventions, and policies; and

WHEREAS, concerns about the safety and wellbeing of the general public and members of the homeless community have been increased in reaction to high-profile violent crimes among the homeless community; and

WHEREAS, since May 2016, there have been 3 violent crimes that have occurred in Burlington among the homeless community; and

WHEREAS, in May 2016, Amos Beede, 38, was fatally attacked at a Burlington homeless encampment; and

WHEREAS, in March 2017, Louis Fortier, 37, was arrested for a fatal stabbing on Cherry Street; and

WHEREAS, in August 2017, Conner Lucas, 28, was arrested for the stabbing of two men in downtown Burlington; and

WHEREAS, in response to these crimes members of the homeless community, particularly females and LGBTQ members, have expressed concerns about safety; and

WHEREAS, Mark Mackillop, owner of Muddy Waters Café, during public comment of the June 5, 2017 City Council meeting, expressed to the Council safety and health concerns related to ongoing behavior issues in the vicinity of his business and other businesses on the Main Street block between South Winooski and Church Street.

WHEREAS, Mark Redmond, Executive Director of Spectrum Youth and Family Services, writing as a private concerned citizen, wrote a letter to the City Council and Mayor, dated August 10, 2017, expressing worry that members of our community who suffer from mental health and substance addiction issues are not getting the care they need and are a risk to themselves and others; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Redmond urged City leadership to take action while recognizing additional support from the State of Vermont is needed; and

WHEREAS, on August 17, 2017, a resolution was submitted to the City Clerk’s Office titled “Referral to Ordinance Committee: Ordinance Changes Concerning Quality of Life Issues in Downtown Core;” and WHEREAS, this resolution, as submitted and if approved, “directs the Ordinance Committee to draft an ordinance that creates a criminal penalty for repeat offenders of these type of violations;” and

WHEREAS, the City of Burlington has a responsibility to intervene when members of our community that display concerning or dangerous behavior in order to promote public safety, health, and wellbeing, and so such behavior does not become staggeringly recurrent; and

WHEREAS, investments in service and care to address underlying mental health and addiction issues related to homelessness and behaviors of concern should accompany punitive measures to insure that only those who commit criminal acts face criminal charges.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council requests that the Public Safety Committee convene a group of service and care providers, as well as other stakeholders, to devise a multi-pronged, evidence-based strategy outlining options to better support Burlington’s homeless community and address the public safety and health concerns set forth in this resolution. Organizations to be included in this conversation include, but are not limited to, the Howard Center Street Outreach Team, the Committee on Temporary Shelter, Spectrum Youth and Family Services, Pathways Vermont, the Community Health Center of Burlington’s Safe Harbor Clinic, the Burlington Police Department, the Burlington Community and Economic Development Office, Community Justice Center, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, the Chittenden County State’s Attorney’s Office, the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance, the University of Vermont Medical Center, faith-based organizations, and members of the business community. This strategy shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Specific action options and any associated implementation costs.
2. A comprehensive report of services options that are currently available, both by the City and its partners, as well as, if available, any recent staffing or budget changes that have impacted these programs.
3. A recommendation on how to best engage partners at the State of Vermont for additional and complementary support.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the strategy should be informed by qualitative feedback from members of the Burlington homeless community on what services are effective in their experience.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Public Safety Committee will review the recommended strategy and make recommendations to the City Council regarding actions options; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Public Safety Committee shall provide prompt feedback and recommendations to any other City Council Committees working on related issues; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Public Safety Committee shall report back to the City Council with recommendations no later than the City Council’s second meeting in November.

Assistant’s initials/atty’s initials/Resolutions 2017/Name Resolution

Date