



August 3, 2021

Jessie Baker
City Manager
City of South Burlington
180 Market Street
South Burlington, VT 05403

RE: October Special Vote

Dear Jessie:

We are reaching out to you, and the City Council, as Co-Chairs of the South Burlington Business Association.

The SBBA Board met today and one of our topics of discussion was the City Council meeting of last evening. The SBBA Board would like to express our opposition to holding a special vote in October for the 4-cent proposed tax for open space. We disapprove for two reasons. First, the extra cost of holding such a special vote is an undue, unnecessary burden when this vote could simply be held as part of the planned March election. And second, this proposed open space tax needs to be thoroughly vetted, discussed, and considered prior to a vote, and a Fall 2021 special vote is too aggressive a timeline.

Prior to any additional proposed special tax assessments, the tax capacity of the City should be reviewed, and a strategic view of priorities should more actively developed. Today, we know of many important priorities in the City, including among others, Dorset Street paving and infrastructure, improvements to the Bartlett Bay treatment facility, the long discussed community recreation building at Veterans Park, and efforts toward increasing affordable housing as major investment needs.

A few influential people bringing forth a proposal like this should not be able to divert the Council's attention from other equally important matters. Citizens should be able to count on a clear, concise plan for future investments. When a new subject comes to the floor, the Council should review where this additional investment falls in the priority list and when the tax capacity of the City might fit this new priority into the mix. We are concerned that this

proposed open space tax is an example of jumping a subject to the front of the line without discussion of how other priorities are affected.

We hope you will strongly consider the above thoughts and recommendations.

Sincerely

SOUTH BURLINGTON BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

John Wilking/Michael Keller
Co-Chairs

CC: Helen Riehle, Chair
Meaghan Emery, Vice Chair
Tim Barritt, Clerk
Thomas Chittenden
Matt Cota