

## Resolution Relating to

### EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, SYRINGE LITTER, AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF SYRINGE DISPOSAL IN BURLINGTON

## RESOLUTION

Sponsor(s): Councilors Litwin, Barlow, Brown McKnight, Shannon, Traverse, Carpenter, Grant, Kane, Doherty  
Introduced: \_\_\_\_\_  
Referred to: \_\_\_\_\_

Action: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signed by Mayor: \_\_\_\_\_

## CITY OF BURLINGTON

In the year Two Thousand Twenty-Four.....

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

1 That WHEREAS, the impacts of Substance Use Disorder, public health, and environmental safety have  
2 remained of increasing concern for consistently been prioritized by the residents, the Administration, and the  
3 City Council of Burlington; and

4 WHEREAS, the public consistently and increasingly has reported concerns about a proliferation of  
5 discarded syringes in public spaces through digital spaces like See Click Fix and social media platforms, as  
6 well as during community meetings and public comment during City Council meetings; and

7 WHEREAS, syringe exchange programs play a critical role in harm reduction, reduce the spread of  
8 disease and infection, and support individuals in managing substance use while also providing education and  
9 mitigation resources to address raising concerns about the environmental impact of improperly discarded  
10 syringes; and

11 WHEREAS, the presence of discarded syringes in public spaces, parks, and the waste and water  
12 stream, has resulted in safety hazards for community members and employees, including incidents that result  
13 in injury requiring urgent medical attention, as well as increased cleaning and disposal costs for the City; and

14 WHEREAS, according to Howard Center Safe Recovery staff, 20,000 syringes are given out every  
15 month and roughly 5,000 are returned at Howard Center Safe Recovery on Clarke Street, leaving 75% of all  
16 outbound syringes unaccounted for, and 2018 data indicated that of the 651,464 syringes given out, roughly  
17 63% were returned<sup>1</sup>; and

18 WHEREAS, the City of Burlington received over 740 See Click Fix reports of a syringe within the  
19 first nine months of 2023, representing three times as many collected as the prior year according to staff<sup>2</sup>; and

<sup>1</sup> Howard Center Safe Recovery Fact Sheet, *Vermont Department of Health [2018]*;

[https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/OCC\\_Safe%20Recovery%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf](https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/OCC_Safe%20Recovery%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> "Discarded Needles Litter Burlington. What Can Be Done?" Seven Days 10/4/2023:

<https://www.sevendaysvt.com/news/discharded-needles-litter-burlington-what-can-be-done-39237083>

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20            WHEREAS, landscapers, property maintenance workers, custodians, and other service sector  
21 employees working in Burlington report increased incidents of being stuck by inappropriately discarded  
22 syringes requiring immediate medical attention and treatment; and

23            WHEREAS, employees at trash transfer stations have reported being stuck by discarded syringes as  
24 well as unlabeled plastic containers with syringes being put through recycling processes; and

25            WHEREAS, in contrast, large-volume syringe providers like hospitals are either pre-treating their  
26 discarded syringes or using certified medical waste haulers; and

27            WHEREAS, it is imperative to evaluate the effectiveness of existing syringe exchange programs to  
28 ensure they are achieving their intended public health goals while minimizing environmental and community  
29 harm; and

30            WHEREAS, the City of Boston has contracted with Addiction Response Resources (ARR) to operate  
31 a Community Syringe Redemption Program (CSRP) successful needle collection program since 2020, which  
32 successfully resulted in the removal of almost 1.8 million syringes from the community last year; and

33            WHEREAS, in 2024 the City of Boston is adopting discontinuing their prior needle collection program  
34 in favor of a new program that offers people with substance use disorder the chance to earn money in  
35 exchange for needle collection, -and wouldwill also include job training and skills building, and will provide  
36 harm reduction supplies and other related supports, and this program is being paid for with Opioid  
37 manufacturer settlement funds; and

38            WHEREAS, issuing unlimited needles to people who use substances improves the safety of drug use,  
39 but increases needle litter which is a particular hazard to children and workers who pick them up<sup>3</sup>; and

40            WHEREAS, engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders—including public health agencies, State  
41 officials, organizations operating syringe exchange sites, City employees responsible for waste management,  
42 and representatives from the downtown business and residential communities—will provide comprehensive  
43 insights and facilitate collaborative solutions; and

44            WHEREAS, substance use disorder impacts all Vermonters and Burlington's core values call on us to  
45 recognize the humanity in all community members and to support one another, including those suffering from  
46 substance use disorder; and

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<sup>3</sup> Boston Ends Needle Collection Program that Collected Thousands of Syringes Daily, *Boston Globe* [7/2/2024]:  
<https://archive.is/7ZZnA#selection-1981.132-1985.103>

48        WHEREAS, both the Board of Health and the Burlington Parks Commission have already started to  
49        review the issue of syringe litter; and

50        WHEREAS, the Burlington School District and other interested parties must be included in the  
51        discussion to address community concerns and educate youth on the importance of responsible syringe  
52        disposal;

53        NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council hereby refers the evaluation of syringe  
54        exchange programs and the impact of syringe litter to the Board of Health, directing them to conduct a  
55        thorough study on these issues; and

56        BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Health is charged with engaging stakeholders —  
57        including, but not limited to, the Vermont Department of Health, Burlington Department of Public Works,  
58        local syringe exchange organizations, the Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront Department and City-  
59        owned park cleaning personnel, Parks Commission and the City Council's Parks, Arts & Culture Committee,  
60        Burlington School District and parent/caregiver communities, Turning Point Center, and representatives from  
61        the downtown business and residential communities with a goal to gather public input on syringe litter and  
62        syringe exchange operations and develop recommendations for improvement; and

63        BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Health shall remain mindful of the lived experiences  
64        of individuals currently experiencing substance use disorder and those in recovery throughout the evaluation  
65        process; and

66        BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Health shall provide a comprehensive report to the  
67        City Council by February 18, 2025, addressing both the effectiveness of syringe exchange programs and  
68        strategies to mitigate syringe litter in Burlington, including recommendations for environmentally friendly  
69        policies and practices for syringe disposal, methods or costs for incentivizing safe return; and

70        BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Health specifically shall include in their research and  
71        report, the programs currently and previously pursued in the City of Boston and other cities around the country  
72        to reduce needle litter and/or encourage employment and workforce development; and

73        BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Health shall work closely with syringe service  
74        providers, particularly with Howard Center Safe Recovery, to better understand the unintended impacts of  
75        these services, to encourage their leadership to apply for State, federal, and private funding to support  
76        mitigation efforts, and to make recommendations to the City Council on possible initiatives or ordinances that  
77        should be considered regarding syringe exchange operations and disposal; and

78       BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in anticipation of the findings and recommendations, the City will  
79       begin exploring potential supplementary funding sources and partnerships to support the implementation of  
80       effective syringe disposal strategies and improve public health outcomes in our community.

81

82       References:

83       <https://www.healthvermont.gov/disease-control/hiv-sti-hepatitis-community-resources/syringe-services-programs>

85       <https://www.cdc.gov/syringe-services-programs/php/index.html>

86

87       ER/Resolutions 2024/*Evaluation and Improvement Of Syringe Exchange Programs, Syringe Litter, and the Environmental Impact Of Syringe Disposal In Burlington*

89       10/22/24