



Town Meeting TELEVISION

At the Center for Media & Democracy

26 January 2010

Background: This FAQ (frequently asked questions) outlines a proposal for a pilot project to change the traditional format for the coverage of Burlington City Council and School Board candidates and ballot items. The Channel 17 Board of Trustees and the Burlington representative Nancy Kaplan, have approved this as a pilot. If successful, we will consider this approach for other local election forums and debates in other communities and for other “races”. Channel 17 holds in high value the history of these forums being on the air, live and accessible to call in viewers, we hope that the above process will not only maintain that standard but elevate it.

Why is Channel 17 joining forces with Burlington’s NPA’s? Because the Neighborhood Planning Assemblies (NPAs) in each ward also schedule candidate and ballot item presentations at their monthly meetings, we agreed it would be productive for us to combine forces. To this end, we propose to combine these forums and build on the strengths of both organizations. Channel 17 staff met with NPA Steering Committee Members from all wards and identified the common interest and desire to move forward.

Can you tell me the details of this pilot election forum coverage? Together, Channel 17 and the NPA’s will host the live election forums. Channel 17 staff will contact the candidates and train the moderators. Questions will be developed jointly with the NPA’s. The forums will be covered live from the community locations and transmitted to Channel 17 viewers. Audience members on location may participate by asking questions. Viewers may call **802-497-4339** or email questions@cctv.org. These questions will be passed to the moderator in written form.

When do these new NPA Forums Begin? – Channel 17 will replace ‘Live Studio Forums’ for Burlington candidates and ballot items with the NPA schedule as follows:

Thurs. 2/4 - Ward 6: 7 p.m., Greek Orthodox Church

Wed. 2/10 - Ward 1: 7 p.m., UVM Memorial Lounge, Waterman Bldg.

Thurs. 2/11 - Ward 2/3: 6:30 p.m., McClure Multi Generational Ctr. (241 North Winooski Avenue)

Tues. 2/16 - Ward 4/7: 6:30 p.m., Miller Community Ctr. (130 Gosse Ct.)

Wed. 2/17 - Ward 5: 7p.m., Dept. of Public Works, 645 Pine Street

Will the forums be Live? The Burlington Election Forums will air live on Channel 17 at the times scheduled. The DPW location will be transmitted via a Burlington Telecom

feed back to the studio for Live broadcast. All other forums will rely on web streaming capabilities at location. Quality will depend on a variety of factors.

Will there be public input? Public questions will come from the floor of the NPA's, phone call-in's and email. These will be submitted in writing to the Moderator by the Channel 17 Floor Manager. The phone number to call is 802-497-4339. The email is channel17@cctv.org.

What will be covered in the Forums? All candidates for City Council and School Board are invited to attend. Ballot questions will also be covered by community members and city officials. Write in candidates will be included as dictated in Channel 17 election policy see:
http://www.cctv.org/files/Microsoft%20Word%20%20Channel17OperatingPolicies_200709.pdf

Will the programs repeat on Channel 17? The forums will repeat on Channel 17 up to 8 times through midnight Monday, March 1st.

What are Channel 17 Election Policies: For the past 20 years, Channel 17 has produced live call-in candidate forums for City Council and School Board seats, along with budget and ballot item presentations in our studio. These have followed the Channel 17 'Election Policies' found online at: http://www.cctv.org/files/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Channel17OperatingPolicies_200709.pdf

What is Channel 17's Role? Channel 17/ Town Meeting TV produces election forums for town meeting, primary and general elections. All Channel 17 forums are based on the principles of impartiality, fairness, inclusion of all candidates and opportunity for public query. The fundamentals of Channel 17's election process include:

- **Scheduling:** Blocking 'live' studio time for production (4-6 evenings for Burlington forums.)
- **Drafting Questions:** Creating candidate questions (with some public input) provided to candidates, in advance.
- **Conducting Outreach:** Staff invitation to all candidates for forums, by phone, email and in writing. Providing questions and forum dates within one week of the forum.
- **Organizing People:** Schedule impartial forum hosts (staff, community members) and coordinate staffing of the forums (camera people, director).
- **Scheduling and Publicizing Airtimes:** Once produced, each forum then gets replayed up to 8 times prior to Town Meeting.

What if I still have questions? Please contact Rob Reiber, Channel Coordinator at rreiber@cctv.org or 802.862.3966 x13