

Montpelier Planning Commission
October 27, 2003
Memorial Room, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: Chair David Borgendale, Members Irene Facciolo, Carolyn Grodinsky, Bryan Mitofsky, Anne Campbell, Curt McCormack, Rich Sedano; Planning Director Valerie Capels

Call to Order

Mr. Borgendale called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes and Review of the Agenda

Ms. Grodinsky moved that the September 29, 2003 minutes be approved, seconded by Mr. Sedano. The motion passed 6-0.

General Appearances

There were no general appearances.

Sabin's Pasture Workshop

FOSP Plan

Michael Hoffman, representing Friends of Sabin's Pasture introduced Dana Farley, a planning consultant hired to help FOSP develop a plan and proposed re-zoning for the property. He explained that their primary intent was to resolve the snarled and confusing zoning that currently applies to the property. Their report does not introduce new concepts but uses measures that are already in the code. It is offered in the spirit of helping the commission find a balanced solution to the multiple desires.

Ms. Farley explained that a new district, the Sabin's Pasture Planned Residential & Conservation District (PRCD) would begin 400 feet from the centerline of Barre Street, based on site visits and computer analysis. This would provide for approximately 70 acres of developable land and 30 acres of undevelopable land and provides for a density of 1 unit per acre. The plan proposes that the commission retain an advisory and oversight role over any development proposals.

There was considerable discussion about details of the plan, including ownership and maintenance of the open land, criteria to be used to evaluate development proposals, ridgeline protection, height restrictions, design standards, and tax implications of going from 652+ allowable units to 70. The commission noted that their proposed involvement in the development review process would be a problem and is not appropriate.

A document prepared by Gordon Hall of extracts from Montpelier's zoning and subdivision regulations corresponding to the FOSP plan was distributed to commissioners.

Work Plan

The July 14, 2003 Sabin's Pasture rezoning work plan was discussed.

Ms. Campbell explained that the Open Space Committee is looking to develop a set of criteria to evaluate open space that incorporates elements of the Views & Vistas study. The Commission urged to have the committee present their findings to them soon.

Commissioners said that they are not comfortable developing recommendations without answers to the open space and natural resources questions. Mr. Sedano recommended that the Commission move ahead as best they can with the information that they have.

There was a brief discussion of whether this amounts to spot zoning. Ms. Capels referenced information that was previously distributed and explained why it is highly unlikely a spot zoning challenge would be upheld.

Commissioners agreed that they want criteria that will stand the test of time and be applicable elsewhere in the city and the Sabin's Pasture cannot be viewed in a vacuum.

There was discussion of high density vs. low density, and density bonuses in exchange for land conservation. It was agreed that open land can easily be destroyed by low density.

Various numbers of housing units were calculated for different scenarios. There was brief discussion of how many new housing units Montpelier is forecasted to absorb and how much of the region's projected housing needs Montpelier must be expected to accommodate.

Mr. Hoffman suggested that the National Park System criteria for accepting park lands be reviewed.

Follow-Up Tasks

- Mr. McCormack offered to research the selection criteria used by national conservation or land trust organizations.
- Ms. Capels is to check with Sara Moulton about the GMP grid map data.
- Ms. Capels is to report to the commission the rough number of housing units already in the pipeline.
- Ms. Capels recommended to the commission that they begin thinking about the urban design qualities that they would like to see articulated in development standards for that area as well as elsewhere in the city.

Meeting Schedules

The following adjustments were made to upcoming meetings:

- Dec. 8: Health & Social Services (Facciolo, McCormack)
- Jan 12: Historic Resources & Built Environment (Facciolo)
- Feb. 9: Culture & Recreation (Campbell)
- Mar. 22: Civic District/State (Mitofsky, Sedano)

Adjournment

Mr. Mitofsky moved that the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Ms. Grodinsky. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Valerie Capels, Director

These minutes are subject to approval by the Planning Commission. Changes, if any, will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which they were acted upon.