

**Montpelier Planning Commission**  
**November 10, 2003**  
**City Council Chambers, City Hall**

*Subject to Review and Approval*

**Present:** David Borgendale, Chair; Bryan Mitofsky, Richard Sedano. Valerie Capels, Planning & Community Development Director; Stephanie Smith, Planner.

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Borgendale who noted that a quorum of the Commission was not present.

**Approval of Minutes and Review of the Agenda**

There were no minutes to approve and no changes to the agenda were proposed.

**General Appearances**

There were no general appearances.

**Forum on City Infrastructure**

Mr. Borgendale introduced Steven Gray, Director of Public Works. Highlights of Mr. Gray's presentation are summarized below:

**Water System Supply**

- Berlin Pond has been the City's sole water supply source for the past 100 years.
- There are a few private water systems within the City. For example, Murray Hill has its own system of wells, storage and distribution lines. A private system on Town Hill Road is currently operated by the City and will eventually be turned over to the City.
- Four filtration units were added to the treatment plant at Berlin Pond in 2000. The treatment system also includes chlorination and fluoridation.
- The treatment plant capacity is 4 million gallons per day (mgd). The City is presently using about 1.5 mgd. The plant could be expanded to 5 mgd through the installation of an additional filter unit.

**Water Distribution System**

- The supply main extends from the treatment plant down Berlin Street and crosses the river at the Granite Street bridge.
- The distribution on the Street side of the river has generally smaller lines that have resulted in some supply difficulties in the area of Northfield Street.
- An analysis of the distribution system was completed in 1974 that resulted in a 20-year plan for improvements. Most of the recommended improvements have been completed. They included the following:
  - ▶ Looping of the lines within the City
  - ▶ Upgrading or improving water mains in several areas
  - ▶ A 2 million gallon tank on upper Terrace Street
  - ▶ A 600,000 gallon tank constructed cooperatively with the fire district.

The tanks allow for the creation of separate pressure zones in areas of the City that are higher than Berlin Pond. Pump stations are used to pump water into the tanks at night. The tanks and a system of valves control water in the neighborhoods so that those areas will continue to have water pressure when water is pumped from the system to fight a fire downtown.

- The piping system is capable of transmitting water at least at the treatment plant capacity. A pressure of 200 pounds per square inch is maintained in the lines in the downtown area. There are only a few areas of the city where pipes and pressures are not adequate to serve new development

(excluding unanticipated high demand consumptive uses). The National Life, Colonial Drive area is borderline in terms of service. The City is considering an additional tank in that area.

- If water service is extended to serve new development, eight inch mains are the minimum size pipe allowed. This pipe size is required to meet needs for fire flows although smaller pipes would be capable of meeting domestic water demands.
- An update to the previously mentioned 20 year plan was completed a few years ago. The update recommends additional looping of the distribution system and the installation of the tank in the area of National Life.

### **Other Water Topics**

- The Department is having a consultant examine whether Berlin Pond is capable of supplying the 4 mgd that the treatment plant would take in if operated at capacity. The study will consider environmental impacts of such a withdrawal in addition to the technical feasibility issues.
- The treatment plant should be capable of serving two to three times the current population of 8,000 residents provided that industries with large consumptive uses of water are not added to the system.
- The City has developed a water conservation plan. A program is underway that will replace all of the meters in the City. This will allow the City to quantify the amount of water that is not accounted for. Present estimates show this to be as high as 30%, but better meter information is needed to develop reliable estimates. An education program has been instituted including informational handouts in water bills. The Department is also considering ways to use non-potable water to replace potable water used in the sewage treatment plant.
- The City presently provides water to Berlin Fire District #1 which is made up of 150 users along Barre Montpelier Road in the Town of Berlin. The State is encouraging regionalization of small water systems. East Montpelier has expressed an interest in purchasing water for its village. Montpelier has a long-standing agreement with Middlesex to supply water to the Middlesex Industrial Park, if it is ever built. It is expected that the developers of the Industrial Park would construct the water main extension for the acceptance of the City.
- The biggest consumers of water in the system are National Life and the State buildings. Both customers use water in their cooling systems
- The U-32 high school is also a customer. It is at the high end of the pipe system and the pressures are not adequate for fire protection. The school has its own 20,000 gallon internal storage tank to meet fire protection needs.
- The City's system can store enough water for at least one and one half days of emergency supply.
- The City does not have an ordinance mandating connection to the water system as it does for sewer connections.
- A study is underway to look at the potential to use hot water from the State heating system for heating other buildings downtown. This would not create additional demands on the water supply system as the water would be recirculated.
- Berlin Pond has a specific legal status as a water supply pond as the State legislature designated it as the water supply for Montpelier. The City owns about 1,500 acres around the pond to control uses that could affect the pond. It is also working with Berlin conservation groups to protect the rest of the watershed. Preliminary work on the potential of the aquifer in the area to serve as a ground water supply source.
- The exact number of houses that are served by private wells is not known. There are about 150 private septic systems. The number of homes using private wells is probably at least that number in addition to the residences in Murray Hill.

### **Sewer**

- A two phase project to separate the storm sewer and sanitary sewer systems is nearly complete.
- The sewage treatment plant capacity is 3.97 mgd. It was originally constructed as a primary treatment plant in 1964. Secondary treatment was added in 1979-1981. Phosphorus removal and

dechlorination units were added in the last five years. A new headworks was also installed to allow for the acceptance of septage and landfill leachate that is hauled to the plant for a fee.

- The plant is presently treating 1.3 to 1.4 mgd. The uncommitted reserve capacity of the treatment plant is 1.98 mgd. The balance of the capacity is committed. The City provides treatment to part of Berlin based upon an intermunicipal agreement. Berlin has a reserved capacity of 600,000 gpd, but presently discharges 250,000 gallons to the system. The discrepancy between water usage and sewer flows is due, in part, to inflow and infiltration into the sewer system.
- There is a ten-year contract in place for the hauling of sludge from the plant to landfills, mostly to Casella's in Coventry. The addition of a sludge composting plant was proposed, but it was determined to be more economical to haul the sludge to disposal sites.
- Needed improvements to the treatment plant include the replacement of the chlorine disinfection process with an ultraviolet light process. The use of chlorine gas for disinfection is hazardous. In addition, the emergency power generation capabilities must be upgraded. Mr. Borgendale stressed that the elimination of the use of chlorine gas is very important for public safety. Mr. Gray said that the Council is preparing a bond issue for this spring.

### **Streets and Highways**

- There are 54 miles of public highways in the City. Montpelier maintains all of the highways within its boundaries except for the interstate, Memorial Drive and Dog River Road. The State provides aid based upon a formula that considers highway mileage and class.
- Most main arteries are in good condition.
- The City has been using its paving funds to match State funds for combined sewer overflow work for the last eight to nine years. Other streets are in the need of paving. A comprehensive paving program has been developed and will be presented to the council next year. The paving needs will have to be prioritized.
- The Department has a crack sealing program for new pavement. This helps to extend the life of the pavement. The program is not adequate to meet all of the needs.
- The State does pavement maintenance on State highways when the roadways rank high enough on their lists.
- There are 16 bridges in the City. Four of them need work:
  - ▶ Work on the Langdon Street bridge has been designed and is waiting for State funding.
  - ▶ The Taylor Street bridge is on the State waiting list for rehabilitation funds.
  - ▶ The Realto Bridge on State Street needs rehabilitation of the concrete coating which has begun to fall away from the steel beams. The concrete coating is not structural, but protects the beams.
  - ▶ The Route 2 bridge needs rehabilitation to its decking. It is on the State waiting list.
- The Public Works garage is in good shape. The Department has improved its utilization of equipment and staff over the past years.

Mr. Gray responded to questions from the Planning Commission, Planning Department staff and the audience. These responses are summarized below.

- Sidewalk repair work is typically performed in conjunction with roadway maintenance. Winter maintenance of the sidewalks is a challenge because of limited staff. The City plows and removes snow from most sidewalks. The development of new sidewalks increases demands on the Department. Several Planning Commission members noted that in other municipalities, property owners are responsible for removing snow from sidewalks. It was noted that such a requirement could be a burden on older residents.
- The City is responsible for maintaining the street lights on parts of State Street, Langdon Street, Main Street and School Street. Other street lights are maintained by Green Mountain Power. The City pays a rental fee for those lights. The lights that are maintained by the City generally require cleaning of the lenses twice a year. The changing of bulbs and the repair or replacement of lights are done as needed. In response to a question regarding whether Green-Up Day volunteers could help with this work, Mr. Gray said that it might be possible to have a team of volunteers assist a City

employee. Regarding the budgetary impact of additional street lights added in order to meet requirements for new development projects, Mr. Gray said that such lighting is typically installed by the developer and then turned over to the City or GMP. GMP charged increased rents to the City when decorative street lights were installed by developers. The need for maintenance of lights may reach a point where it makes sense for the City to contract for such services.

Mr. Borgendale thanked Mr. Gray for his presentation.

### **Sabin's Pasture**

Mr. Mitofsky moved that the Planning Commission send a letter to the City Council requesting that the Conservation Commission work with more deliberate speed to get the open space plan and natural resource inventory completed within specific dates. The motion was seconded. A member of the audience stated that the Open Space Advisory Committee will not be creating a prioritized list of open space, but will identify open space resources. Mr. Mitofsky said that it is important that the Council set a date for the work to be finished. Mr. Borgendale said that the criteria being developed by the Conservation Commission are very important to the Planning Commission. A member of the audience stated that the Conservation Commission is trying to develop general criteria that can be applied to any parcel in the city. Parcels will be listed, but not prioritized. Mr. Borgendale said that the Planning Commission's role will be to apply the criteria and identify those portions of parcels that best meet the criteria. Mr. Borgendale said that the Planning Commission needs to explain to the Council that the information is needed in order to move forward with the Commission's responsibilities. Mr. Mitofsky restated his motion that the Planning Commission send a letter to the Council asking that the Council direct the Conservation Commission to complete the open space plan and the natural resource inventory by a date set by the Council. Mr. Sedano seconded the motion. Mr. Borgendale said that he did not think that it was appropriate to make that request, but instead, the Commission should explain to the Council that the Planning Commission needs the open space plan and the natural resource inventory in order to proceed on Sabin's Pasture. Mr. Mitofsky agreed to amend the motion accordingly. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Borgendale referred to a "short list" on Sabin's Pasture that had been handed out to the Commission members. He asked the Commissioners to focus in particular on the last question. He said that other Master Plans have suggested public uses other than open space for the parcel. He asked whether such uses should be identified in the consideration of permanent zoning for the parcel.

### **Adjournment**

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Capels

Transcribed by Kathleen Swigon

*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.*