

**Montpelier Planning Commission**  
**June 14, 2004**  
**City Council Chambers, City Hall**

*Subject to Review and Approval*

**Present:** David Borgendale, Chair; Carolyn Grodinsky, Vice Chair; Anne Campbell; Irene Facciolo, Curt McCormack  
Staff: Valerie Capels, Planning & Community Development Director

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Mr. Borgendale.

**Approval of Minutes**

Several Commission members said that they had not had time to review the minutes of the May 24, 2004 and March 22, 2004 meetings. Ms. Grodinsky made a motion, seconded by Ms. Campbell, that the Commission table action on the minutes until the next meeting to allow the Commissioners time to review the minutes. The motion was approved 5-0.

**Comments from the Chair**

Mr. Borgendale noted that the meeting would be primarily a working session.

**Review of the Agenda**

Mr. Borgendale reviewed the agenda. Ms. Campbell asked that a discussion of the work of the Open Space Committee be added. Ms. Grodinsky also proposed to add a discussion of the agenda preparation process and a brief update of a workshop that she attended.

**General Appearances**

There were no general appearances.

**Views and Vistas Report**

Mr. Borgendale asked for the Commission members' thoughts on how the Planning Commission should address the Views and Vistas report. Ms. Grodinsky said that the report should be incorporated into the open space checklist or other open space tools. Ms. Campbell asked whether Ms. Grodinsky meant that the report would be incorporated into the criteria for natural resources and open space protection. Ms. Grodinsky said that was her intention and that the view and vistas would be treated in a manner similar to recreation, wildlife corridors, slope protection and other resource protections. Ms. Campbell agreed. Ms. Capels asked whether the intent was for the report to function as a policy document or as a tool. Ms. Grodinsky said that the report should be an element of the "tool kit" developed by the Open Space Committee. Ms. Campbell said that she believed that the Open Space Committee was planning on using the report in that manner. She asked how that would differ from a policy document. Ms. Capels said that a policy document could have an impact equal to the Master Plan in contrast to a reference that policies might be developed from.

Mr. Borgendale said that he thought that some of the conceptual pieces could be incorporated into the Master Plan. He said that he has done some research on open space development and found that some communities create a priority scheme for classifying areas of their cities for open space issues. Those classifications could then be incorporated into zoning requirements. Mr. Borgendale gave the Commission members copies of a summary of his thoughts on zoning issues, open space model ordinances and other materials related to open space. Ms. Grodinsky asked whether anyone had talked to the people from the Vermont

Forum on Sprawl. Ms. Capels said that she spoke to Dylan Voorhees and was told that they do not do the type of training that the Commission would be interested in, but, rather focus on making publications available. Ms. Capels said that she placed links to some of those publications on the Planning Department's web site.

### **Sabin's Pasture**

Ms. Grodinsky said that she would like to hear about the recent City Council meeting. Mr. Borgendale asked Chris Smart, who was attending the Commission meeting, to discuss the Council meeting. Mr. Smart said that a motion was passed 5-1 to create a committee to come up with a first draft of zoning for Sabin's Pasture, to hire an expert to work on this zoning, and to pass the expert onto the Planning Commission. He said that the expert could then be used to assist in any zoning throughout the City. The Committee would be made up of three Councilors and one member of the Planning Commission as a voting member. The meetings will be open to the public and that all of the Planning Commission members are welcome to attend. The first assignment will be to seek proposals for the expert. The Committee will have \$20,000 for this project in the fiscal year that ends this month.

Ms. Grodinsky asked whether the expert will be looking at Sabin's Pasture only. She said that the idea had been to develop zoning that was visionary and broadly applicable within the City in order to generate community support for the zoning. Mr. Smart said that the resolution said that the expert would be retained after the completion of the Sabin's Pasture zoning to work on other zoning City wide. Ms. Grodinsky said that the Sabin's Pasture zoning would have to meld with the Master Plan. Mr. Smart said that this presents an interesting challenge since the deadlines on the interim zoning are coming up and the Master Plan is due in September 2005. Ms. Grodinsky said that she believed that the interim zoning would expire in 2005. Mr. Borgendale said that was the case, but the expiration date and Master Plan date are less than one month apart.

Mr. Smart said that the new changes to Chapter 117 suggest that it is best if zoning changes and Master Plan revisions are ready at the same time. He said that the committee and expert will only be producing a draft that will be provided to the Planning Commission. The Commission will be expected to exercise independent judgement on the document. Ms. Grodinsky said that the zoning will be more controversial if it does not address the big picture.

Mr. Smart said that, once hired, the consultant would meet with the Planning Commission at the earliest opportunity to hear Commissioners' ideas on Sabin's Pasture. Ms. Campbell noted that the Commission's ideas regarding Sabin's Pasture could be applicable to the broader city. Mr. Smart said that parcels are unique and the results might not be the same if the same methods are used on different parcels. He said that it would be preferable if the Sabin's Pasture zoning fit seamlessly into broader zoning changes, but it remains to be seen if that will be possible.

Mr. Smart that the Committee will be issuing a Request for Qualifications before issuing a Request for Proposals. This will allow the RFP to be sent to a smaller group of parties. He expected that the Committee will meet next week.

Mr. Borgendale asked for volunteers to be the Commission member to serve on the Committee. Commissioners Campbell, Facciolo, McCormack and Grodinsky volunteered. Mr. McCormack asked for clarification on the role of the Committee. Mr. Borgendale said that the Planning Commission came to the conclusion that the current zoning ordinance has to be amended to address the permanent Sabin's Pasture zoning. Mr. Smart said that the consultant will work on

the scope of the needed changes and draft them. He also said that the Planning Commission volunteer will be a voting member and would be committing to attend at least 90% of the committee meetings. The other Planning Commission members can attend the meetings and provide input. The draft zoning will then be referred to the full Planning Commission for its acceptance or denial.

After some discussion, Ms. Campbell and Ms. Grodinsky said that they would be willing to defer their interest in becoming the voting member of the committee with the understanding that the other members of the Planning Commission would be able to provide input at the meetings. Ms. Grodinsky made a motion to designate Ms. Facciolo as the Planning Commission's representative on the committee. Mr. McCormack seconded the motion. The motion was passed 5-0.

Ms. Capels asked for the Planning Commission's thoughts on the next steps. She asked whether the Commission still wants to move forward on its work toward permanent zoning for Sabin's Pasture as well as city-wide issues or whether the Commission would defer to the Council Committee on that work. Ms. Campbell asked whether it would be useful for the Planning Commission to provide input on its ideas for the property. Ms. Facciolo said that, once hired, the expert consultant would be meeting with the Planning Commission to hear the members' thoughts. Mr. Borgendale said that many of the Sabin's Pasture issues overlap with the work on the Master Plan. He suggested that the Planning Commission should focus on resolving the broader issues that will affect Sabin's Pasture as well as other areas throughout the city. He mentioned ridge line issues as an example and said that there are many other issues like that. Ms. Facciolo said that it sounds like the Planning Commission does not presently have a lot of the information that will be needed in such an effort. She said that it may be difficult to gather the necessary information within the time frame for the Master Plan and asked where the information will come from. Ms. Capels said that the Planning Department has some of that information. She said that updated property maps had just been received. Information can now be mapped using the updated property maps as a base. Mr. Borgendale said that the Commission may have to develop broader goals in some areas and have the Master Plan state that there must be an organized process to gather information needed to meet those goals. Ms. Capels said that, based on the discussion, it appeared that the next step will be to continue work on the Master Plan.

A member of the audience asked whether there is a consensus on what the Planning Commission would like to see for Sabin's Pasture. Mr. Borgendale responded that it is really a question of what the community prefers. He said that he assumes that there will be some combination of development and preservation. The difficult issues will be finding the balance and ensuring that the decision is legally supported.

Ms. Capels said that most of the amendments to Chapter 117 take effect in July. She said that any zoning amendments after the effective date must comply with the law. She noted that the amendments will require a stronger connection between by law amendments and the Master Plan. This may mean that some by law amendments will result in the need to also amend the Master Plan.

### **Mapping Update**

Mr. Borgendale asked Ms. Capels to present the maps that her office had prepared. The maps showed open space and related resources in Montpelier and adjoining communities. The Planning Commission members examined the maps at length and provided numerous

comments. Ms. Campbell said that she would like to see a map showing areas with slopes of 20% or more to reflect the Master Plan limitations on steep slopes. Ms. Grodinsky said she would like the planning efforts to address how open spaces can be linked within the City and with open spaces in other communities. Mr. Borgendale said that he hopes that the maps showing overlays of important criteria will remove some of the politics from the open space discussions.

### **Fiscal Impact RFP**

Ms. Capels said that her office is seeking a consultant to work on the fiscal impact report. She said that the goal is to turn around the proposals quickly so that a selection recommendation for hiring can go to the City Council for its July 14 meeting agenda. The Councilors' meeting packages will be mailed on July 9 which means that the time frame is very tight. A \$15,000 planning grant will pay for some or all of the project. Mr. Borgendale said that the time frame seemed extremely tight and that he would like to participate in the selection process. Ms. Capels said that she would deliver the proposals to the selection committee on Friday, July 2 in order to have a meeting on July 6. She said that the July 14 Council meeting is critical because it will be the only meeting that month. Mr. Borgendale asked whether anyone else wanted to serve on the committee. Ms. Facciolo suggested that Mr. Mitofsky might be interested.

### **Other**

Ms. Capels said that she expects to have some kind of a draft of the Master Plan for the Planning Commission by the next meeting. She said that it will probably not include the draft transportation plan since Lucy Gibson has not yet been given the transportation survey results. She added that the question of open space will need to be further developed. Mr. Borgendale said that there was a motion at the last meeting to have a draft resolution on open space at this meeting. Ms. Capels said that the staff was directed to draft a resolution as soon as possible saying that the Open Space Commission would be a subcommittee of the Planning Commission. Mr. Borgendale added that the resolution was to ask for the City Council's concurrence or giving some official status from the Council. Ms. Campbell said that she understood, based on the discussions with the co-chairs of the Open Space Commission, that the Planning Commission would ask that the group function as a subgroup of the Planning Commission.

Ms. Capels said that she was not sure whether the draft Master Plan would be ready much before the next meeting. The Planning Commission may not be able to have a substantive discussion because of the short lead time. Mr. Borgendale said that the Commission should get the draft Master Plan as soon as it is ready and Ms. Capels could provide an overview at the meeting. He said that the Commission members could then discuss the process to move forward in preparation for the first public hearing on September 27.

Ms. Capels said that, looking ahead to the July meetings, the Commission had expressed an interest in meeting with representatives of other communities. Ms. Grodinsky said that she is only interested in having that meeting if there are clear questions prepared in advance. Ms. Capels suggested that the meeting be planned for the second meeting in July. Ms. Grodinsky said that the Commission members should draft questions, send them to Ms. Capels and circulate them amongst the Commission members. Ms. Campbell said that she wants to know what pressures the other communities are feeling regarding open space and what they are doing to mitigate sprawl. Mr. Borgendale said that he would like to hear what the neighboring communities perceive Montpelier's role to be. He noted that Montpelier has affects on nearby communities such as Berlin. Ms. Grodinsky said that she is interested in whether the

communities have any coordinated planning on open space and how the different communities can coordinate.

Ms. Campbell said that it was her clear understanding that the Open Space Committee was to be on tonight's agenda to bring the Planning Commission the work that it has been done to date. The Committee worked hard to have information ready for tonight's meeting. Ms. Capels said that she have some recollection of that but her notes and the minutes did not reflect it. She had spoken to Geoff today and found that he also believed that this item would be on the agenda. Ms. Campbell asked whether the other Commission members believe that time is of the essence on this issue. Mr. Borgendale apologized that the item was not on the agenda. Ms. Campbell noted that this is the second time that there had been a delay.

**Adjournment**

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.*