

**Montpelier Planning Commission**  
**June 28, 2004**  
**City Council Chambers, City Hall**

*Subject to Review and Approval*

**Present:** David Borgendale, Chair; Carolyn Grodinsky, Vice Chair (left at 9:05); Irene Facciolo; Curt McCormack (arrived at 7:15); Richard Sedano; Marge Power  
Staff: Valerie Capels, Planning & Community Development Director

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Borgendale.

**Approval of Minutes**

Borgendale noted that he was not present at the March 22, 2004 minutes and asked for a motion for the May 24 minutes. Ms. Grodinsky said that she had just received the minutes of the June 14, 2004 meeting and had not had time to review them.

Ms. Facciolo made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 24, 2004 meeting minutes, seconded by Ms. Grodinsky. Mr. Borgendale had a correction: the sentence on page 2 incorrectly stated that Mr. Borgendale said that pedestrian access was not appropriate at all locations. He said that he had not made that statement and the sentence should be struck from the minutes. The motion to approve the minutes with the correction was unanimously approved.

It was agreed to move consideration of the March 22 and June 14 minutes to the end of the agenda.

**Agenda**

Mr. Borgendale said that Geoff Beyer would be presenting some output from the Open Space Committee. He added that the Planning Commission could also discuss the status of the OSC if the members wished to. Mr. Borgendale said that Ms. Capels would be presenting the first working draft of the Master Plan and that the Commission could discuss how to proceed with the development of the document. Also, he would like to add a discussion of Chapter 117 to the agenda. He said that the law contains some sections that relate to the City Council Committee on zoning. Ms. Grodinsky said that she would like to add an update on the status of the Request for Qualifications to the agenda.

**Comments from the Chair**

Mr. Borgendale introduced Marge Power who will be an official member of the Planning Commission as of July 28, 2004. Ms. Power said that she was honored to be present and was impressed by the Commission's perseverance.

**Open Space Committee**

Geoff Beyer provided the Commission with several copies of draft maps and an attribute list. Mr. Borgendale asked Ms. Capels to make sure that each of the Commission members received copies of the documents.

Mr. Beyer said that the Open Space Committee (OSC) has started an open space report that may be useful in the development of the Master Plan.

Mr. Beyer presented the map showing ridge lines and vistas. He said that using the technical definition of "ridge line" would not necessarily result in the protection of the view sheds and view points that the Planning Commission desires. Mr. Borgendale said that many communities do not

just identify ridge lines for protection from development, but also establish criteria for development that will minimize the visual impact of the development on the views. The criteria could include materials, landscaping, shapes, heights and lighting. Mr. Beyer said that this concept could be reflected in the attributes list which will address view sheds and view points rather than ridge lines. Commission members discussed the map and provided comments. Mr. Beyer noted that it is a work in progress. Mr. Borgendale said that the meaning of the various symbols should be clarified. The Commission could then provide more specific comments. They may also want to share a map with the public for feedback as part of the Master Plan review process. Ms. Grodinsky noted that the view shed criteria may be the most subjective criteria related to open space. Other resources such as wetlands or wildlife habitat will be less subjective. Mr. Beyer said that the map may be more subjective than some others, but that he is not sure that the criterion is all that subjective. There is some universality to opinions on views. Ms. Grodinsky clarified that she meant that areas identified for protection will probably be based more on other criteria such as recreation, wildlife corridors and others. Ms. Power noted that many of the public will react to visual changes to the landscape of the city.

Mr. Beyer went over the map showing natural communities. He said that it shows habitat types such as meadow, deciduous forest, etc. The map is a general representation of community types; it does not show the details that he wanted to include. He would like to develop a map that shows data layers of land where permits are already required (such as wetlands or deer yards). Then, other layers could be added showing resources that the Planning Commission wants to scrutinize on a local level (such as wildlife corridors). Mr. Borgendale said that many communities have developed classification schemes using overlays. He hopes the Commission will discuss formalizing a process to assign some body with the responsibility for creating overlays based upon specific criteria.

Mr. Beyer showed the Commission a map showing open space in adjacent communities. He said that it will be useful for coherent community planning of recreation corridors, trails and wildlife habitat.

Mr. Beyer next discussed a map showing regulated lands including wetlands, flood plains, and steep slopes. Mr. Borgendale noted that the Commission had asked for a map showing slopes of 20% or more. Mr. Beyer said that the map shows a great deal of information. He encouraged the Commission members to take some time to examine it and to send him more comments or questions by e-mail.

Mr. Beyer then passed around copies of the checklist. He said that he wants to make the attribute list match the map layers in a coherent way. He is still fine tuning the documents. Ms. Facciolo recommended that a better definition of "vacant lot" be used. Mr. Beyer said that he will probably strike that category from the list as it is not very useful. Mr. Borgendale said that the checklist will be very helpful. Mr. Beyer said that it could be used to look at specific properties in a uniform manner. Ms. Grodinsky asked whether any thought had been given to assigning weights to the various criteria. Mr. Beyer said that his strategy up to this point has been to first develop the list and then give more thought to weighing the criteria later. Ms. Grodinsky said that she was thinking about the bigger picture across the community rather than specific properties. Mr. Borgendale said that the Planning Commission would want to be able to give this list with some kind of community consensus on the relative importance of the criteria. Mr. Sedano said that he is concerned about who is best situated to give such advice. The Commission needs a sense of who will make decisions and of the roles to be played. Mr. Beyer said that the Open Space Advisory Board is clearly advisory and any of that Board's recommendations would have to pass through the Planning Commission and then through the City Council. Mr. Sedano asked whether the Open Space

Committee would be tackling the issue of qualitative ways of assigning priorities. Mr. Beyer said that they are looking at which considerations are important. They may suggest some priorities when they are clear; the setting of priorities was difficult due to lack of a consensus. Ms. Capels said that it may not be as much a weighing of criteria as looking at how many of those criteria are present on a parcel. Mr. Beyer said that approach had some limitations. For example, it would be difficult to compare one parcel with a single attribute to another parcel with a different single attribute without assigning some weight to the attributes.

Mr. Borgendale said that it will be important that the Master Plan process develop some kind of mechanism to identify and prioritize land in a way that not only identifies areas for preservation, but also identifies areas where the City would want to provide incentives to develop resources that the community believes to be necessary.

Mr. Beyer said that he also has a very early draft of language providing narrative comments on open space. He said that it could be used for the Master Plan. He hopes that this will help the Planning Commission in developing the Master Plan and suggested that the Commission take some time to look at it and e-mail any comments to him. Mr. Borgendale said that, regardless of how the Planning Commission uses it, it is helpful to have some ideas down on paper.

#### **Preliminary First Draft of Master Plan 2005**

Ms. Capels gave the Commission members copies of the first preliminary draft of the Master Plan. The draft is fashioned after the outline that was discussed in April. Because the current Master Plan is still in effect and presumably contains still-relevant information, her first step was to fit information from the existing Master Plan to the outline. Some sections are not completely fleshed out, but that the draft is intended to provide a starting point for discussion. Mr. Sedano asked how he could tell which parts of the document were new. Ms. Grodinsky said that this draft should be read as a new Master Plan without referring back to the old Master Plan. Mr. Sedano responded that the Commission should be able to identify how the new Master Plan differs from the last one.

Ms. Grodinsky said that it would be interesting to include the list of goals from the last Master Plan with an assessment of what progress had been made. Ms. Capels said that this could easily be done in either a table or narrative format. Mr. Borgendale said that it might be a good idea to go back to the specific implementation goals and list the current status of them.

Ms. Facciolo said that the appendices include a history of planning efforts. She said that it might be better to place the history in the beginning of the document. Mr. Sedano said that, while the planning history is interesting, many users of the Master Plan will want to move quickly through the beginning of the document to find out "what is next." Ms. Facciolo said that the part that she was speaking of is not really a history, but establishes the basis of planning decisions and shows how the process incorporated the community's comments and ideas from the workshop forums. Ms. Capels said that the Master Plan could include a brief section explaining the process with a reference to the appendices for more detailed information. Mr. Sedano said that Ms. Facciolo had a good point and that the process is important to explain. Ms. Facciolo said that it is important to acknowledge that the current Planning Commission is different than the Planning Commission that developed the last Master Plan.

Ms. Capels said that she tried to take a stab at vision statements covering major topic areas. She expects the Planning Commission will want to comment on these. Mr. McCormack asked whether this draft of the document is one that will change things. Ms. Capels said that most of this draft is made of parts from the current plan. The new ideas and approaches have not yet been added. Mr. Borgendale said that it is his sense that the Planning Commission should focus on goals and

policies and let the staff focus on data and statistics. Mr. McCormack asked whether the document “pushes the envelope” in terms of strength of policies. Ms. Capels said that it does not yet do that. The Planning Commission can use the draft as a starting point to work from. She added that she will focus on Chapter 2 in the time before the next meeting.

Ms. Grodinsky asked whether it would be better to hold on comments until the draft is fleshed out further. Mr. Borgendale said that members could make notes regarding sections that need to be discussed further. He would like to suggest that Planning Commission members be prepared to discuss the vision statement at the next meeting. Mr. Sedano said that he would not be able to attend the next meeting, but thought that it will be important for each member to share their ideas on what the vision should be. He said that each person’s priorities will be different and the Commission will have to work out the differences. Mr. Borgendale said that everyone should bring some documented ideas of what is important to include in the vision statement.

Mr. Sedano asked whether the draft document is available to anyone who wants it. Mr. Borgendale said that it is a public document. Ms. Capels said that she hopes that the Planning Commission can give her feedback on the overall document and the approaches that she has used. She said that comments could be sent to her by e-mail.

### **Other Business**

Ms. Grodinsky said that she hoped that the Planning Commission could discuss the RFQ and the dates for the meetings of the Council Committee. Ms. Facciolo said that she was not at the last meeting of the Committee but that she would e-mail the dates for the next meetings when she hears of them. Ms. Capels said that the RFQ was sent to firms across the country and via the Internet through the Vermont Planners Association listserve. Ms. Grodinsky said that the Vermont Forum on Sprawl suggested contacting the City of Burlington because it recently dealt with a similar proposal.

Mr. Borgendale said that he took a look at the new Chapter 117 provisions with a focus on those that would have an impact on the Council Committee’s work. He said that one change was in section 4441(g), which states that if a proposed by law change or repeal is requested by the legislative body, it must be treated as a petition. A second change requires mandatory reporting on amendments or new by laws. He said that specific items that must be addressed include the effect of the proposal on the availability of safe and affordable housing and the compatibility of the proposal with the proposed future land uses and densities of the municipal plan. He added that the law contains a specific definition of affordable housing.

### **Minutes**

Ms. Grodinsky said that she had not had time to read the minutes of the June 14 meeting. Mr. Borgendale noted that there was not a quorum of members who attended the meetings to vote on the minutes. He moved the consideration of the minutes to the next agenda.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Sedano made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Facciolo seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0 at 9:10 p.m.

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.*