

**Montpelier Planning Commission**  
**July 12, 2004**  
**City Council Chambers, City Hall**

*Subject to Review and Approval*

**Present:** David Borgendale, Chair; Carolyn Grodinsky, Vice Chair; Irene Facciolo; Curt McCormack; Anne Campbell; Bryan Mitofsky; Marge Power (non-voting)  
Staff: Valerie Capels, Planning & Community Development Director

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Borgendale.

**Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Grodinsky made a motion to approve the minutes of the meetings of June 14, 2004 and June 28, 2004, seconded by Ms. Campbell. Ms. Campbell had a correction and an addition to the June 14 minutes. She said that under the heading of "Other," there is a reference to the co-chairs of the Open Space Commission which should be corrected to refer to the co-chairs of the Conservation Commission. In the same section, a sentence stating "The other Commission members agreed that this was the case" should be added after the sentence that states that "Ms. Campbell asked whether the other Commission members believe that time is of the essence on this issue."

Ms. Grodinsky had a change to the June 28 minutes. She said the sentence in the first paragraph of page 2 should be modified to say: " Ms. Grodinsky clarified that she meant that areas identified for protection will probably be based more on other objective criteria such as recreation, wildlife corridors, wetlands and others. She added that there was a spelling error at the bottom of that page where the word "than" should replace "tan". Mr. McCormack said that the sentence at the top of page 4 of the June 28 minutes should be clarified to state that his question regarding whether the document pushes the envelope was referring to whether to plan has strength in the Act 250 process.

**Agenda**

Mr. Borgendale said that he would like to move the Master Plan discussion to the end of the meeting, after item #8. He said that he would also like to add an item for the consideration of Mr. Mitofsky's continued role as the Planning Commission's representative to the Carr Lot Committee.

**Comments from the Chair**

Mr. Borgendale did not have additional comments.

**General Appearances**

There were no general appearances.

**Planning Commission's Representative on Carr Lot Committee**

Mr. Borgendale said that Mr. Mitofsky was interested in continuing to serve as the Planning Commission's representative on the Carr Lot Committee. Ms. Campbell said that while she respects Mr. Mitofsky's abilities, she was confused as to how a person who is not a member of the Commission could serve as a representative of the Commission. Mr. Mitofsky said that the Planning Commission can appoint members as it needs. Mr. Borgendale said that Mr. Mitofsky would be appointed as a representative of the Planning Commission to the Carr Lot Committee and he would have to report to the Planning Commission regularly and keep up to speed with the activities of the Planning Commission.

Mr. McCormack said that it would be good for Mr. Mitofsky to continue as the Commission's representative because he has a good background from his participation in the Committee and because he could be more effective by focusing solely on the Committee. Mr. Mitofsky said that the Carr Lot Committee is at a critical juncture and it would be difficult for someone else to step in at this point. Ms. Campbell asked what the critical issue is. Mr. Mitofsky said that the Committee must decide where the lot will be located. It may be possible to conduct the necessary Environmental Assessment for both of the sites at the same time. Originally, Jon Anderson had been told that federal funds were available for the Environmental Assessment (including archaeological digs) of only one of the sites. Now, it appears that Bill Fraser may have come up with a way to conduct the Environmental Assessments on both of the sites.

Ms. Campbell asked where the sites are. Mr. Mitofsky said that one site is behind Capitol Plaza and one is behind Brooks Drugstore. He favors the Brooks site while Jon Anderson favors the Capitol Plaza site. The Committee heard lengthy testimony the other night by parties from East Montpelier who suggested other alternatives. Mr. Borgendale said that he was at one of the public hearings and noted that there did not seem to be much public support for any of the options.

Ms. Grodinsky asked whether one of the options considered by the Committee was a site at the edge of the city that would reduce the number of vehicles moving through town. Mr. Mitofsky said that such a site was one of the ten options considered, but was dropped based upon the consultant's selection criteria. Ms. Grodinsky said that such a site would be consistent with the Master Plan vision to reduce traffic in the city. She believed it would be great for Mr. Mitofsky to continue on the Committee but that the methods of keeping the Planning Commission informed must be worked out. This could be accomplished through e-mails after each meeting or other methods. Mr. Mitofsky said that he is committed to making sure that he gets on the Planning Commission agenda whenever anything of significance comes up. Ms. Grodinsky said that she would like the Planning Commission to be informed of any upcoming decisions. Ms. Campbell added that the Planning Commission needs to know that its representative reflects the general opinions of the Commission. Mr. McCormack said that the Planning Commission could pass a motion on anything of importance. He described an interest in providing housing as an example of an issue that the Commission might want to address in this manner. Ms. Campbell said that to pass a motion the Commission would need to know that such an issue was coming up.

Mr. Borgendale noted that the problem with the Capitol Plaza site was that the design did not make sense. It was very expensive and did not provide much additional parking. In addition, the design had a street running under a parking ramp. Mr. Mitofsky said that newer designs for the site would involve the second floor of the building bridging the street and railroad tracks. Mr. Borgendale said that he understood the consultant had said that it was not practical to build high enough to allow trains to pass under the structure. Mr. Mitofsky said that the idea was considered as a means of providing more parking. Ms. Campbell asked what would happen to the proposed green space/park at the confluence of the North Branch and the Winooski River. Mr. Mitofsky said that question is part of the concern. He said that if there is a way to do both environmental studies at the same time, those decisions will not need to be made immediately. He added that the issue may be out of the hands of the Committee as it appears that the City Council will be taking over the decision making on the two sites.

Mr. McCormack moved that Mr. Mitofsky be appointed as the Planning Commission's continued representative to the Carr Lot Committee with the understanding that he will ask for space on the agenda and report when there is anything significant. When he cannot do so, he will poll the Planning Commission by e-mail. Ms. Grodinsky seconded. Ms. Capels said that she recalled that

in a previous situation, the Carr Lot Committee members felt that Bill McBroom could not represent the Planning Commission when he was no longer a Commission member. She asked whether Mr. Mitofsky had talked to the Committee members about this. He said that he had spoken with them. Ms. Grodinsky said that she would prefer that brief updates of meetings be sent to Planning Commission members so that they would be up to date when Mr. Mitofsky comes to a Commission meeting to discuss an issue. The motion passed 5-0 with Mr. Mitofsky abstaining.

### **Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan**

Mr. Borgendale asked Ms. Capels to discuss her memo of July 9, 2004, which was included in the Planning Commission members meeting packages. Ms. Capels said that the idea began as discussions between her and the City Manager of whether developing an urban renewal district for the area around Main Street, Shaws, and the two vacant lots was worthwhile to consider. The main advantage seems to be in broadened municipal powers for property acquisition, financing, and leveraging additional monies. Whether an urban renewal district plan or simply an area redevelopment plan, it seemed like a good idea to take the opportunity consider the vacant lots on Main Street, including the Tomasi lot, other underutilized properties, a proposed parking structure, and how all of these pieces best fit together. Mr. Mitofsky said that the Tomasi lot would be used as the entrance to the possible parking site. Ms. Capels said that the purpose of the memo was to present the concept to the City Council.

Mr. Borgendale said that many of the ideas discussed in the memo are also items that should be addressed in the Master Plan. Ms. Capels said that this would be more of an area-specific urban design exercise. Mr. Mitofsky asked how the urban renewal plan specifically would relate to the Master Plan. If it is a component of the City's plans, it should be worked on in the Master Plan process. Ms. Capels said that the timing of the two plans may not allow that to happen but they should complement one another.

Mr. Mitofsky said that he disagreed. He said that the plan should be a component of the Master Plan and should be put forth in the Master Plan. He said that the Master Plan would give such an urban design plan its authority. Ms. Capels said that if it is completed before the Master Plan, the Master Plan could cross-reference the urban redevelopment plan. If not, the urban redevelopment plan would certainly be consistent with the Master Plan. Mr. Borgendale said that this is broader than an urban design exercise. He said that it speaks to significant changes in uses of a good chunk of downtown with implications on traffic and demand on City services. Ms. Capels agreed and expected that the plan would be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Master Plan. Mr. Mitofsky said that this sounded like an idea that would be consistent with the setting of goals, but it represents another little project that would be worked on independent of others. He said that too many of the City Council's independent projects are not tied back into the Master Plan. Ms. Capels said that although the memo was written to the Council because of the Carr Lot replacement parking item on its agenda, it was not intended to become a Council initiative. It would make sense for this to be a Planning Commission initiative and she copied the memo to the Planning Commission to share the idea with them. Mr. Borgendale said that it should be a component of the Master Plan.

Mr. McCormack asked whether the area under consideration extends far enough up Barre Street in a way that would make urban renewal funds available for improvements to the area. Ms. Capels said that may be possible depending on the boundaries of the study area. Mr. Mitofsky said that the concept is a good one, but that he does not like the process. He said that it could make the Barre Street extension more feasible, could tie into the transportation center improvements, and could provide other government services to the area.

Mr. Borgendale asked whether uses would be addressed in the plan. Ms. Capels said that uses would be addressed, particularly in the use of the vacant lots. Mr. Borgendale said that this is the substance of what should be discussed in the downtown component of the Master Plan. Mr. Mitofsky said that the context of the memo is that the parking study is moving ahead and that a plan for the area may be appropriate. He said that this must be addressed in the Master Plan or the Master Plan will be useless. Ms. Capels said that she did not agree. The Master Plan should address issues and priorities for that part of the city, but the Master Plan adoption schedule will not allow for a detailed urban renewal plan to be included. The Master Plan should complement the urban renewal plan, but will not be useless if it does not contain one. The Master Plan should address larger objectives such as encouraging multi-story structures on vacant lots in the downtown area.

Mr. Borgendale said that, to the extent that the Planning Department is allocating time for such projects, they take away from time needed to work on the Master Plan. One of the potential funding sources mentioned in the memo is a source for the Planning Commission's efforts. The concepts in the memo need to be fleshed out as part of the Master Plan work. He felt strongly that this effort needs to result in work that becomes part of the Master Plan. Ms. Power noted that the memo says that time is of the essence to make decisions before other actions and decisions preclude desired outcomes. This is important when thinking about the parking lot decisions and that it may be necessary to rethink the pace of decision making on the parking lot. Mr. Mitofsky responded that the Carr Lot project is all about federal funds that have time commitments attached to them. There are two years left to meet those commitments and the NEPA study will probably take a year. That will leave a year to make a decision. If it is possible to do the NEPA study on both sites, it should be done in that manner. Mr. Borgendale asked what the NEPA study is supposed to address. Mr. Mitofsky said that it is concerned with soil contamination, environmental issues, and archaeology. Ms. Power asked whether the Carr Lot funds could be used to finance the study described in Ms. Capels' memo. Ms. Capels said that is an interesting question, but was not likely since the plan described in the memo is much more broad than the Carr Lot issues. Mr. Mitofsky said that the Barre Street extension should be covered since it is a phase of the transportation center project. Ms. Capels added that the Planning Commission hopes to begin public hearings on the proposed Master Plan in September of this year. Even if we apply for grants to do the urban area redevelopment plan, funds won't be available until next winter and the plan itself is expected to take at least 6 months to complete.

Mr. Borgendale asked who has determined that replacement of all lost parking spaces is required. Mr. Mitofsky said that it is a local issue. The City did not want to reduce the number of parking spaces in the City. Ms. Capels noted that the replacement of parking was included in the proposal submitted for funding.

Mr. Mitofsky said that if the Planning Commission really wants to pursue peripheral parking with busing, he will bring those thoughts to the Carr Committee. He said that the consultant had ruled out this option, but the Mayor is in support of the concept. The reason he was interested in serving on the committee was to try to see that tax dollars spent on a parking facility would serve the broadest number of City goals. Parking at Capitol Plaza would be purely a parking garage while use of the Jacobs lot would allow for many other City goals.

Ms. Campbell asked for the time frame for decision on the parking lot. Mr. Mitofsky said that a decision could be made on Wednesday. The best solution is to study both sites. Ms. Power asked whether the Planning Commission has made recommendations to the City Council on the parking lots. Mr. Borgendale said that Commission had not done so. Mr. Mitofsky said that the Carr Lot

Committee is an appointed committee of the City Council and does not require Planning Commission approval. Ms. Power said that they were talking about a huge project. Ms. Campbell said that the project will have significant impact on the city. Mr. Borgendale said that the City has a tendency to plan for discreet areas without integrating those plans into an overall plan. He said that the overall planning approach should be addressed with the City Council.

Mr. Mitofsky asked whether the Commission wants him to pursue peripheral parking lots and busing. Mr. Borgendale said that he did not know, but that he was truly disturbed by the rule that construction on parking areas in the City center means that spaces must be replaced. He said that parking lots are not good uses in the center of the City. Mr. Mitofsky said that the City needs a cohesive plan for parking. Planning for parking should not be the responsibility of each individual site developer, but it should be the City's responsibility to provide parking otherwise there will be no cohesive plan for parking. Ms. Campbell added that there will also be no cohesive plan for economic development. Mr. McCormack said that he does not agree that the City should be providing subsidized parking. Mr. Mitofsky said that the Parking Committee is working on a plan to make parking self-sufficient.

Mr. Mitofsky asked how he should represent the Planning Commission at the City Council meeting. Ms. Campbell asked whether the Commission members agreed to:

1. Support both studies at the same time,
2. Support pursuing parking at the Jacobs lot because it supports the City rather than State facilities and supports other Master Plan goals, and
3. Support peripheral parking.

Mr. McCormack said that he would like the Commission to consider insisting that housing be included as a component of the project. Mr. Mitofsky said that issue will not come up in this phase of the project; the focus is currently only on the replacement parking. Mr. Mitofsky asked whether the Planning Commission members wanted him to state that their order of preference was, first, for support of both studies, second for peripheral parking and third for the Jacobs lot. Ms. Campbell said that she did not see this as an "either/or" situation. She said that the Planning Commission's support for the Jacobs lot did not mean that future peripheral parking would be precluded. Mr. Borgendale said that he would also like to express the Planning Commission's concern about the policy that requires downtown development to replace all displaced parking. Ms. Campbell suggested that Mr. Mitofsky state that the Commission believes that the long term planning interests of the City are best represented by alternative approaches to parking. Mr. Mitofsky said that he could add that the approaches should be more planned out and include a parking system. Ms. Campbell said that the current project-specific approach is not appropriate. Mr. McCormack added that the Commission needs to reject the idea that each space taken up by construction must be replaced. Mr. Mitofsky suggested that he characterize the Commission's thoughts by stating that the current parking code does not adequately address a Citywide parking system and the Planning Commission is considering options in the new Master Plan. Mr. Borgendale said that would be fine. Ms. Campbell said that it should also be noted that the Planning Commission rejects the notion of replacement parking as a policy.

Ms. Grodinsky said that the Commission needed to say that car pooling is part of the solution in addition to peripheral parking. Mr. Borgendale said that the subject was just parking at this time. Ms. Power said that the statement should include the fact that the Planning Commission is appalled by the concept that every parking space displaced by downtown development must be replaced.

### **Ratification of recommendation for Consultant Selection for Fiscal Impact Study**

Ms. Capels summarized her memo on this subject which was included in the Commissioner's meeting package and available on-line. Ms. Campbell made a motion that the recommendation be approved. Ms. Grodinsky seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Mitofsky said that he was leaving the meeting at this time. Mr. Borgendale thanked Mr. Mitofsky for his service. Other members of the Planning Commission also thanked Mr. Mitofsky.

### **Master Plan Update-Vision Statement**

Ms. Capels distributed copies of vision statements from the plans of other localities. She said that there are many approaches to this subject, and some municipal plans do not include any vision statements at all. In general, the statements are intended to describe how the community is desiring itself to look or be at some future point in time. This draft is meant to be a starting point for discussion.

The Commission members' comments on the draft vision statements are summarized below.

Ms. Facciolo:

- The section on the economic base should include a discussion of natural resources.
- The document should talk about river views, river access and shoreline protection.
- The section on historic buildings should include a more specific discussion of the scale of the town, three dimensionality and design control.
- The transportation paragraph should discuss pedestrian and non-motorized forms of transport.
- The section that notes the decline in crime should discuss specific reasons for the decline including the sense of community in the neighborhoods.
- Schools should be within walking distance of downtown.
- The bullets on changes to the City should include the goal of reducing dependence on automobiles.

Ms. Grodinsky:

- Walkability is a huge issue and should be in the first sentence of the document.
- Bridges are gateways.
- The Master Plan is part of the region.
- The section on new development should mention "green buildings."
- Residents, workers, and visitors should be able to walk or bike to destinations in the city. Safe walking and biking throughout the city should be stated goals.
- Car pooling is not mentioned.
- The last sentence of the first page should state that "the design of new development provides for a diversity of housing types."
- The farmers' market should be mentioned as it is a big draw for the City.

Ms. Campbell:

- The one page document handed out by Mr. Borgendale at the last meeting is a good resource with wonderful ideas. It discusses many of the points made by Ms. Grodinsky and Ms. Facciolo.
- Rather than saying that the plan starts in the year 2010, it should say that the City will consistently work on the goals so that there is a continuum into the year 2010.
- Bicyclists should be able to travel to all points within Montpelier as well as between Montpelier and Barre.
- There is a missing form on page 2 on increased funding for education.
- There does not appear to be any mention of cultural and educational resources.

Mr. McCormack:

- The statement regarding the protection of important natural resources should be reworded so that it does not imply that only those resources designated as “important” will be protected.
- The second paragraph could include a humorous suggestion made at a meeting two years ago. After the word “products”, there could be a reference could be made to the goal of being able to buy underwear downtown.
- At the end of the paragraph that ends with “scale of the public realm”, add a statement that new buildings and new development will be at the same or higher density as the historical building stock in order to continue and expand the walkable downtown and neighborhoods.
- District heating is a good inclusion.
- A good idea for parking lots is the concept of a satellite park and ride for bicycles with connections to off-road bike paths. This was included in the City’s Bike Plan.
- It is recommended that the comments on prisons be eliminated.
- In the discussion of a variety housing types, the term “mortgage” should be changed to “purchase.”
- Since the whole document makes up the Master Plan, even the vision statement has impacts in the Act 250 process. Therefore, there should be references to high density throughout the document.

Mr. Borgendale:

- The language of the vision statement (in the bulleted points) should address concrete goals on the size of the community and the mix of population. The vision statement should include goals for diversity including age, income, cultural and social aspects.
- The vision statement should address the mix between permanent residents and people working in the City. The goal should be to increase the proportion of people who both live and work in the community.
- All areas of the City should have a mix of commercial and residential activities.

Ms. Power said that there should be an implementation method that ensures that the desired mix of commercial and residential uses is achieved. She described the problem of the CB-II zone where office space has gobbled up the available housing. Zoning should protect residential space from conversion. Mr. Borgendale said that building owners have pointed out that mixed uses of buildings make it difficult to get insurance. If that situation makes it impossible to have mixed uses within buildings, then the mix should be achieved in the buildings side by side.

Mr. McCormack noted that while the Commissioners have been adding to the document, it is already overly long. Ms. Power said that the Commissioners should add the ideas that they want to include and then go back and cut the document down to size. Ms. Capels asked whether the Commission agreed with the basic approach used in the document. Several Commission members agreed. Mr. Borgendale said that he was inclined to begin to publicize an early draft of the vision statement to seek community input and he would like to hear thoughts on how to accomplish that.

Mr. Borgendale suggested that the Commission work on the transportation chapter at the next meeting since Lucy Gibson will be attending. He was also thinking that it would be good if the fiscal impact consultant sat in on the meeting with the planning commissioners from other towns since a big issue will be regional impacts. Ms. Capels said that meeting should be scheduled for the first meeting in August in order to stay on schedule. Mr. Borgendale said that the Commission members have two issues to discuss with the fiscal impact consultant. Those are the review of the scope of the study and the development of scenarios. He said that he was not sure if the Commission can get both done at one meeting and added that he hoped that all of the members would be

thinking about those topics. Ms. Grodinsky asked for copies of the proposal to be shared with the Commission members. Ms. Capels said that the consultant wants to meet with the Planning Commission to get a sense of which approach is preferred.

Ms. Grodinsky asked for an update on the subcommittee on Sabin's Pasture. Ms. Facciolo said that the subcommittee is meeting to discuss the RFP on Thursday at 6:30 and said that anyone could attend.

Mr. Borgendale said that he would like to devote one half of an hour at the next meeting to discuss the scope of the fiscal impact study with the consultant. Ms. Capels said that there may be limits on how many times the consultant can travel to meet with the Commission. Mr. Borgendale said that they should think about the meeting.

### **Other Business**

Ms. Capels said that the cable television station would like to have a more predictable schedule for television the Commission meetings. The Commission members expressed an interest in televising the upcoming meeting on the transportation chapter and the meeting with the other planning commissions. Ms. Grodinsky said that, if Ms. Gibson will be discussing the transportation survey at the meeting, it would be worthwhile to take out an advertisement in "The Bridge."

Ms. Capels asked whether the Commission had decided that the meeting with the planning commission would be scheduled for the August 9 meeting. Mr. Borgendale said that it would be scheduled either for August 9 or August 23, depending on availability. Ms. Campbell said that she would be missing the next meeting and the second meeting in August.

Ms. Capels said that she was wondering if it would be practical for the members who previously took on subjects for the Master Plan to review those sections and make sure that key points are included.

### **Adjournment**

Ms Campbell made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Grodinsky. The motion was approved 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 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.*