

Montpelier Planning Commission
September 27, 2004
City Council Chambers, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

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

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Borgendale at 7:15.

Review of Agenda

Mr. Borgendale said that he did not want to vote on agenda item #6, the resolution regarding the Open Space Committee, without a more significant quorum. He took a crack at the purpose statement and would like comments from the Planning Commission members by e-mail.

Comments from the Chair

Mr. Borgendale provided a copy of a draft response to the Times Argus regarding the zoning consultants to the commissioners. He said the letter is to explain why the City needs help with zoning. Ms. Grodinsky said that the process needs to be more deliberate. She is concerned that the consultant will produce the zoning quickly without opportunity for adequate public comment. Mr. Borgendale said another issue is that the zoning will result in the placement of a line on the property that shows where development may and may not occur, but will not describe the broad community goals that will be served or the basis for the line. Ms. Grodinsky said that she is concerned the line will not be supported by a scientific basis such as wildlife corridors or feeding areas. Mr. Borgendale said that it is hard to argue that Sabin's Pasture is a wildlife corridor since it is surrounded by development. Ms. Campbell said that the point is to focus on where to draw the line and how the placement of the line is justified. Ms. Grodinsky asked for the time frame for sending the letter. Mr. Borgendale said that there is no specific date, but it should be sent before it becomes old news.

Master Plan Draft Topics

Transportation:

Ms. Campbell said that the draft is very comprehensive and ambitious. The Commission will need to set priorities. Ms. Grodinsky said that there could be certain visions in the transportation section such as bike lanes that could be implemented any time the City is working on the roads. That would be a method to achieve some of the goals without large capital expenses. Mr. Borgendale said that he did not think that the Commissioners should be prioritizing in the first draft, but they should be deciding on goals. He wants to see part of the transportation section addressing the responsibility of pedestrians and bicyclists to also share the road. He would e-mail suggested language.

Ms. Grodinsky said she is curious to hear if the Commission thinks that there is enough stress on traffic calming. She suggested commissioners continue to send comments to her. Mr.

McCormack said he would like to look into the issue of vehicle noise and inadequate mufflers. There may be good laws on the books that are not being enforced.

Infrastructure

Mr. Borgendale pointed out that Goal #3 has been revised to include a statement that the police and fire departments will develop ways to measure the effectiveness of outcomes. An example could be a comparison of the number of police and the number of a type of criminal incidents in a city of a similar size as Montpelier.

Ms. Campbell said the goal that all residents shall use public water and sewer raises a significant issue. She asked why the goal needed to be so extreme when so many residents are not connected to public water. Mr. Borgendale said that there are typically greater safety risks for individual systems. He wants to hear the other Commissioners' comments. Ms. Capels pointed out the possible ramifications if water and sewer infrastructure was extended to outlying areas of the city.

Mr. Borgendale said that, in goal #4, he wanted to say that certain kinds of activities are disproportionately responsible for demands on City services. Montpelier's fire and police departments, for example, are large because of all of the activity going on and the people coming to visit. The concept should be that if your activity results in a greater public safety risk, then you should pay a portion of the public safety cost. Ms. Campbell suggested that the words "proportionally supported" should replace "borne." Ms. Grodinsky said that the City should be exploring a revenue stream from the people using city infrastructure. This could be in the form of user fees, parking fees, or commuter taxes. Mr. Borgendale said that the broad point is that the Master Plan should look at financial consequences and incentives. Ms. Capels noted that the economic development impacts also need to be considered in the consequences.

Mr. Borgendale said that he did not want to discuss the other topics without Mr. Sedano and the other Commissioners present.

Update of Council Rezoning Committee

Ms. Grodinsky asked whether a request could be made to Ms. Facciolo to send an update by e-mail.

Mr. Borgendale said that the Commission needs to think about preparing for the public hearings on the rezoning. Ms. Grodinsky said that the process has not provided opportunity for public input. Mr. Borgendale said that the Commission should be aware that under the provisions of Chapter 117, it will have to write a report that assesses the impacts of the zoning changes on housing and other areas. It will be important to publicize the fact that the zoning is not just for Sabin's Pasture. Ms. Grodinsky said that she is concerned that the zoning committee's process has not included a broad range of people.

Mr. Borgendale said the Planning Commission is supposed to be provided a "smart code" ordinance that lays out all of the requirements of the T-4 development zone, pieces that will apply to all zones, a map saying how much of Sabin's Pasture will be zoned T-4 and how much

will be the T-1 zone, some information on how the line was drawn, and some information on the impact to housing stock. Mr. McCormack said he had communicated to Chris Smart that the high density zones should allow for densities at least as high as they are now. Mr. McCormack said that he wanted to be sure that the result would not be a down-zoning. Mr. Borgendale said the densities will be expressed in terms of by-right densities. There will be criteria for bonus densities.

Mr. McCormack said he believes that the smart code will bring more problems. The Planning Commission could have done better if it had been allowed to hire a consultant directly and work on amending the current zoning ordinances. The Commission will be left with doing the work of holding public hearings on the code that the committee produces. Mr. Borgendale said that if the product is not acceptable, the Planning Commission can send it back with a recommendation that it should not be adopted.

Ms. Grodinsky said the Commission has to be proactive on the issue of the process. Mr. Borgendale said that he has a problem with the perspective that it is so important to do something that the City might forge ahead with something that could make things worse.

Ms. Campbell asked Mr. McCormack to explain his issue with smart code. Mr. McCormack said he objects to the "Disneyland" approach to making a perfect place which focuses on the superficial aspects of the code. What matters is that sprawl is a terribly unfair and wasteful use of land.

Mr. Borgendale said that one of the causes of sprawl is resistance to infill development. Some of the regulations could ease neighbors' concern that infill development will not fit the neighborhood. He also thinks the process is being micro-managed. Typically, under smart code, a parcel would be zoned to allow a range of densities with set percentages for those densities. The developer would then have the flexibility to design the site within those limits. This process may not result in that type of flexibility.

Master Plan Timeline

Ms. Grodinsky suggested that public relations for the Master Plan should be addressed in a systematic way so that people will know what is going to be discussed at the meetings. Ms. Capels said that the articles in *The Bridge* prior to the 2002 Town Meeting was an example. Ms. Grodinsky suggested drafting a public relations plan. She could try to come up with a draft, but that the other Commissioners should be involved. Mr. Borgendale said a subcommittee could be formed. Ms. Grodinsky said that she would take it on rather than create a subcommittee. She is thinking of publishing simple descriptions of the agenda of each meeting on a regular basis. Ms. Capels said that it is important to make the information as relevant to the citizens as possible in order to catch their interest. Perhaps the Commission could use a logo like the one that was used for the Town Meeting information.

Ms. Campbell said that Commissioners can help the process by talking about it informally with members of the community. Ms. Capels suggested that a concise PowerPoint presentation or other kind of presentation could be put together and offered to groups like the Rotary.

Other

Mr. Borgendale asked Ms. Campbell to send copies of her comments on his letter to the other Commissioners.

Mr. Borgendale said the Commission will have to revisit the schedule for the Master Plan at the next meeting. A complete first draft should have been put together by now.

Adjournment

Mr. McCormack made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Grodinsky seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

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.