



CITY OF MONTPELIER PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, May 29, 2007, 7:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers, City Hall

MINUTES

MEMBERS

Ken Jones, Chair
Carolyn Grodinsky, Vice Chair
David Borgendale
Anne Campbell
Alan Goldman
Mark Kaufman
Christopher Paterson

STAFF

Gwendolyn Hallsmith, Planning &
Community Development Director

Kathleen Swigon, Acting
Administrative Officer

George Seiffert, Community
Development Specialist

Eric Scharnberg,
GIS/Web Specialist

Audra Brown
Planning and Zoning Assistant

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Please note: All times are approximate and changes in the agenda may occur.

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. Those Planning Commissioners present included Ken Jones, Chair, Carolyn Grodinsky, Vice-Chair, Christopher Paterson, Mark Kaufman, and David Borgendale. Others included Gwendolyn Hallsmith, Director of Planning and Community Development, teachers and students from the Montpelier High School.

Approval of May 14th Minutes

The Board voted to approve the minutes of the May 14th meeting.

Presentation by Montpelier High School on Open Space Survey.

Students in Sue Beem's advanced statistics class presented the work they have done conducting an open space survey for the city. The report is attached to these minutes.

enVision Montpelier Project

The grant that the city received for the implementation of the long-term visioning process was discussed. The grant proposal is attached to these minutes. The Planning Commission discussed the kick-off event that was held on May 19th and the plans for the upcoming Stakeholder's Meeting; the proposed agenda is attached.

Parking and Transit: Public Discussion

The Planning Commission discussed the memo that Ken Jones had written to engage the public in a discussion about parking in the downtown. The memo is attached.

Montpelier Springs Proposal

The Planning Commission and members of the Conservation Commission discussed the possibility of using the pipeline construction to connect the trails that are near it.

Draft Stakeholder Meeting Agenda

Monday, June 4th

Montpelier High School Cafeteria

5:30 – 8:00

I. Introductions

5:30 – 6:15

Snacks will be available, and stakeholders will participate in an activity that introduces people to each other.

II. Planning Commission Presentation

6:15 – 6:45

Ken Jones, Chair of the Planning Commission will outline the envisionMontpelier process and the roles the stakeholders will play.

- Public Visioning Process
- Setting End State, Asset Based Goals
- Zeroing in on Targets
- Designing Effective Strategies
- The Action Plan
- Indicators, Performance Measures, Monitoring and Reporting

III. Stakeholder Skills

6:45 – 7:15

Gwendolyn Hallsmith, Planning and Community Development Director, will review some of the new skills that stakeholders will need to effectively participate in the process, including:

Group process skills: facilitation, decision-making, and conflict management,

Technical skills: systems thinking, strategy design, introducing innovation.

IV. Break

7:15 – 7:30

IV. Small Group Work

7:30 – 8:00

Stakeholders will be presented with a list of subcommittees, and will choose which groups they would like to attend. Members of the Planning Commission will take responsibility for each subcommittee and convene the group for the first time, setting up a regular meeting date and identifying some of the presentations from existing groups they would like to hear.

Social Systems

Human Development

Governance

Economics & Livelihoods

Built Environment & Infrastructure

CONCEPT PAPER

City of Montpelier: Creating a Sustainable State Capital

May, 2007

Summary

The City of Montpelier has initiated a long-term, visionary planning project called envisionMontpelier, which is designed to lay the groundwork for strategies and activities that will contribute to our progress becoming the country's first sustainable state capital. The project has secured City Council endorsement – they have included it in their goals for 2007-2008, and has recruited a core group of stakeholders from business, government, the schools, non-profit organizations, artists, senior citizens, youth, minority populations, and ordinary citizens to carry out the planning and action project.

We are seeking funds to implement the recommendations that result from the stakeholder group's work in the five key areas of sustainable community development: social well-being, participatory governance, economic security, efficient services and infrastructure, and environmental integrity. Projects will each include consideration of these issues, and priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate strategic leverage toward changing the underlying systems at work in our city to accelerate our progress toward a sustainable future.

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the implementation grants will be to:

- 1) Demonstrate measurable progress toward the goals that are set for the city, such as reduced carbon emissions, increased renewable energy production, reduced waste streams, increased social equity and participation in governance, poverty eradication, improved eco-efficiency of city services and infrastructure, etc.
 - a. Require each project to submit clear targets and indicators that will be addressed in the key community issue areas.
 - b. Report on the progress of the individual projects and the implementation effort as a whole on an annual basis to stakeholders as a way to maintain engagement.
- 2) Empower the stakeholders to work together toward common ends – encouraging cooperation among diverse groups and enabling principled and coherent decision-making about projects in the city.
 - a. Develop a decision-making process and grant delivery system that engages the stakeholder group in deciding on the grant awards, working with the recipients to implement the projects, and reporting on the progress made.
 - b. Fund projects that address issues in all five of the community sustainability areas.
- 3) Provide a mechanism to solicit matching funds from the city and other stakeholder groups who would be responsible for implementation of the plan.
 - a. Secure a local match for each project proposed that represents at least 30% of the value of the project, including both cash and in-kind contributions.
 - b. Engage the major stakeholders in the community in the financing and implementation of the project action plan.
- 4) Target projects that involve the youth in the community in the design and decision-making, to help young people here feel ownership of the city's future.

- a. Each project will have at least one youth representative from the community who is part of the decision-making and implementation process.
- b. Projects initiated by young people in the community will have priority in the criteria the Stakeholder Group uses to determine funding levels.

Activities

To support the decision-making and implementation of grant activities, the Stakeholder Group will establish clear guidelines and criteria for selecting projects. They will appoint a subcommittee that includes representatives of organizations in the community that are in a good position to evaluate the viability and effectiveness of the proposals such as the New England Grassroots Fund and others, to solicit and review the project proposals, and will establish benchmarks for progress.

To support collaboration among the diverse individuals and organizations involved in the envisionMontpelier project, the city will provide training in conflict management, group process skills, systems analysis, and innovation. This will be an in-kind contribution to the grant activities; funding is not needed for this.

To support the contribution of matching funds for the initiative, the Stakeholder Group will be asked at the outset to make a commitment to the implementation of the plan that is developed by the group as a whole, in the area of the action plan that applies to their organization. When projects are identified, the group will work with the applicable stakeholders to secure an appropriate match.

To support youth engagement in the project, the city has applied for VISTA volunteers through the Youth Services Center; their primary goal will be to engage young people in the planning and project implementation.

Timeline

The timeline for the envisionMontpelier planning process is 18 months to two years from April of 2007. The project implementation grants made under this program will begin in the fall of 2007 and will continue for two to three years to provide incentives and concrete steps toward the realization of the community's goals,

Budget

We are requesting \$100,000 as a two year grant for the implementation activities under the project. We anticipate that the projects that are awarded grant funds will range from \$2,000 - \$25,000 on average, which will allow for 10 – 15 projects. Since the city is administering the grant, it is possible for us to dedicate 100% of the project funds to the implementation projects chosen by the Stakeholder Group.

Structuring a Parking and Transit Discussion in Montpelier

Starting the Discussion

A preliminary question to address through data and public input is:

Is the current parking in downtown Montpelier sufficient to meet your needs?

The information to support this discussion is an inventory of existing parking broken down into four categories.

- Metered parking for 2-hour visitors
- Permitted parking for longer use (employees and residents)
- On-street parking in the downtown area
- State office parking

The response to the question can also be categorized by these categories

- More parking when shopping or visiting downtown for 2 hours or less
- More parking when you need to stay for half a day or longer
- More parking with no meters
- More parking when visiting or working in the State Offices downtown

One possibility for promoting this discussion is to develop an introductory article for the local newspapers and provide multiple opportunities for people to respond to the question. These options may include

- Post cards available at the Library, City Hall, Visitors kiosk, with a drop box.
- Web site
- Leave a phone message at City Hall
- Visit the Planning Commission during a meeting to discuss the results of the question.

I am curious the depth of sentiment regarding the need for parking. And, regardless of the response, we will need to go on to the next questions.

The meat of the discussion

Building off of the results from the first question...

What are some of the pros and cons of three different approaches to improving the accessibility of parking?

- More surface parking through identification of additional spots. (Focus group A)
- Construct a parking garage to get more spots without increasing the footprint of spots (Focus Group B)
- Managing the demand for existing spots opening them up for other users. (Focus Group C)

To the extent that people do not think parking is too restricted at this point;

Is there something the City should do to promote some discussion between those that think parking is too limited and those that think the parking situation is fine and should not be tinkered with?

The focus groups should get specific.

Focus Group A – Using a map of the Downtown area, point out where additional parking opportunities may be. From those highlighted areas, note what the positives and benefits are for each.

Focus Group B – Using a map of the Downtown area, point out where a parking garage might make the most sense. What would the impacts be on traffic? Should the parking garage be used for short term or longer term parking?

Focus Group C – Identify some of the strategies that might help people find alternatives to driving into the downtown and parking for long periods of time. Who will we need to engage to implement each idea?

The results from each Focus Group should be brought to the Planning Commission for discussion during a regularly scheduled meeting. At the conclusion of the three reports, the Planning Commission should sponsor an open hearing on the progress to date.

Thinking of the long term

The possibility that the future of transportation is going to change dramatically is important to consider in this discussion as well. Possibly during the open hearing, we should also raise the question of people's expectations about how they will move about the region ten or twenty years from now.

- Will we still be using gasoline fueled vehicles

- Will we be moving to other energy sources for individual occupancy vehicles

- Will we be moving to a more coordinated transit system with less reliance on vehicles

The results of this discussion will help us consider the length of time that we need to be considering our solutions. If there is a general sentiment that there will be less reliance on single occupancy vehicles, then any parking fix should be flexible to allow for less use in the future. However, if the sentiment is that we will find some way to keep to our single occupant vehicle, we can't presume that parking is going away as an issue and our solutions will need to be long term.

Addressing transit

After the parking discussion gets rolling, the Planning Commission should sponsor additional discussions regarding transit. The Census provides us a general sense of the destinations that Montpelierites have for their out-of-town work and the home towns for those people that work in Montpelier. A focus group for categories of individuals can focus on current and future options for transit.

Focus Group D – Those that work and/or live in Chittenden County (and maybe Franklin County) (My top two destinations are UVM and the airport)

Focus Group E – Those that work and or live in northern towns (Calais, Worcester, Woodbury, etc.)

Focus Group F – Those that work and or live in the Mad River Valley and Waterbury

Focus Group G – Those that work or live in the eastern towns (Barre, Plainfield, Marshfield)

Focus Group H – Those that work or live in the southern towns (Northfield, I-89 south)

The relationship between the parking and transit topic is the extent to which local citizens have an interest in transit to out-of-town destination and the related need to park to gain access to the transit options.

Integrating with the Capital Complex Commission

Over the next few months, the Capital Complex Commission is also going to be looking at parking. This is in the context of implementing the current plan for the Capital Complex. The first meeting on this topic is on June 13 and I will propose the following.

- Determination of current number of state parking spots
- Estimate of visitors to state offices (time of day, time of year)
- Estimate of visitors to State House during session
- Estimate of state workers that use state-owned parking

From this starting data, I will ask for estimates of future employment, and visitors.

The data from this discussion will feed into our city discussions and I am presuming that some of the suggestions for parking demand management will feed back to the Complex Commission (i.e. ways to get state employees to park on the periphery or to carpool)