

Planning Commission Minutes
July 9, 2007

Meeting convened at 7:10 pm

Attending:

Ken Jones, Chair
David Borgendale
Anne Campbell
Mark Kaufmann
Gwendolyn Hallsmith, Planning and Development Director

enVision Montpelier

Meetings of each of the Committees are taking place with a portion of the agenda dedicated to training carried out by Gwen. Both David and Anne noted that their Committees (Governance and Social Systems) have been well attended and the proceedings well received.

Gwen reminded us that the second of the summer Committee meetings should determine a Co-Facilitator that will also serve as a representative to the Steering Committee.

In addition to the Committee meetings, Gwen described the content of the EarthCAT toolbox that is available on the internet and includes the responses from the survey cards filled in by local citizens. The total number of cards is approaching 100 and therefore the database of responses is beginning to have some interesting themes. Ken encouraged Commission members to review the EarthCAT site, both to consider its general applicability for supporting the project, and to get some initial input from citizens with regards to the City vision.

The remaining schedule of Committee meetings is available on an email from Gwen to the Commission dated June 8.

During the July 3 celebrations, Gwen and Mark handed out additional survey cards to the throngs attending the parade. Already, some of these cards have been returned.

At a future meeting, later in the summer, the Commission will need to consider the agenda for the next full Stakeholders meeting to take place on September 11 on the Vermont College campus (in the Chapel?). In addition, the Commission will need to provide some consideration to the agenda for the as-yet unscheduled first meeting of the Steering Committee.

Parking and Transit

Ken distributed some of the very early results of the short parking survey. About 30 of these surveys were returned via one-on-one discussions by Ken and 7 surveys have been returned from the Bridge article. The results of these surveys are important for three reasons.

First, the folks filling them out tend to engage in at least a brief discussion about the parking situation which primes them to receive future communications. Second, the responses themselves show a range of sentiments even if the statistical distribution of those responses may not be valid because of the unscientific nature of the manner for survey collection. And third, the responses provide a basis for a future article in the local news media to introduce the more comprehensive features of the outreach.

Ken requested that Commission members consider individuals that will be able to articulate their positions on certain strategies for addressing parking. Examples of these perspectives may be:

- Supporting a parking garage
- Opposing a parking garage
- Supporting a way to maximize the value of existing spaces
- Supporting a way to reduce the demand for parking through carpooling and transit

These writings would help initiate a city-wide discussion about the remedies for parking. Additional future steps for the outreach are to have a more formal polling process and public hearings sponsored by the Planning Commission and/or City Council.

District Energy

Gwen notified the Commission that the City has applied for funding through the Department of Public Service to support the next steps in the development of a district energy plant. This facility will be a wood-fired electric generating plant while also heating buildings in the downtown area. The City is working in partnership with the State and some representatives of the private sector to structure this facility. The City is fortunate to have the expertise of the Biomass Energy Research Center working on the plans and they helped in the development of the proposal, as well.

Future meetings

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will be on July 23. At this meeting, the Commission members will review the preliminary results of the parking survey. Also, the Commission will review the content of the EarthCAT website for results from the enVision Montpelier project and to consider the site as a tool for greater use in that project. Ken agreed to provide some discussion questions for consideration prior to the meeting as a basis for members to query the database.

Mark noted that the School Board was also carrying out significant planning and with the start of a new Superintendent, it will be valuable to identify opportunities for integrating the planning of the School Board with the Planning Commission. Ken agreed to work with John Hollar to find an opportunity to learn more about school planning.

Meeting adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.