

**Montpelier Planning Commission**  
**July 23, 2007**  
**City Council Chambers, City Hall**

*Subject to Review and Approval*

**Present:** Ken Jones, Chair; Carolyn Grodinsky, Vice Chair; David Borgendale, and David Borgendale.  
Staff: Gwen Hallsmith, Director, Planning and Community Development

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Jones at 7:00 p.m.

**Public Appearances:**

There were no public appearances.

**Minutes:**

The Planning Commission reviewed the minutes of May 14, May 29 and July 9, 2007. On page 3 of the May 14<sup>th</sup> minutes it mentions Mr. Goldberg once and Mr. Goldman several times, and needs to be corrected to reflect Mr. Goldman's name. Mr. Patterson moved approval of the May 14<sup>th</sup> minutes as amended, with Ms. Grodinsky seconding the motion. The minutes of May 14, 2007 were approved unanimously. Ms. Hallsmith said she included the open space survey results as part of the May 29<sup>th</sup> minutes. Mr. Paterson moved approval of the May 29<sup>th</sup> minutes, with Mr. Borgendale seconding the motion. The Planning Commission minutes of May 29, 2007 were approved unanimously. There were not enough members present who had attended the July 9<sup>th</sup> meeting to approve the minutes. The July 9, 2007 minutes will need to receive approval at the next scheduled Planning Commission meeting.

**I. enVision Montpelier Project Update:**

**a. Committee Meetings and Training:** Ms. Hallsmith reported that the Social Systems Committee have decided to initiate a time banking project and have set up another subcommittee to do that, which is meeting on August 28<sup>th</sup>. Time banking is like a time dollar system. They are doing great and had a good turnout at their meeting. There is a lot of enthusiasm, both in that committee and the community, for the time dollar system. Ms. Hallsmith wrote an article about time banking for *The Bridge*.

Mr. Paterson reported that he and Mary Hooper facilitated the Human Development Committee meeting. They generated a long list of assets. One of the things he agreed to do before they met again was to go through the list and try to do some grouping. Ms. Hallsmith reported that John Hollar and Steve Metcalf have both agreed to serve on that committee. They have a lot of the studies that would answer the questions. The school is right on top of a lot of that stuff. Mr. Paterson said the next meeting for the Human Development is September 18<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Hallsmith said the Planning Department will have two new staff people in August that will help with enVision. She reported they hired a new Zoning Administrator, Clancy DeSmet, who has a law degree from Vermont Law School. He specializes in environmental law. He hasn't passed the Bar yet. He used to be an environmental regulator in Alaska so he has some experience with being a regulator.

**b. September Meeting Agenda:** The Planning Commission noted at their last meeting they need to start thinking about the types of items to be included at the September meeting. Is there going to be a way during the September meeting to give all of the attendees a sense of what the other groups are doing? Mr. Paterson said we should get lists of what the committees are doing and put them up on the wall and have time for people to stroll around and see rather than receiving reports. Ms. Hallsmith said in Calgary at a large meeting the chair of the committee stayed at the table and had a discussion. Mr. Paterson said he was thinking of something a little less formal at the beginning of the meeting, or during a break.

Mr. Paterson said they need to something to reorient people to what is happening and let them know what we need to do over the next four months and lay out the tasks in front of the committees.

Ms. Hallsmith said there are some decision points that would be important to get through at a meeting in September. One of the things that has worked in other places is to get the group to agree that they will rotate chairmanship of the stakeholder group among the committee chairs they have elected.

c. **Steering Committee:** Ms. Hallsmith said she hopes the Steering Committee will have met at least once before the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Planning Commission also needs to appoint two people to the Steering Committee. The City Council also needs to appoint two members. The Mayor is the facilitator.

Nat Frothingham thought there should be an event where people gave up their car one day a month and put a sticker on their car for the day they are giving up their car, and by doing that they get out of a parking ticket free once a year.

d. **EarthCAT Results:** Mr. Jones said he had tried the software. Ms. Hallsmith said when they are creating the vision statement, which is the point of this exercise is the things that stand out for people will still be there in the future. The vision statement might say something about Hubbard Park and the Library as what people really value as continuing. What is it about a city that has Hubbard Park and the great library we do that we can expand on to talk about the kind of city it is for the future. That is the kind of thing people value which also could shape how development elsewhere occurs.

In addition to going into the area and see what people are seeing, there is another area where you can discuss that. It's called the open forum on the web site. The stakeholders need to be added into the web site. They could demonstrate the web site at the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. The vision is relatively short, which is a short statement about the future. The goals should be structured around the needs, and that is where you would get into specific goals on solid waste, education or recreation. Once the goals are in the web site you can actually develop reports.

Mr. Jones asked if there was a way to go into another project. Ms. Hallsmith said they could go into Calgary. They are all password protected.

## **II. Parking and Public Discussion:**

a. **Survey Results to Date:** Montpelier residents see themselves walking and taking their bikes to work in the future. Mr. Jones talked with the Capitol Complex Commission and told them the Montpelier Planning Commission was going to be doing outreach, including state workers. He talked to the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles to see if he could put the box in their offices and on vehicles. People who are using the parking lots don't see a radical new approach to how they are getting to work in the future. This is a self-selected process. People fill out the cards because they want to.

Comparison 2 is these are all the local folks, the difference between the short term parking and parking all day for jobs. Many people who live local have trouble parking. When it comes to those folks in terms of working, they are not the ones having the significant problem. Local people have problem parking for shopping.

The Planning Commission had a discussion about parking problems on Terrace Street during the legislative session. It is an issue, and the state has a significant responsibility for this. Ms. Grodinsky said in Waterbury a few years ago the state did make some changes in parking to create more spaces. Ms. Hallsmith said she feels the state should build a parking garage, but she doesn't feel the city should build a garage. Why should the Montpelier taxpayers pick up the bill for the rest of the state?

Mr. Jones said the discussion he has had with people is that there is a sentiment from the local citizens that parking is not that big a problem. It is folks who live out of town that have a greater problem with parking. Mr. Borgendale said there have been Letters to the Editor from people who live outside and come to Montpelier to work and feel the City of Montpelier has an obligation to provide them with a place to park for free.

Mr. Jones the survey has shown that a lot of people hate parking meters. Several people said Barre provides free parking and why can't Montpelier provide free parking. The meters do keep the shopping parking available.

That is the purpose for the meters, to move people in and out of downtown. The downtown would fill up with day long parkers if we didn't have parking meters. Mr. Borgendale said they could rephrase the statement that we have a problem getting people into downtown for events. He said he has no problem with Fred Bashara running a shuttle to bring people in for events at the Capitol Plaza.

Ms. Hallsmith said the question becomes, what is the public interest? And, how is it best served? Mr. Jones said there is a sentiment that the strength of the downtown is related to the strength of the businesses and the business owners are a reflection of that.

Ms. Hallsmith said the question could be, what should our public money be spent on? People who create private parking demand need to be willing to shoulder some of the costs of the private parking demand they are benefiting from. People like the state, and people who generate a lot of parking trips, should be ready to step up to the plate and help the city buy the parking it needs. Help put up the parking garage. Help with the remote spots. She said she has problems when public dollars start to be spent on what is essentially private parking, which is now proposed for the Carr Lot situation. Replacement parking is build a public parking garage but sell the spaces to the highest bidder. That's private parking, and not public parking. Why should public dollars go into funding expensive parking spots for the wealthiest folks and lawyers who are coming in to lobby the legislature? If there is a private market for parking, then the private sector ought to be able to step up to the plate and fund it. Mr. Borgendale agreed the city should make it possible for them to do that. Public money should be spent on public parking.

Ms. Hallsmith said they should look at Burlington and their public parking facilities that exist there. They are open to the public. In several of them you can park for the first couple of hours for free, and they are open to the public. The spaces throughout those garages are public spaces. You don't drive through and see reserved spaces. Anyone can drive in and use it. Private parking is something she owns because she pays rent and a lease on it. Of course, it is more lucrative to lease out the spaces individually.

Mr. Jones said the problem is that Montpelier doesn't have the public space to put a public parking lot on right now. We talk about a parking lot on state land. As soon as we build it we have to give the state back 150 spots for the state. State parking should be paid for by the state, private parking should be paid for by the private sector, and public parking paid for by the public. Burlington does a good job with parking.

Mr. Jones said they would keep circulating the survey and get more responses. He listed some issues that deserve some communication from folks. He is hoping to find individuals who want to weigh in on this discussion.

Mr. Borgendale said to a certain extent there is a relationship between parking and a creative economy because the kinds of economic activity that really drives a high demand for parking are retail and service type organizations, most of which is what we have in Montpelier. The stuff people do in a creative economy tends to not require nearly as much parking. It is retail and service economies that dominate the local economy in Montpelier. He believes economic development plans that push the creative economy to get more people doing those kinds of things within the city will tend to alleviate the parking problems.

### **Other Business:**

**a. Creative Economy:** Mr. Jones said some people say a creative economy is any sort of creative solution, but many of the people who attended the meeting represented the arts community. They see a creative economy being based on the arts and creative economy is selling art. If you are creating innovation, it is different than encouraging the development of the performance arts and saleable arts. Ms. Grodinsky said there is real grey zone.

Mr. Jones said a few years ago when Move-On asked people to do videos on Bush. They were fantastic. The quality of the stuff that came out for free was fantastic. There are so many places where good creative things can make existing sectors of the economy more productive.

Mr. Borgendale said we want to encourage the arts and crafts community, but that is not a basis for a long term sustainable economy. Ms. Hallsmith said she has data on the percentage of the creative economy that the arts represent and all of the other sectors. There are design, engineering, software, marketing and advertising. The creative economy now employs more people than the manufacturing sector does. The people who are the smart ones creating things that are patentable, writing the books, and making the art and developing the software tend to be a class of people. That class of people is attracted to cities for similar reasons, even though one is an artist and one is an engineer. They want places that have a high quality of life, lots of amenities like we have here in Montpelier with good theatre, restaurants, schools and night life. They want access to technology.

Ms. Hallsmith said she has done a lot of research and work on this and have a chapter in a book written on the creative economy and what the strategies are and what role the arts play. The strategies you use to promote a creative economy are strategies that appeal to artists.

Mr. Borgendale said he thinks we need to be playing to our strengths in having some unique characteristics appeal to people who do that kind of things. In other words, we may be ahead in that foot race if we decide to participate and market ourselves and pursue these strategies.

Mr. Paterson said he believe a talk or the resources would be better utilized by the folks working on enVision Montpelier than the Planning Commission. It is a lovely discussion, but he doesn't feel this is the place for it. Ms. Hallsmith said she believed the strategies for promoting a creative economy certainly are within the purview of the Planning Commission. Montpelier used to have a Creative Economy Task Force, and she served as a member of that commission. They formed around the grants and opportunities that were available through the Council on Rural Development and got turned down. The task force dissipated after that.

**b. Growth Center Designation:** Discussion about growth centers was postponed until a future meeting.

**c. Planning Commissioner Recruitment:** Mr. Jones said the Planning Commission needs to draft a note to City Council emphasizing that they are hoping to get a planning commission member who represents gender equity and represents downtown. Mr. Borgendale said he thinks they need strong representation of the environmental interest.

Ms. Hallsmith inquired if any members of the Planning Commission were interested in serving on the brownfields committee of the Regional Planning Commission. She has tentatively volunteered to serve.

Ms. Hallsmith said a quick update on the Carr Lot is that it looks like now that the testing and characterization that is going to be done is going to do it for a high occupancy use. It looked like Alan Carr was proceeding down a path that would only produce the data or a parking lot and not for a multi modal transit center. That is some good news. Just paving the Carr Lot doesn't meet the EPA standards, so the state has approved a corrective action plan that EPA won't approve.

**Adjournment:**

Mr. Borgendale moved adjournment, with Ms. Grodinsky seconding the motion. The Planning Commission adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Gwen Hallsmith, Director  
Planning & Community Development