

**Montpelier Planning Commission**  
**March 14, 2011**  
**City Council Chambers, City Hall**

*Subject to Review and Approval*

**Present:** Jesse Moorman, Chair; Tina Ruth, Kimberly Cheney and Jon Anderson; Youth Members Megan Wingate and Anna Hartman.  
Staff: Clancy DeSmet, Planning & Zoning Administrator and Taylor Newton, VISTA

**Call to Order:**

Jesse Moorman, Chair, called the meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:00 P.M. Mr. Moorman welcomed Kimberly Cheney to the Planning Commission. Mr. Cheney said he looks forward to being a part of what is going on in the city and helping to make it a good place to live.

**Review & Approval of October 25 and November 22, 2010 and January 24, 2011 Minutes:**

There wasn't a quorum to approve the October 25 and November 22, 2010 or January 24, 2011 Minutes. No minutes were approved lacking a quorum.

**Update on Zoning Project & Neighborhood Meetings:**

Taylor Newton said they have entered into the second meeting phase relative to zoning. There was one second meeting which was poorly attended.

Tina Ruth said it was disappointing because they had met in the Meadow the week before and had 8 or 9 people present. They talked about the uses existing in the Meadow and additional uses they might want to have, specifically addressed the concept of how the Meadow could contribute to additional affordable housing in the city and felt there was very little land. There are three sites that readily come to mind that are possible ones that could be added. They like the Meadow as it is so they would like to keep similar housing but maybe a large house looking building that would work for several apartments might look fine. The Carlene Bagnall side lot and two ranch houses on Pearl Street that are not in great shape that are targets for rebuilding something on those sites. Tina Ruth said she lives on Elm Street.

Second meetings are meetings where you get together with the neighborhoods to talk about the results of the survey. What is the timeline envisioned between the second and third meetings?

Mr. Newton said it is tentative but are looking towards the fall.

Mr. Moorman said for a couple of first meetings they had neighborhoods grouped together. What is the idea of the second meetings?

Ms. Ruth said it makes sense to her for each of them to meet separately. It is so each community is focusing on its own neighborhood and not on somebody else's.

Mr. Moorman said they have a 1 percent response to the surveys. Is there any concern about surveys coming from other municipalities? 79 of the 80 could be from another town. Continue to do whatever we can to promote the next meetings.

**Discussion of DC Zoning Best Practices Study:**

He encouraged members to look at the Conclusion Section of the Study. This has different ideas and concepts of zoning. He has always viewed the Planning Commission's work right now as education and outreach about the mission of getting the zoning revision going. While the neighborhoods do the work of filling out the surveys and providing their input it behooves the Planning Commission to come up to speed with these different concepts.

He focused on the Conclusion Section starting on page 44. One idea that stood out for him was the idea of parking maximums. There were green design incentives. On page 45 finding increases in property values in mixed use neighborhoods with neighborhood commercial but reductions in value in some neighborhoods proximate to multi-family development. Consider the economic impacts of mixed use development.

Mr. DeSmet said most of the case studies in cities were nothing like Montpelier – San Antonio, Texas and Norfolk Virginia for example.

Mr. Moorman said some of the cities like Boston, Fort Collins and St. Petersburg have opted to go down the neighborhood district route where they have identified neighborhoods, and that is one option we are considering with the way we have structured the public outreach. Modified conventional goes into five types. What stood out there was something about higher density zones on a smaller footprint. On page 48 it talks about composite zoning which is the most interesting of the five but he couldn't understand it. He liked how it spoke to the combination of flexibility and certainty and the ability to customize for certain properties. It tends to be a complex ordinance. They keep hearing from folks that the current code for Montpelier zoning is byzantine and they would like to simplify it. When he is done reading this he thinks they can't escape all together some complexity. Form based codes is zoning for idiots which is more tangible. If you go with form based codes you should make it mandatory otherwise it won't work. Then, on page 53 it says form based codes are an incomplete tool.

Mr. DeSmet said they are never going to get away from floodplain and historic preservation in Montpelier. That is why you need some sort of customization because it won't be that flexible.

We already have performance based zoning which are based on uses. The report says form based codes includes a high emphasis on physical design with little or no emphasis on the environmental impacts of development.

Mr. Moorman said he thinks Montpelier is a prime candidate for infill development incentives. A focus of their work should be on how they can promote infill development because it is a dense downtown with increased housing in the same footprint of the city.

Mr. Anderson asked if they had a master list of where Clancy thinks of zoning ordinances for the city.

Mr. DeSmet said he has the last version of his copy of the ordinances that he has marked up extensively where he has noted things are inconsistent and ambiguous.

Mr. Anderson said it might be useful to have a copy of that for members. Have they thought about ways that the current ordinances could be simplified? It seems for awhile the drafting of zoning ordinances in the state was the feeling the more tables they had the better. The length of the ordinances seems to have multiplied. They seem a lot more complex.

Ms. Ruth asked if there are parts of the zoning ordinance that is functional. They know the sign ordinance isn't. If parts aren't broken she would just as soon not fix them.

Mr. Moorman said they could probably pick and choose some of the existing pieces of their code that work just fine. He thinks they have to identify what their goals are for the zoning – infill, increased housing, less real estate devoted to parking. He knows the city needs to foster infill development.

**Setting Next Meeting Date:**

There are neighborhood meetings coming up. He suggested they meet April 11<sup>th</sup>. They will review the five page zoning references in the Master Plan and see what our goals are.

**Adjournment:**

Upon a motion made by Tina Ruth and Jon Anderson the Planning Commission adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clancy DeSmet  
Planning & Zoning Administrator

Transcribed by: Joan Clack