

## **Including All Voices in the Country Club Road Project**

*By Evelyn Prim, Communications Coordinator*

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As Montpelier explores how to use the 133 acres of land at 203 Country Club Road, the city council is seeking broad public input on its future plans.

Robust public involvement is the cornerstone of healthy local government, and the city of Montpelier has committed to increasing public engagement opportunities. This means creating space for public input in decision-making for the newly acquired land at 203 Country Club Road.

“When Montpelier residents come out to be heard, we make the final project better,” said Montpelier City Councilor Jack McCullough who represents District 2. “We want to hear from all the citizens of Montpelier.”

At the Sept. 14 city council meeting, councilors reviewed plans for “Phase 1” of the public engagement process according to [a memo](#) to the council from White + Burke real estate advisors. Continuing the listening session that began in the spring, the city plans to host a series of public engagement opportunities throughout the fall to allow residents to share their thoughts on the planning and development process.

City Manager Bill Fraser wants people to know that there will continue to be ample opportunity to get involved in many different ways. “The community has made a large investment in this property,” Fraser said. “It is appropriate that they have a significant say in how its future is shaped.”

### **Ways to Engage**

Josh Jerome, the city’s community and economic development specialist, said the city will be offering a range of ways for the public to get involved. There will be three meeting options at different times of day and days of the week so people can choose which meeting time works best for their schedule.

“All meetings will follow the same format,” Jerome said. “People don’t have to worry about missing out if they can’t attend one. The idea is to have plenty of options.” he continued.

The first meeting will take place at the former Elks Lodge property site at 203 Country Club Road on Oct. 15, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

The second meeting will be held on Oct. 19 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. in the Memorial Room at Montpelier City Hall. This meeting will also have a virtual option so people can join remotely.

The third meeting will be held on Oct. 27 from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Jerome said the city will be sending out more information about these meetings in the coming weeks. He also recommends people go to the city's website and sign up to receive email updates for this project if they'd like to learn more or get involved.

If residents do not want to or are unable to attend the meetings, the Zoom session will be posted on the website so they can see the presentation and hear public comment. There will also be tables with opportunities for public comment at community events (including the farmers market and at city hall on election day).

The public input heard in the spring has been compiled into a document that will be available on the website soon. The city will share this fall 2022 feedback on the website after compilation as well.

In today's world where misinformation abounds, Fraser said it's important the city keeps the public informed and involved throughout the project. "We need to be diligent in providing facts so that our residents can make decisions and reach conclusions based on accurate information," he continued.

### **The Big Vision**

The 203 Country Club Road project is tied to several ongoing goals in the city. [The initial ballot item](#) specified housing, recreation, and the potential for other uses.

"The planning process is here, and the city council wants it as broad as possible," said Montpelier City Councilor Dona Bate, who represents District 1. "This project is an opportunity to make progress towards the city's big vision," she continued.

The "big vision" for Montpelier, as Bate describes, is an updated recreation facility, more housing, and more community partnerships.

"I was so pleased that the voters saw the vision," Bate said as she reflected on the results of the Town Meeting Day election in March of this year. "That took a leap of faith."

The big vision for Montpelier is more than just meeting short-term goals, it's about anticipating future needs and taking the necessary steps now to see them to fruition.

"I'm interested in hearing what kind of housing and recreation facilities will be needed well into the 21st century," said McCullough. "This project affects the whole city."

### **Due Diligence & Next Steps**

Concurrent with public engagement to bring all voices to the table, the city's consulting team is conducting a site assessment to inventory the natural resources, understand the development constraints, and identify areas of opportunity.

These two pieces — the listening sessions and the due diligence — will be put together over the next few months. The city planning team will look at the opportunities and constraints and the range of priorities for use that have come from the community.

The following step will be a series of public workshops to analyze the range of scenarios and provide feedback on the potential. From there, the city will take up any additional analysis, due diligence, and drafting that may result from the public process. The result will be conceptual

plans for public discussion and direction from the city council. The city expects this to take place over the better part of the next year.

### **How Can I Stay Informed and Get Involved?**

- Sign up to receive project updates by email. Go to [montpelier-vt.org](http://montpelier-vt.org) and scroll down and click on the yellow “Notify Me” banner. Type your email into the address bar and click “Sign in.” You’ll receive an email confirmation to confirm your subscription. Once you’ve signed in, click on the email icon that corresponds with the updates you want to receive.
- In addition to the 203 Country Club Road updates, the city also recommends all Montpelier residents sign up for the [DPW Weekly Newsletter](#) to stay informed about road work projects in their neighborhood.
- Go to the Current Projects page on the city of Montpelier’s website at [montpelier-vt.org](http://montpelier-vt.org). To see updates on the 203 Country Club Project, click on Services > Current Projects > [203 Country Club Road Property Development](#).
- Follow the city of Montpelier on Facebook and LinkedIn. The city of Montpelier has a [Facebook](#) page for just about every department. Check out Montpelier Recreation Department for recreation updates and the Montpelier Police Department for community awareness bulletins. Check out the city’s LinkedIn page for open positions and committee vacancies.
- Watch the Montpelier Front Porch Forum. The city frequently posts updates on the Montpelier Front Porch Forum about scheduled meetings, events, and announcements.
- Check out the bulletin board inside city hall. Located just outside the assistant city manager’s office on the main floor, the bulletin board is a great way to learn about local goings-on. While you’re here, stop in and say hi!