

## **Sabin's Pasture Working Group Notes from 04/28/08**

5:30 PM – 7:30 PM: held at TPL, 3 Shipman Place, Montpelier VT.

**Present:** Todd Bailey, Katherine Cooper, Jennifer Hollar, Mary Hooper, Bill Kaplan, Dave Keller, Jennifer Knauer, Rodger Krussman, Jim Libby, Rory Malone, Neal Rodar, Roy Schiff, Leigh Seddon, Nancy Sherman.

Facilitator: Rodger Krussman

### **1. Requests for review**

- Sabin's Pasture Informational Publication (draft): please review and let Rodger and Katherine know if you have comments/revisions .
- Sabin's Pasture Report 050908: Please check out how you are listed and see that it is how you WANT to be listed. Send changes to Katherine and Rodger.

### **2. Continued discussion of recommended plan, development area and current revised map.** Questions raised included:

- Why did the group take the term easement idea off the table?
- Regarding development on the piece of land called the "Upper Area" on the map: Is it a question of "when and how," or "if" development is recommended in this area?
- What's the end result the group is trying to achieve, and what are the right tools we need to get there? The term easement is one tool, perhaps there are others that would be preferable?

Comments and discussion from the group:

- There's no way to know what Montpelier will need in the future, and therefore no way of knowing if the development area in the recommended plan needs to include a portion of the upper pasture. What we are really talking about is an articulation of community values. Providing for both additional housing in town and additional protected land reflect important community values.
- Some members of the working group have a high level of skepticism that land in Montpelier temporarily placed in conservation (via a term easement) would ever be taken out of conservation for development. It would be preferable to have certainty now about what areas are recommended for development.
- Some members of the working group expressed significant reservations about building beyond a small clump of trees on the north side of the existing farm road (this lines up approximately with the eastern edge of the quarry), due to the visibility of development in this area from upper elevation areas on the northeast portion of the property. Recommending development east of this is currently not acceptable to at least one member.
- We should clarify on the map areas that are intended for public access corridors and open space within the neighborhood. These areas should be cross-hatched and labeled as green space / public access / view points. We should specify in the

narrative of the recommended plan that one of the criteria for development is that corridors providing public access to the park should run through the development.

- Reminder of observations and areas of tentative agreement from prior meetings: no-one wanted a development on the property that would be unsightly from surrounding neighborhoods. High volume development (600 units) was not acceptable to the community. This property parallels the road and development on the site will significantly impact the view of the land from off-site.
- Need to clarify in the plan that housing should be a mix of ownership and rental units, and the ratio of owned to rental units should be similar to that in the community at large.
- What views are we seeking to protect? These must be defined in the report and viewpoints shown on the property map. Is the idea of development in the Upper Area problematic because it obstructs specific views that the group & community has identified as worthy of protection, or is it problematic because the buildings are visible at all from the higher elevations on the property?
- The group discussed taking a walk in Hubbard Park to see what it is like to be in a park within sight of homes. It is not unusual to be able to see a house from within a protected area in town. How much does this impact a city park experience?

### **3. What is the alternative to reaching consensus? Would the group present a recommendation with two options to the community for comment?**

- If we don't come to agreement on a recommended plan that we can present to city council and the community in June, it will be a lost opportunity. It would be counterproductive for the group to present a report that included areas of disagreement.
- Be aware of VT New Neighborhoods legislation that passed this session and is awaiting the governor's signature. Under this legislation, City Council could apply for Vermont Neighborhood Designation which would almost certainly include Sabin's Pasture. ACT 250 would not be applied to mixed income housing developments of more than 50 units (for a city of Montpelier's size) within this designated area. This group has the opportunity to recommend specific guidelines for the development of this property that would protect conservation values and place development where it most appropriate. Especially given the uncertainty that this legislation brings, we should work to achieve consensus on a proposal.
- Does this legislation relax the need for housing on this property, since the result may be that it will be easier for developers to build within designated Vermont Neighborhoods?
- The benefit for this group coming to consensus is that it will bring constituents with us, and hopefully build support for a project that a majority of people can support. **The Group agreed to continue working toward reaching a consensus recommendation by the end of May.**

### **4. What is the best way to assure that the land is developed in a way that reflects the community's values?**

The Group acknowledged that the only part of the recommendation that provides certainty for the future use of the land is the conservation area. Development will unfold

in unanticipated ways, hopefully according to/guided by the principles the group presents in recommendation. The Group discussed ways to craft a recommendation to provide guidance while allowing for uncertainty of future community needs and values.

**5. The Group agreed to draft language for discussion at the next meeting that attempts to achieve the following:**

- Define a Phase Two “Future Development” area (configuration to be agreed to by the group). Development does not happen in this area until a defined period of time passes and/or a certain level of development has occurred or specified goals met on the Lower Pasture. This would provide a “development by right”, so that there is an automatic right to develop at the end of the term.
- After x years, city voters may choose to conserve the land (affirmative action of the city council and people of Montpelier would be required to put the land into conservation), but otherwise right to development stands.
- The group considered 15 years to be a reasonable timeframe.
- The Future Development Area would be held by the city in the interim
- If development goals were accomplished on Lower Pasture before the 15 year time period was up, then the upper pasture could be considered for conservation by affirmative action by City Council and voters.
- Goals for development in Lower Pasture should be carefully defined in the recommended plan. As the plan is drafted, building 175-225 units on the Lower Pasture would be considered meeting the goals.

**6. Next Steps**

- Rodger and Jim will draft and circulate language to the group by the end of the week. Working group should think about pros, cons and unintended consequences of the Future Development Area for discussion.
- Next Meeting Tuesday, May 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 and Tuesday, May 27<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM at TPL's offices