

Montpelier Planning Commission
March 8, 2004
City Council Chambers, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: David Borgendale, Chair; Carolyn Grodinsky, Vice Chair, Anne Campbell, Bryan Mitofsky, Irene Facciolo, Valerie Capels. Planning & Community Development Director Stephanie Smith, Planner

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by David Borgendale at 7:20 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

The Commission reviewed minutes from January 12, 2003 and October 27, 2003. Commissioner Campbell made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Grodinsky seconded the motion. The minutes were approved. The minutes from April 9, 2004 were not available for approval.

Comments from the Chair

The Chair had no comments

Review of Agenda

Commissioner Borgendale commented that two items on the evenings agenda were carried over from the previous Planning Commission meeting. These items were Sabin's Pasture and the Planning Commission's funding for the upcoming year.

Commissioner Campbell commented that she recently spoke to Geoff Beyer, who is the staff person for the Open Space Strategy, and said that he had not received the email copy of the letter from Commissioner Grodinsky. Ms. Smith said she would send a hard copy of the letter to Mr. Beyer.

Commissioner Grodinsky wanted to discuss what that the commission needs to take a comprehensive look at the issues for re-zoning Sabin's Pasture. The commission agreed they didn't want to look at the issue of Sabin's Pasture in a vacuum and wanted information about the entire city.

The committee asked for information from the Regional Plan, with respect to Housing, Growth Centers and Natural Resource Protection. The committee wanted to look at Smart Growth policies in region.

Ms. Capels commented that the tax map update should be complete by the end of the month. This is another piece of information that the committee should use when looking at the city.

Commissioners Mitofsky and McCormack are looking at the current zoning regulations and evaluating neighborhood character. They are interested in removing the barriers to denser development in the downtown.

Other ideas for re-zoning that were discussed:

- to allow for density bonuses on parcels where the proposed development makes significant accommodations for the preservation of green space and/or natural resources (70% of total land area);
- regulations that perpetuate the traditional development patterns of the city (citywide changes which may allow for greater density in our downtown); and

- explicit zoning regulations that protect our natural resources (deer yards, wetlands, and endangered species and wildlife corridors).

Commissioner Borgendale asked if all deer yards are created equal, or is there a difference between urban and rural deer yards? A member of the commission stated that it is important to give the same importance to all deer yards to avoid fragmentation of habitat.

Commissioner Borgendale stated that it is important to be proactive to strengthen and encourage regional planning. How does Montpelier take the lead?

A member of the commission asked if the Montpelier Master Plan can question regional planning decisions. Ms. Capels said that the master plan can have firm statements about what will happen in areas bordering our city, for instance how does Montpelier feel about commercial development on Berlin Street. The current plan calls for keeping Montpelier's section of Berlin Street as a residential street.

The commission asked for other materials that they would like to continue their discussion, including, GIS maps to address housing potential or development constraints including natural resources, slope, infrastructure limits, and identification of parcels that are develop-able by some type of criteria.

The transportation plan will be helpful in forecasting traffic. Commissioner Campbell thought that maybe the commission should be thinking about transportation route connections.

Commissioner Grodinsky thought the commission should be thinking about infill in the form of new units in existing structures. Ms. Capels thought that infill could also be addressed in the form of filling in the gaps in our downtown with new buildings as well. This would require an evaluation of minimum lot size.

Commissioner Facciolo is overwhelmed with the type of analysis that could result in changes to the zoning, and added an additional request for information with regard to what is the capacity of our current water, sewer, and school facilities. The master plan should contain the information on what the community needs to do to address the construction of housing or not. How many housing units do we need? Many groups came up with different #'s what were all those numbers? A commission member brought up that roads are a limiting infrastructure, and that the commission should look at inclusionary zoning.

The Chair asked that the next agenda contain a discussion to hold a regional planning commission meeting with the adjacent municipalities and the RPC. The tentative meeting was discussed as 5/10 with another date as 5/11.

Another Town meeting is on the horizon in earlier summer. The commission thought this would be a good opportunity to do more information gathering. The commission discussed identifying what the community wants for the city. Ms. Capels commented that the meeting as designed by the City Council will focus on taxes. The Planning Commission would like to opportunity to also discuss Master Planning issues.

The commission summed up the action steps from this evening's meeting. The action items are:

- Open Space meeting next week, Geoff Beyer will coordinate.
- Send hard copy of Commissioner Grodinsky's letter to Geoff Beyer.

- Find out information on the capacity of water, sewer, public safety
- Anticipated # of housing units from Housing Task Force, Regional Planning Commission, and the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation.
- Generate maps overlaying the natural resource information.
- Schedule meeting with adjoining communities and RPC. The commission needs to discuss what they would like to discuss at such a meeting. Commissioner Borgendale said he would like this on the next PC meeting agenda.

PC Project Funding Resources

Commissioner Mitofsky pointed out that another municipal planning grant will be available in FY '05. \$15,000 potential dollars were added to the budget.

Outstanding Minutes

Commissioner Borgendale commented that he would like to see meeting minutes from the more recent meetings over minutes from minutes from last year. Staff agreed. Minutes will be continued to be posted on the website.

The committee decided not to appoint a member of the commission as a secretary. They would appoint a member of the commission on an as need basis if staff cannot serve as the secretary.

Master Plan Outline

The Commission reviewed the draft outline for the Master Plan, and suggested changes. Staff stated they would incorporate the suggested changes and distribute for review a their next meeting.

The commission had some questions about the cost to print and deliver the annual report. Ms. Smith said she would research the cost and report to the Commission.

Other Business

March 22nd is the Civic District Forum. The Commission discussed whether or not they should have the forum, as Tom Torti, Commissioner of Buildings and Grounds, is not available. Ms. Capels suggested to Rich Sedano that Nancy Wasserman attend, an ex-member of the Planning Commission was involved in the development of the Capitol Complex Viewshed Study in 2002.

Beverlee Pembroke Hill was asked to participate in the Forum. Staff was asked to share the notes from Rich Sedano's meeting with Tom Torti.

Adjourn

Bryan Mitofsky made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:50. It was seconded by Ann Campbell.