

Montpelier Planning Commission
April 9, 2007
City Council Chambers, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: Ken Jones, Chair; Carolyn Grodinsky, Vice Chair; Anne Campbell, David Borgendale, Mark Kaufman; Christopher Paterson.
Staff: Gwen Hallsmith, Director of Planning & Community Development

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Ken Jones, Chair at 7:00 p.m.

Review of the Minutes:

The last meeting was video taped and the Planning Commission does not yet have access to the video tapes to create the minutes.

Comments from the Chair:

Mr. Jones introduced the two new members of the Planning Commission, Mark Kaufman and Christopher Paterson. He said he would like for them to provide a little perspective as to why they asked to join the Planning Commission.

Mark Kaufman:

Mark Kaufman said he is a believer in planned communities having grown up in one and seeing the value of long range strategic planning, economic planning and cultural planning. Coupling that with his desire to live in Vermont, he chose Montpelier to live. He lives on Wilson Street.

Christopher Paterson:

He has served on the Parks Commission so he has already sought ways of engaging in this community's well being. When the opportunity came up to serve on the Planning Commission, it seemed like the sorts of things he enjoyed doing, which is to figure out how to get people involved in thinking about and taking responsibility for the long term well being of Montpelier. He is here to help that process and helping others become more involved in that process so whatever comes out of the Planning Commission isn't just their work but also the community's work.

Public Appearances:

None.

Review of All Board Meeting:

Mr. Jones said he is interested whether the Planning Commission can identify a couple of follow-up activities or strategies to promote the communication they all appreciated and hope to expand upon. Ms. Grodinsky said one thing she would have liked for closure was a decision from everyone present on how they would continue to meet.

Ms. Grodinsky said what happened with Sabin's Pasture in their group was the exact same thing that happened with Stone Cutters Way – zoning. There was zoning proposed, and when there were decisions made which were independent of the Planning Commission it went to City Council where decisions were made that weren't recommendations from the Planning Commission. This involved the designation of the River Front District. She said having the All Board meeting was fantastic, and it is something that should happen on a regular basis.

Mr. Jones said Mayor Hooper thanking the Planning Commission for helping to organize the meeting. He wonders about the future the extent to which individual topics are the basis for the group getting together or is there a more general reason for the group to get together.

Ms. Hallsmith said it was a lot of work to organize the meeting, and trying to do it more than a couple of times a year is a bit ambitious. It is a lot of work for staff and we are asking volunteer board members to give up another night of the week when they already sit on a lot of committees. City Councilors are out almost every night of the

week. It did make a lot of sense to have the meeting at this time of the year when the City Council is setting their goals for the year so they can hear from everybody, and also during budget season. April and October are good times to meet.

Mr. Kaufman said the benefit, as a newcomer, was people around the room getting to know what the other boards and commissions were doing. Secondly, for the coming year, what are the issues and challenges and concerns that each group has on their agendas? This would also inform and influence thinking about their priorities.

Mr. Paterson said he thinks there is a difficulty inherent in the communication process between the various commissions and the City Council. A lot of what he heard as a newcomer centered on a perception that the Planning Commission is valuable but not valued. It's a great thing to do but has no teeth, and if the City Council or another board decides what they have said they will throw out that part of the master plan. He said he had seen that in other locations where the Planning Commission was eventually subsumed into more active groups. Conversely, he has seen where the Planning Commission has an adopted plan and other groups must fit within the plan or request a variance.

Ms. Campbell said in terms of each group proposing the projects they are working on at a meeting like this ask for any relevant input.

Mr. Jones said he thinks last week people appreciated having the opportunity to exchange perspectives. That is valuable. But in terms of informing the City Council priority session they didn't accomplish that. They saw how the Design Review Committee and Development Review Board share information needs a little work. The Planning Commission and the Development Review Board and how the DRB utilizes the master plan, which we heard not much. Enforcing the ordinances is their job.

In addition to the next meeting, there are the non-meeting ways of extending communication. One of the examples was using the annual report format in a more frequent than annual basis to share written reports of what each is doing. This could be a way to summarize the minutes and findings from the different meetings as they take place. We could send delegates to different meetings occasionally.

Mr. Paterson said he would be an advocate for finding the easy pathways to communicate. He gets a little nervous when they start talking about attempting to affect budgets or Council priorities. We don't have the level of communication or trust to start working on those across the different groups yet. Mr. Paterson said he was sitting at the table with the Conservation Commission who are really struggling with the natural communities' inventory. What role would the Planning Commission play? What do other people see the value of the Planning Commission?

Ms. Grodinsky said the Housing Task Force members helped with zoning. Ms. Campbell said there were individual members of the Conservation Commission who were very active and present with zoning.

Ms. Hallsmith said the opportunity to collaborate with each other will come in the master planning process because there will be a fairly detailed agenda well in advance of the meetings for people to consider.

Mr. Jones said from the Conversation Commission's perspective they have take on as their responsibility to identify specific resources that deserve focus and then do projects. There isn't often participation from City Council. There has been an effort to do some work around Berlin Pond. The Conservation Commission recognizing resource values at Berlin Pond did an inventory and then came up with a strategy that did require City Council to participate, and it just didn't work. The absence of City Council providing the Conservation Commission a charge is another piece of that story.

Ms. Hallsmith said the other question they seem to beg is somehow imagining the community as a whole would come up with one top priority, which doesn't tend to be the case. The community will have about 50 different top priorities and that is when it is left up to the City Council and City Manager as it relates to city staff work load to prioritize. On a larger scale, that is also the role of the master plan because the master plan is a comprehensive plan for the city and will help the whole community set those priorities on a long term basis. Then, we can

measure progress towards specific issues like North Branch erosion. How would that issue play out in reality? North Branch erosion is caused by a number of different factors, and the latest science on the issue at the state level has to do with looking at the geomorphology of rivers and designing them so they can be like real rivers with the space they need and the stream bank vegetation they need to behave without all of the canalization and rip rapping we have provided. When the North Branch comes through the city it is completely channelized which likely contributes to erosion downstream.

Mr. Jones asked if there were any specific steps the Planning Commission could take to build off the success of the All Board meeting.

Mr. Kaufman suggested that specific next steps would be for one or more members of the Planning Commission talk with chairs of the other boards and commissions and ask them what value they saw coming out of the meeting, and what issues came out that the Planning Commission could help continue the dialogue.

Ms. Hallsmith said that Mayor Hooper had planned on attending the meeting to talk to members about the next steps. There is a City Council meeting on Wednesday, where they will probably have this on their agenda, so that might be a good place to start. Chris Paterson and David Borgendale said they would try to attend the Council meeting. Mr. Jones said he would like some way to formalize communication between the boards and commissions. He hopes that on the City Council agenda there will be a 5-minute item which City Council deliberates and develops a product and tells Bill he needs to communicate to the Planning Commission.

Ms. Hallsmith said perhaps a recommendation would be to have an annual All Board meeting at the Council's priority setting time

Mr. Borgendale said they had present at the All Board meeting all five of the bodies that are established under some kind of statutory authority. There are 13 or 17 other appointed advisory bodies to the City Council. What is the interrelationship of those advisory boards to the statutory boards? It might be appropriate to understand what all of the advisory committees are and what their relationship is supposed to be with the Planning Commission and the City Council.

Ms. Hallsmith mentioned committees like the Carr Lot Committee, the Housing Task Force and the Energy Task Force should have a relationship with the Planning Commission. As they move into the master planning process they should not try to reinvent the wheel but engaging a lot of the same groups as subcommittees of the process and ask them to expand their thinking so they could be considering what elements of the master plan might need to reflect their interest. There is the Bike Path Advisory Committee, the Parks Commissions, and several others that we need to figure out a way to have them work together.

Mr. Borgendale said he didn't think the Planning Commission had done a good enough job of farming their work out to subcommittees. Hopefully, Envision Montpelier will help with that.

There was discussion about whether an organization chart for the City of Montpelier existed.

Mr. Jones said he is hearing there will be Planning Commission members at Wednesday's City Council meeting to pose questions about their reactions to the All Board meeting and get suggestions from the Council members in terms of what steps might be appropriate for strengthening the communication between the various boards and commissions, and the Planning Commission will use that at the next meeting to move the topic along.

Master Planning Process:

Ms. Hallsmith reported she had been recruiting stakeholders and has a list of about 17 people participating. She said she was going to contact clergy, the historical group, Rotary Club, Daniel Hecht, Brooke Pearson, Center for Independent Living, the Lazy Pear Gallery and someone from the Senator's staff. The brochure she designed has been useful.

Mr. Paterson said one thing that caught his attention at the All Board meeting was that Gwen sounded like the decision had been made to go ahead with this process. Mayor Hooper talked like this was something the Planning Commission is considering. It isn't clear if this is what they are pursuing.

Mr. Jones said he thinks the Planning Commission is in agreement that they want to pursue a process like the stakeholder processes that Gwen has led in the past. That core group, with direction from the Planning Commission, is going to define the project. There isn't a huge amount of definition to the project, but they need to get some more people involved.

Ms. Hallsmith said there are a few critical pieces. The City Council and the Planning Commission have made updating the master plan a priority. There is a budget for this and we could hire a VISTA volunteer to do some of the community outreach. Then, how do we update the master plan? Obviously, the first critical point, which she hoped the All Board meeting got them to, is City Council endorsement in the form of including this process in their goals for the coming year. She said the Mayor, Ken and she are hoping at the next City Council meeting they will have the mandate to move forward with the stakeholder process. That does require a level of official action and delegation. This represents a new way of updating the master plan that has an eye toward sustainability and long term planning rather than just looking at the next five years. It engages a multi stakeholder group in the decision making and the whole community in the visioning process. The outcome is a real action plan in addition to the more traditional land use and infrastructure plans that master planning typically represents.

Mr. Jones said because the City Council is going through their priority setting exercise he believes the Planning Commission should send a memo to City Council requesting that the Envision Montpelier process be a priority for the city.

Mr. Kaufman made a motion that a memo be drafted for a recommendation to City Council to include Envision Montpelier multi stakeholder process as a priority for the city. This includes convening a multi stakeholder group engaged in a broad based community visioning process.

Mr. Borgendale said he was impressed with Gwen's presentation at the All Board meeting. The whole idea of learning your way into the future as opposed to planning it is for the Planning Commission to be aware that the specifics of the process will evolve.

Ms. Grodinsky said as a member of the Planning Commission since its inception as being separate from the Development Review Board that without having a stakeholder process they aren't getting anywhere. We need to have the pulse from the public at the beginning.

Mr. Jones said the master plan does have statutory requirements, and we know this from the last revision. As Envision Montpelier moves forward the Planning Commission will have to extract pieces from it and call that the actual master plan.

Ms. Hallsmith said one of the reasons master plans collect dust and sit on shelves is because they are done in isolation, and a very small group of people actually end up owning whatever the plan is. By engaging a multi stakeholder group you aren't putting the entire burden for implementation on the Planning Commission or the city's shoulders. In fact, one of the goals of stakeholder recruitment and training is to get them engaged on behalf of whatever institution, household, business or organization they represent so they bring it back to the places they work and live to help with the implementation. Doing it this way actually makes it more likely that the plan will be implemented over time.

Mr. Borgendale said he wanted to talk about planning horizons, talking about 30 to 100 years instead of five years of planning. As we go through this process, we need to think a great deal about what the consequences of what they do might be in 30 or 100 years. It doesn't mean that the Planning Commission is sitting here in 2007 and 2008 in their infinite wisdom setting priorities and goals but leaving that to future generations and future planning commissions that might have a different perspective.

Ms. Hallsmith agreed the idea is to get out of the normal planning mode and into the learning modality. It makes a five-year plan easier to do because they can align it with a longer term approach. Calgary started with a 100-year plan and eventually settled on 100-year goals and outcomes. Then, they set 30-year targets.

There is a motion by Mark Kaufman that the Planning Commission draft a memo to City Council recommending that the Envision Montpelier process be a priority of the city, which would include convening a multi stakeholder process, developing long term goals and action plan for 30-100 years, engaging broad based community visioning and drafting a plan that goes beyond the traditional land use and infrastructure constraints of a master plan. Mr. Borgendale seconded the motion.

Mr. Paterson said he would like to offer an amendment, which is if they are serious about the stakeholder group determining the process and structure of what happens they should leave out the 30-100 years and just say long term.

Ms. Hallsmith said she felt 30 years as a threshold is important, because when you are talking about a sustainability agenda you are talking about future generations. Fifteen years from now isn't another generation; 30 years from now is. Part of the generational idea is that getting out 30 years puts you beyond the life of the current infrastructure. Wastewater treatment plants, streets and roads, bridges, etc. are typically constructed on that time horizon. We are locked into our current status quo at a shorter time horizon.

Mr. Paterson said if they are serious about empowering the group of people to make decisions, is this a decision we make for them or do we allow them to make it themselves.

Ms. Campbell said it is very useful for the stakeholder group to establish some parameters under which they are operating. What is lost if we leave it out of this motion? Ms. Hallsmith said it just defines what the Planning Commission means as long term, which is a legitimate thing for the Planning Commission to define.

Ms. Hallsmith said the longer time horizon is how you arrive at your goals, and the goals are only one of the outcomes of the process. The other outcomes are the actual strategies, targets and action plans. Starting with a longer term time frame helps because it is the starting point where everyone can come to some agreement.

Mr. Jones said the question before the Planning Commission now is what they want to communicate to City Council. Mr. Paterson withdrew his amendment. The motion was approved unanimously.

The Planning Commission discussed the kickoff event for the master planning process. Ms. Hallsmith said this would be used to solidify the stakeholders' interest rather than a training event. They discussed sometime in May for the event. Members discussed possibly coinciding the date with Green-Up Day or All Species Day. They also discussed about holding the event around the opening of the Montpelier Farmers' Market. Saturday morning, May 19th was suggested as a possible date in the afternoon. Stakeholders are defined as people who have a stake in the future of the city.

Mr. Kaufman said the purpose of the kickoff is to inform people, get them excited, and get them to commit to engaging in the process. On May 19th there will have to be an additional schedule about when training will begin and when the first meeting will happen.

Mr. Jones said the idea of music is exciting for a lot of people so we should have some discussions with people who would be interested in this. Bill Fraser has a band, and there are great musicians in Montpelier.

Ms. Hallsmith said they need to work on before May 19th is the questions the Planning Commission wants to ask people for the visioning process. That would be a great opportunity to get a lot of questionnaires filled out.

The Planning Commission reviewed the product that came out of the 2002 Vision Town Meeting. Ms. Hallsmith said she wondered how many things had been accomplished because some were specific recommendations. Ms. Grodinsky said when they worked on the transportation chapter they invited the Agency of Transportation and the Department of Public Works. It wasn't like a diverse group of stakeholders but the experts directly involved.

Ms. Hallsmith said we don't want to forget what has been done in the past. Some of the people she has talked to about Envision Montpelier have said they had a big meeting and did this. This is a lot of interesting ideas, but not a vision. It's a lot of input into what the vision might ultimately contain. It is just a laundry list of stuff that the city needs to keep on its front burner.

Mr. Jones said Chris Paterson's point is that this is not the only list that is out there, and the other lists are equally valid. As a first step, Mr. Jones said he would go through what he has and develop a list. Ms. Grodinsky said she had the instructions for what the Planning Commission was to use in developing their chapters.

Mr. Borgendale said he was less excited about trying to resurrect and preserve the stuff they did in the past. That was all built around a different kind of planning process than what they are talking about now.

Growth Center Discussion:

Jon Anderson appeared before the Planning Commission to present information on the Growth Center and New Neighborhoods legislation pending in the Vermont Legislature. He told the Planning Commission he came to them to ask for input and to learn how things he might do as a local legislator might help in Montpelier. He serves on the Water Resources and Wildlife Committee.

One of the bills he testified on as a private citizen last year, which was adopted, and he continues to be interested in, is the growth center legislation. He wanted to talk to the Planning Commission about how this could help Montpelier. In particular, the growth center legislation includes a concept known as "TIPS – tax increment financing". The idea is to try to get growth into growth centers where the location is well planned so we can preserve green space. Because we are allowing growth to occur in those areas, it would put less pressure on developing outside of the growth area.

Mr. Borgendale asked if the growth centers are self designated or does the state have some definition. Mr. Anderson said it is a fairly complex process that hasn't been implemented yet. Many of the larger towns, such as Montpelier, are getting ready to go into the growth center process. Montpelier doesn't have any plans to go into the growth center process. We need to be aware of this. It is a great planning tool.

Mr. Anderson said there is a limited amount of Act 250 relief, which is primarily related to what you do about prime agricultural land. It will be easier to develop all prime agricultural land in a growth center rather than preserving about two-thirds of it outside the growth center.

One of the things the Growth Center legislation does is it gets us back to where we were previously in a growth center and you pay a mitigation fee to develop all of the land. It is still more difficult to develop more than a third of the agricultural land outside the growth center. It makes it easier to develop more in the growth center, and more difficult to develop less outside the growth center.

Ms. Campbell inquired if that would include all of Montpelier in a growth center. Mr. Anderson said they would designate areas. It certainly would not be all of Montpelier but a relatively small part. The main thing is tax increment financing would be available to allow projects go forward but only if they wouldn't otherwise go forward without the tax increment financing. He said he would talk about the concept and then give a specific application.

If a project within a growth center could not afford to go forward without a subsidy, then to the extent a subsidy was needed the municipal taxes would remain the same, but the school taxes could be forgiven to the extent necessary to allow the installation of infrastructure. The easiest way to think about school taxes in Vermont is simply say it doesn't make any difference. The school taxes depend on what you are spending per student. This says more state money will come to Montpelier because we aren't sending as much state tax money because they are using the locally collected money that would otherwise go for school taxes to put in infrastructure to enable well planned growth. Mr. Jones said he sees this as the general fund of the city.

Mr. Anderson gave a specific concept. If we were to imagine a way to work out an acceptable compromise for the Zorzi land that included maintaining a substantial portion of it as green space, then you could still get the same

to the Zorzi family by using tax increment financing to put in some of the infrastructure they would have to put in to develop the land. Where it is the Zorzi family or the developer, you would adjust the purchase price. The green space is preserved at the cost of the education fund dollars that are mostly paid for by other taxpayers in the state. When he served on City Council they talked about whether they should have an office park at National Life, and the concern was always how to put in the infrastructure.

Mr. Borgendale said it sounds like it is done on a town by town basis, and these problems tend to be more regional. Mr. Anderson said the bill may not be perfect, but it is better than what was in place a year ago. It's a tool that can be used. A lot of the larger towns in Chittenden County are focusing on using this. Burlington, South Burlington, Milton and Williston have active planning going on towards the growth center concept. It is a tool that is available from the state.

Mr. Jones said the way he has read the designation of growth center Montpelier probably can't have more than one. It will be that area contiguous to downtown Montpelier. As they go down the Barre-Montpelier Road it may touch into that aspect of other towns. It provides incentive for development within that growth center. He said he didn't see the regionalization issue because it doesn't shift from anywhere except however the market decides to shift. It's not like transferred development rights. It has nothing to do with any of the land outside of the growth center.

Mr. Anderson said the development patterns should be immediately adjacent to the developed areas. There is a contiguity requirement in growth centers. East Montpelier, if they had a growth center, their growth center should be located immediately adjacent to the downtown.

Mr. Jones said the agriculture component is a piece of it, but it won't matter in Montpelier. It just provides incentive for development within the growth center. It doesn't have sort of regionalization topic that other sorts of mechanisms to encourage growth.

Ms. Hallsmith said the regional role in helping to identify and making sure the growth centers make some sense on a regional level shouldn't be ignored. The Town of Berlin has designated a growth center down next to our sewage treatment plant. That part of town is undeveloped now. Arguably, it is contiguous to Montpelier. That would be a question that the Regional Planning Commission would look at to see if it makes sense.

Mr. Anderson said whatever they had called growth centers in the past are entirely irrelevant to this bill. You start over and go through a process in which you get approval from the Downtown Board, which is a state board, for the designation.

Ms. Hallsmith said she tends to think the issue of growth center is a substantial enough issue for the City of Montpelier that it ought to be factored into the planning process. We should leap forward now and start trying to define growth centers prior to the process with the citizens to get a sense of what they want would seem premature.

Mr. Anderson said he believes the growth center legislation requires so much planning that you can't jump forward to designate a growth center without having done the planning.

Mr. Jones said he thinks the specificity required for growth center designation is not going to come from Envision Montpelier. The foundation whether Montpelier should focus its development close to its existing development is a topic we already know the answer to. When we put lines on the map, he doesn't think Envision Montpelier is going to get there. There are too many topics. They will get the general idea we want to maintain growth within the areas that have historical growth.

Ms. Hallsmith said when Burlington went through this process one of the goals they developed for their long range plan, which was out of the same interest in growth centers and avoiding sprawl while building more compact development in the city, that by the year 2030 the population of Burlington was going to double. One of their long range goals was to increase the population to 70,000 or 80,000. That is what Montpelier needs to develop a community consensus about. We need to make sure that the whole concept of growth centers people

are well educated about and understand why it is important. It is important for Montpelier to be a growth center in the region to avoid some of the outlying sprawl and transportation and infrastructure issues that come from development which is expansive. Even in terms of the tax burden on the city, extending sewer lines miles and miles, and extending roads and maintaining them for scattered development costs a lot of money over time. It is that kind of educational process we need to go through before we start designating growth centers anywhere.

Mr. Jones said he thought many of the sectors of the city have gone through that. The discussion about extending sewer lines has taken place in the city before. They are in general agreement at this point that preferable development takes place where the existing infrastructure lies. If it takes place outside of that, you are on your own unless you can do the fiscal analysis to show that no one else suffers.

Mr. Paterson inquired if there were any downsides of a community not entering into this process sooner rather than later. If Montpelier waits two years before entering this program, what are the ramifications?

Mr. Anderson said he believes this program is like schools. If there is money, the program will be there. People have been talking about growth centers for 20 years. The Vermont Forum on Sprawl and others led the charge on this and the Governor signed it, and is proud of it. It is going to be there for a long time.

Mr. Paterson said the downside is there may be certain developers or businesses who can't take advantage of it for a year or two; the upside is that it is a tool and would probably have more support if it follows from a process where people say here is what they are trying to accomplish and a tool by which they can accomplish it.

Mr. Anderson said there is also planning money you can apply for to do the growth center planning. The Growth Center Planning Manual just came out around the first of the year.

Mr. Borgendale inquired if the planning money that is available in addition to the planning grants available from the state. Mr. Anderson said the planning money is in the same pool of money. It isn't yet more money because people haven't asked for it. Mr. Anderson said he participated with some people to figure out how the process could be pushed forward. One of the things they talked about was more money. The consensus was that more money was not needed yet.

Mr. Jones asked if there was any news on the New Neighborhoods legislation that should influence the discussion.

Mr. Anderson said the New Neighborhoods legislation is for some areas in addition to growth centers. A lot of towns around the state will not do growth centers because it is too complex. East Montpelier might be an example. This would be a way to designate faster and more easily some "new neighborhoods" that would be on the edge. There is a proposal to ease Act 250, and that seems to be going nowhere. There is an ability in the bill to allow taxes to go to the municipality for about three years. There is a need to spur housing, including affordable housing. The idea would be to give towns money as an incentive for creating new neighborhoods. Presumably, for a few years the taxes in your municipality could go down.

Mr. Paterson said he would prefer to go slow and watch other communities' progress as they enter this process. There is a high potential this tool is something that could dovetail with what will come out of the Envision Montpelier process.

Ms. Hallsmith said there is no reason not to apply for the planning money to help with the process.

Mr. Jones said he appreciated the discussion tonight, but he isn't sure what the Planning Commission can or should do at this point except to keep track of what is happening with other towns. As Envision Montpelier moves forward, they can look for the connections.

Mr. Kaufman said Oregon did something like this 12 or 13 years ago. It was beautiful for the first year.

Mr. Anderson said he thinks there is considerable concern to not duplicate the problems of Oregon. Oregon has one big city. The idea of the growth centers is to have well planned growth for the next generation and then have another growth center that will take the well planned growth to the next generation.

Mr. Jones said he would use Maryland as a better example than Oregon, because Oregon says no growth outside of growth boundaries. Maryland provided all of the positive incentives within the growth boundaries but did not specifically restrict. Actually, Oregon's plan is still in place.

Mr. Anderson told the Planning Commission he planned on remaining an active member of the Carr Lot Committee.

Wastewater Rules:

Ms. Hallsmith said it looks like there are new state rules about wastewater. She isn't sure how it affects Montpelier, but the Planning Office received a memo from the Regional Planning Commission saying to all licensed designers of soil based sewage systems and potable water supplies on July 11, 2007 the state will assume universal jurisdiction over all soil based wastewater and potable water systems in the state. At that time landowners will have to obtain a state wastewater permit to build these systems. Towns will no longer be issuing their own permits for these systems, but may apply to the state to run the state program for their residents. At this point, only Colchester has obtained this delegation. Ms. Hallsmith said from her conversations with the Department of Public Works there is a man in Public Works who does this now, and from this memo he will be stripped of his responsibilities.

Mr. Anderson said this is the direction the state has been going in for five years. This is part of the legislation that eliminated the 10-acre loophole from water and wastewater permitting. Whenever you develop any building using water or wastewater, you need a permit where before you didn't have to obtain a permit if it was on more than 10 acres. There is also supposed to be the allowance for more creative design of water and septic systems. All of that was put in place in 2002 with a transition period occurring from 2002 until July 1, 2007. As of July 1, 2007, all permits will go through the state where before towns.

Ms. Hallsmith said the memo states that the workload of the state's regional offices will double as the result of universal jurisdiction. With no additional staff in sight to help with this increased work, the state has been developing changes to their permitting process so existing staff can handle the projected increased workload.

Mr. Anderson said people have been working on the transition issues for this and foreseeing them for at least a year. He foresees some transition problems that will need to be worked through. He understands before 2007 the Agency of Natural Resources would spend a lot of engineering time reviewing engineering plans, and the shift will now be more towards accepting a self-certification and licensing the engineers and designers to comply with the new designs. Then, they will be able to certify this is in compliance. There should be a faster check to make sure the proper design has been done.

Mr. Jones said for Montpelier they don't have a large number of dwellings outside the sewer area. The outlying towns are going to be affected by this a whole lot more. This will not apply to the city water and sewer system.

Mr. Paterson said as a new member he is curious why this item was brought to the Planning Commission. Ms. Hallsmith said it was just informational because it could actually have an impact on the permitting process. She said from what she has seen on the Vermont Planners' Association dialogue communities won't be able to issue their issue of certificate of occupancy until these permits are in place, so it does impact the permitting process.

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission Nomination:

Ed Larsen resigned effective April 10th.

Mr. Jones said the mechanism is for City Council to nominate a representative to the Regional Planning Commission.

Mr. Borgendale said his contacts on City Council said the representative should come from the Montpelier Planning Commission. Ms. Hallsmith said the Planning Commission decided they would like to have a member from this commission serve on the Regional Planning Commission so there is better communication.

Mr. Jones inquired if City Council was looking to the Planning Commission to recommend a member. Mr. Borgendale expressed his interest in serving on the Regional Planning Commission. Mr. Kaufman said he would support David as a member of the Regional Planning Commission.

Mr. Jones said he would entertain a motion to draft a recommendation to City Council to have David Borgendale be Montpelier's representative to the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.

Mr. Paterson moved, with Mr. Kaufman seconding, the nomination of David Borgendale as Montpelier's representative to the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.

Mr. Borgendale said he would keep the Planning Commission informed and communicate the sentiments of this body to them.

The motion for David Borgendale is recommended to the City Council as Montpelier's representative to the Regional Planning Commission was approved unanimously by the Planning Commission.

Other Business:

Mr. Jones said he circulated a draft article on the planning process and is interested in the feedback. Perhaps, because there is a date set for the kickoff this article could fuel some of that interest as well. Mr. Jones asked members to review the article. He said there was a question about whether the growth center topic should be forwarded. He put a question in the article, should Montpelier address the question of whether Montpelier should continue to grow. Mr. Borgendale said that was one of the things that came up at the 2002 Town Meeting the Planning Commission hosted.

Adjournment:

Ms. Grodinsky moved adjournment. Ms. Campbell seconded the motion. The Planning Commission adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Gwen Hallsmith, Director
Planning & Community Development

Transcribed and prepared by:

*Joan Clack
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