

Montpelier Planning Commission
August 13, 2007
City Council Chambers, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: Ken Jones, Chair; Anne Campbell, Claire Benedict, Chris Patterson, David Borgendale, and Mark Kaufman.

Staff: Gwen Hallsmith, Director, Planning and Community Development.

Call to Order:

Ken Jones, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Comments from the Chair:

Mr. Jones said there were a lot of guests present tonight because a significant portion of the agenda is to talk about a creative economy. Gwen Hallsmith will be leading them through a presentation on that topic. In addition, they will be updating the enVision project and parking and transit and consideration of pursuing a Growth Center Designation grant.

Mr. Jones introduced Claire Benedict, a new member of the Planning Commission.

Creative Economy:

Ms. Hallsmith said they were honored tonight to have the Economics and Livelihood Subcommittee of the enVision Montpelier process meeting with the Planning Commission.

A copy of the Creative Economy pdf files attached hereto.

Mr. Kaufman said Gwen had talked about the historic and cultural preservation. He would hate to see Montpelier as part of an attempt to become a creative economy become something that is focused so much on its own past that people say this is what life used to be like in Montpelier. What is the past, present and future continuum of that creative economy? What other state capitols in this country have gone through some kind of sustainability effort? How have other state capitols, particularly smaller state capitols that are more dominated by state employees, attempted to wrestle some of these questions?

Mr. Borgendale asked if the next largest state capitol, which is Helena, have an educational institution. Someone mentioned it might have been the State University of Montana or the University of Montana. Maybe as part of the creative economy we need to build up our educational sector. Mr. Borgendale said he felt that was critical. Attracting a larger educational presence in this community would be a great thing to do.

Ms. Hallsmith said that Vermont College of the Arts is starting up. That is what Union Institute is morphing into shortly. One of the things we need that we don't have is a performing arts space that fits more than 400 people. We are cramped for space when it comes to doing bigger performances. The Barre Opera House holds about 600. Part of what the Pyralisk is proposing was going to be a bigger performance space, but she thinks they are scaling that back a bit. We are just about to build a big development on Stone Cutters that includes a performing arts space. Maybe we need to think bigger about how to make that work so it meets that need.

enVision Montpelier Project Update:

Mr. Jones asked that for an item on a future agenda as Gwen is developing the specifications for the web site that the Planning Commission has some discussion. They have reviewed the EarthCAT product as a

web tool. He would like to identify the sorts of attributes they think would be beneficial. Ms. Hallsmith said she would like to see it more interactive.

Mr. Jones asked if the various committee meetings were on task to be ready for the September 11th meeting. Ms. Hallsmith replied they were. Gwen said there are six committees, so they have tried to have a planning commissioner take responsibility for one. She and Ken are acting as floaters and attend a group of meetings. There are six committees: 1) natural environment; 2) built environment and infrastructure; 3) governance; 4) economics and livelihood; 5) social systems; and 6) human development. She said she had been impressed with the turnout and enthusiasm they have had from the committees over the summer.

Mr. Jones said he would like to ask the Planning Commission members about their sense of the potential and reality of enVision gaining visibility. How can we make sure the participation keeps expanding? Mr. Paterson said he thinks it has to expand. The Human Development committee has been fairly small in its participation. From the conversation he is having with people on the street enVision Montpelier is not on the tip of their tongue.

Ms. Hallsmith said they did a kickoff event back in June where they had tables at the Farmer's Market and handed out postcards. She has attended several meetings and events. Her idea for the VISTA volunteers is to put together a list of community events and schedule people to speak at different meetings around the community. There are a lot of nonprofit organizations that have regular meetings and they can ask to be put on their agenda. There are business groups that we can be included on their

agendas. One of the important focuses of the VISTA volunteers is youth outreach. They are going to be working hard to get the young people in school engaged in enVision Montpelier. They hope to recruit youth to serve on the various subcommittees and get young people to reach out to the schools to do the visioning exercise.

Mr. Jones said he would like to think bigger would be an event on December 31st. Having events happen when there are 10,000 people in town, and December 31st because we have three months to work for it, there might be some thinking precipitating from the meetings to let people react a little.

Mr. Kaufman said if they put a music festival for their planning region in early October, that would be geared towards December 31st, a big part of the message would be this is a starting point for those who haven't joined yet.

Ms. Hallsmith said they actually have a larger stakeholder group than people actually serving on the committees. Part of the VISTAs job is to get them to commit to serving on the committees. She said the agenda for the September meeting is still not set. The main meeting on September 11th will be in the Vermont College Hall Chapel, and there will be breakout rooms adjacent to the Chapel reserved as well. Vermont College is not charging for the meeting space.

Mr. Kaufman inquired what the purpose of the September 11th meeting is. Mr. Hallsmith said there are a couple of orders of business. One is to figure out who is going to run the meetings. One of the ways that has been done in other places is they decide the chairs of the subcommittees will rotate responsibility for the large group facilitation, and other places someone prominent like the Mayor facilitates all of the meetings. Another obvious task is to give a report from all of the committees about what some of their learning objectives are, who their chairs are, identifying members of the

subcommittees and describing the grant program. Another possibility is to do an exercise around visioning, have a speaker come in, break into small groups. The main purpose is to have the stakeholder group come together again as a group and start to gel.

Mr. Borgendale said he thinks the meeting should have a pep rally aspect to it and try to promote excitement among the people who are already participating.

Ms. Hallsmith said they also need to re-explain to the stakeholders what they are there for. Ultimately, they are going to be taking all of the visioning information and turning it into a community vision. We need to get them engaged to get people involved.

Mr. Kaufman said he didn't think they have clearly defined what it is, what they are doing, and what they expect to the community.

Ms. Hallsmith suggested they needed to have a steering committee meeting before September 11th. Mr. Jones said Gwen had already listed off ideas to be part of the agenda. He would take the responsibility working with the Planning Commission to get reactions so they can finalize the agenda on August 27th. The Steering Committee meeting needs to be September 5 or 6.

Mr. Jones asked if the city has a schedule in mind for the first round of allocations of the Mazer grant. Ms. Hallsmith said that is the responsibility of the Steering Committee. There is \$50,000 in hand that needs to be spent the first year of the project, and there is another \$50,000 for the second year of the project. Mazer probably considers the project to have started back in June, so by May 2008 we need to have spent all of the money. Ms. Hallsmith reminded them there is a match requirement, so it is

\$50,000 plus the match. The proposals have to come up with a match, which is 25 percent. This can be in-kind and cash.

Parking and Transit: Public Discussion:

Mr. Jones said there are no real additional survey results to report. What they talked about at the last meeting, and what he took steps toward, is to identify some individuals that would be able to write up some perspectives with regards to solutions for parking. Someone is going to write up a perspective on why a parking garage is a bad idea. He asked if they needed to reinvigorate their efforts to identify other individuals to provide their perspectives on the parking solutions which would be matched with some of the survey results as articles within *The Bridge*. There will be someone who will write why we do need a parking garage in a parallel column.

Mr. Kaufman said he has someone who has tentatively agreed to write why we don't need to worry about parking, who is a local business owner.

Growth Center Designation Grant:

Ms. Hallsmith said the grant is due in September. She has asked Clancy DeSmet to work on the grant. There is a meeting on August 30th for those who are interested in what is involved in applying for a Growth Center Designation Grant. This is part of the municipal planning grant round. They have actually identified a special category of those grants this round to encourage communities to think about growth center designations. There are a couple of large properties that are currently on the market that could be appropriate for a growth center designation, Sabin's Pasture and the Old Sparrow Farm, which is currently owned by Alan Goldman.

Mr. Jones said he wasn't sure what agreement there was that Montpelier should be pursuing a growth center designation because this is going to require us to draw a line. Drawing lines in Montpelier is not that easy. If we were to receive the grant, when is the expectation that we would have completed the designation process? Is that consistent with the enVision process?

Ms. Hallsmith said that had been a concern of hers. From a planner point of view she would rather wait until enVision was completed before we did a growth center designation, but given the current status of the properties it makes some sense to begin the process now and do it. If we pursue the grant that suggests a year from the end of 2008 we will have drawn a line to talk about what the growth center for the City of Montpelier is. Ms. Hallsmith said that would correspond with some of the major goals and findings of the enVision process.

Mr. Borgendale asked what the sale of the property had to do with this issue. Mr. Jones said it was the infrastructure investment. They have talked about the possibility of providing some infrastructure for some of these places they want to encourage certain types of growth. The downtown designation allows for the city to support some of that infrastructure. Mr. Borgendale asked why that needed to be linked to the change in ownership of the property. Ms. Hallsmith said it doesn't necessarily. If we are going to do a growth center and the possibility exists now where at least one of the owners is very enthusiastic and willing to work with us on it, that's a factor.

Mr. Paterson said he didn't see it as a problem in terms of how it coincides with the schedule for enVision Montpelier. His concern would be how we could accomplish both processes.

Ms. Hallsmith said one of the advantages of the grant is that they would hire a consultant to do a lot of the data gathering and report generation needed for the planning process. Mr. Borgendale said

somebody is still going to have to make a value judgment on how we proceed, and that is certainly going to come through the Planning Commission. Mr. Jones replied that it would spark the discussion about the big looming question about growth in Montpelier. The designation comes with it that we want to encourage growth of a kind, but it isn't clear from the discussions he has had that it is a certainty that a large enough majority of the people in Montpelier would want to encourage. There are a significant people who would say no.

Ms. Hallsmith said the grant would enable the city to develop the information they need to make the decision. Mr. Paterson said he believed pursuing the planning grant is a positive thing. Mr. Kaufman said he felt we should move forward with the grant. It needs to be made clear to their constituency that this is an opportunity for information gathering. That is the primary purpose and not because we have money we can designate ourselves as a growth center.

Mr. Jones asked Ms. Hallsmith to coordinate with the City Manager to make sure that is on the Council's agenda. Mr. Borgendale said the application for the grant needs to be approved in a regular City Council meeting.

Ms. Hallsmith said they should take a vote so it could be reported to City Council that the Planning Commission voted in favor of applying for the growth center designation grant.

Mr. Borgendale moved the Montpelier Planning Commission approve apply for the Growth Center Designation Grant. Mr. Kaufman seconded the motion. The motion was voted favorably by a unanimous vote.

Other Business:

At 6:30 a.m. Ken Jones is going to be on WGDR to talk about energy coop, which is part of the Montpelier Energy Team. He will be raising this as one of the possibilities that the Montpelier Energy Team is looking at.

Election of Vice Chair:

Claire Benedict, David Borgendale and Anne Campbell nominated Chris Paterson. Mark Kaufman and Christ Paterson nominated Anne Campbell. Ken Jones nominated Mark Kaufman.

Nominations for Vice Chair were: Chris Paterson, Anne Campbell and Mark Kaufman.

Ken Jones changed his nomination to Chris Peterson.

Ms. Hallsmith said since more people nominated Chris she would propose a consent round that Chris be elected and see if there is an objection to that.

By consent Chris Paterson was elected as Vice Chair of the Montpelier Planning Commission.

Mark Kaufman said since Carolyn had served a long time on the Montpelier Planning Commission it would be nice to recognize her by sending a letter thanking her. Mr. Jones said he would draft a letter.

Adjournment:

Mr. Borgendale moved adjournment, with Mr. Kaufman seconding the motion. Montpelier Planning Commission adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gwen Hallsmith, Director
Planning and Community Development