

Montpelier Planning Commission
September 10, 2007
City Council Chambers, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: Ken Jones, Chair; Christopher Paterson, Vice Chair; David Borgendale, Anne Campbell, and Mark Kaufman.
Staff: Gwen Hallsmith, Director, Planning and Community Development. Mayor Hooper was also present.

Call to Order:

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

Review of Minutes:

The Planning Commission reviewed the August 13 and August 27, 2007 minutes. On page 5 of the August 27th minutes there are notes from Mark and Ken saying they suggested things. These suggestions were not their opinions about topics but noting there may be an opinion out there about some of these topics. It is not his opinion that the city should divest itself of all parking but rather a possible approach is for the city to divest itself of the land it uses for parking and essentially let the market control it. This is not something he would propose. They were just listing off various approaches they might want to consider. It should be noted that members were generating hypotheticals and not necessarily what they might consider as great ideas personally.

Mr. Kaufman moved to approve the August 27th minutes with changes.

Mr. Paterson made reference to page 6 about the Carr Lot. Mr. Kaufman said he believed the city had been talking about Carr Lot plans in general.

Mr. Jones said recognizing these comments do not lead to specific decisions but setting the tone, could they put a disclaimer at the beginning of the minutes. Many of the discussions held during the meeting were in the form of hypotheticals and opinions of individual Planning Commission members should not be taken as policy statements but only speculation that other people may be generating. Each of the topics were interesting points.

Ms. Hallsmith said they need to have a quorum of people who were present on August 27th to approve the minutes. Anne Campbell was not present. The Planning Commission tabled the minutes.

The Planning Commission delayed review of the August 13th minutes until the next meeting since they had not had an opportunity to review them.

Public Appearances:

None.

All Board Meeting:

Under this topic there is the possibility to use a specific issue around which the Development Review Board, Design Review Committee, Historic Preservation Commission, City Council and the Conservation Commission to have a discussion. A discussion of the development at the Triangle might be an interesting topic for members to look at each of their individual roles. What is the role of each group and what are the next steps? This is the possible construction of the State Archives with the later development of Motor Vehicles.

Ms. Hallsmith said she believed the Design Review Committee and Development Review Board would be very uncomfortable discussing a proposal that is in front of them at an All Board meeting because they serve in a quasi-judicial function. It is like ex parte conversations from their perspective. They wouldn't be amenable to that. Mr. Jones said the tone of the topic would not be too centered around the decision but rather to better understand. Perhaps they could get a better understanding of what the current status of the review process on the project is before the Development Review Board. What information did they provide? The reason they are doing this is to have some communication between members of the different commissions. What pieces of the Master

Plan seem to be in play in the process? Is this project review highlighting some pieces of the Master Plan that may need revision so there is a clearer set of guidelines?

Ms. Hallsmith said a topic more general like the expansion of the Capitol Complex or an expansion of state owned properties within city boundaries and the general issues associated with any time that happens, but she doesn't feel they are going to feel comfortable talking about specific development proposals. The bigger question is the state has decided to build some new facilities outside of what we generally consider the capitol complex. The city/state commission has been sunsetted for awhile. The Capitol Complex Commission, because it is outside the boundaries of the Capitol Complex, doesn't really have jurisdiction so how do we address this as a city and how do we engage with the State in a dialogue about that kind of expansion to make sure everyone's concerns are taken into account. That is a good topic that would be rich without needing to get on to specific development proposals.

Mayor Hooper said in her view the State is obligated to follow Montpelier's permit requirements. She isn't sure why we would ask them any differently than they would any major property owner unless the city is trying to make a point in which case we ought to remind them of their obligation to follow state law.

Mr. Jones said he thinks they are different developers. Other developers, yes, all the city can ask is that they follow the city ordinance. But there is something called Act 200 where land use as determined by the state is supposed to go through a process with a municipality.

Mayor Hooper said perhaps they should begin with a meeting with the people in state government and remind them of their obligation.

Mr. Kaufman added this is a useful discussion, but the All Board meeting is intended to accomplish opening lines of communication and figuring out ways to be more coordinated with their work. He said is all for some real or hypothetical discussion as long as they stay focused on inter-board coordination. Mr. Jones said there are overarching questions with regards to how the Master Plan helped the Development Review Board consider and how the Master Plan reflects the priorities of City Council. Here we are looking at land outside the Capitol Complex. Is there something in the Master Plan that suggests what that land would be ideal for?

Ms. Hallsmith said one of the topics they had discussed for the next All Board meeting, if they were going to do them bi-annually instead of annually, was an early fall discussion about the budget. All the boards could and ideally should have input on the budget.

Ms. Campbell said she is looking at the implications of Act 200 and where the city and the State are with respect to Act 200 and plans for the Triangle, and how that interfaces with the various boards and commissions in Montpelier. She asked Gwen if they had gone forward and coming to the DRB with a proposal and that Act 200 did not apply.

Ms. Hallsmith said they have come before the Planning Department and the Technical Review Committee with a draft proposal that is not yet complete enough to submit for the full process, although they have submitted enough information for a sketch plan review. They are planning to submit sketch plan review at one of the Development Review Board's upcoming meetings. She said she didn't believe the requirements of Act 200 have been met yet. That doesn't mean they won't be. They are certain proceeding with all intents to comply with the state law around the state proposal to city government, which means they are required to go through the city's review process for most zoning issues. There is some debate about design review, at least some of the specifics about design review. As long as the requirements and conditions the city sets do not interfere with the use of the property that the state is proposing, we can't tell them they can't use the property the way they are proposing to comply with the city's zoning. For example, the building they are proposing to serve as the ECO (Emergency Operation Center) would need to have six stories. In the office park district we have a limitation of five stories, but they can't do those uses without a sixth story. In terms of stories their proposal so far is not in compliance. But in terms of the absolute height restriction, which is also articulated in the zoning at 710 feet above sea level, they are below that height restriction.

Mayor Hooper said this brings up interesting issues about how the ordinance is interpreted. Perhaps, this is the question of an All Board meeting. She was talking with a friend who was on the Planning Commission a long time ago when the Planning Commission was also the permitting board, and he couldn't believe the city permitted the apartments and condominiums because there is a story restriction. She gathers that the interpretation of the DRB was x stories or x height, and they went with the least restrictive. Her friend who was on the Planning Commission when the language was written said that was never the way they intended it to be used. She has heard of home occupation uses being approved by the DRB, which is hearsay, where home occupations were permitted where the homeowner didn't live in the home where the occupation was. That really felt like it was stretched. The issue of interpretation is really interesting.

Ms. Hallsmith said in this case to strictly interpret the number of stories would restrict the state's use of the property. Montpelier's zoning under state law can't limit the fact they would have six stories because then they wouldn't be able to use it for what they are proposing. There is a separate law that describes what regulations the city can impose on the state, and the regulations are only to the point where it doesn't restrict the use the state is proposing.

Mr. Kaufman said that is the conceptual. What is the process? What is the interpretation? Who makes that interpretation? What is the legislative process behind the interpretation? What is the judicial process behind the interpretation?

Mr. Jones asked who gets to determine whether the function of the building is affected if it is five or six stories. If the state simply asserts that this building can't function at five stories, the Development Review Board doesn't have jurisdiction. As a judge, which he is not, he would ask what functions are taking place in that building that have to take place on a sixth floor? Do you need a certain vertical drop for testing materials?

Ms. Hallsmith said on this site there are deed restrictions in place that limit the developable area of the property, so the state is between a rock and a hard place because they have to blast into the hill. They are only allowed to blast in so far or they will be in violation of the deed restrictions. All of the parking that is required for the facilities and replacing the parking lot that is used as a commuter lot they are very limited in terms of the square footage they have to develop on the site. To have the amount of office space they need to have both a functional DMV and the Emergency Operation Center that will be the case they will make.

Mr. Jones said because the state presumes x number of parking spots, therefore they need x footprint for the building and y footprint for the parking lot, there does come the question of when does the city get to participate. Ms. Hallsmith said that would come with the DRB review.

Mr. Jones said this will not be the only state development that takes place. We have a master planning process, and some day they will reopen the city/state commission we'll know how to plan the next one.

Ms. Campbell apologized if there had been briefing on Act 200 that she had missed. Her understanding of Act 200 is a broader process than the DRB and it takes into consideration the plans and preferences of a community and what they want their town or city to look like. That is why she is confused that this plan has come before the DRB without an appropriate full board discussion.

Mr. Jones said the state has not implemented Act 200 in the last five years. Buildings and Grounds is one of the departments that is supposed to supply a plan that gets reviewed by the Regional Planning Commission.

Ms. Campbell asked if there was a law requiring this.

Mr. Jones and Ms. Hallsmith both agreed there is a law and it has never been implemented. Mr. Jones said they are not complying with the law. Ms. Hallsmith said the state hasn't complied with the law since the law was passed. Mr. Jones said they did for a couple of cycles.

Mr. Kaufman said they have now started to get into nitty gritty details about which they don't have full information. Perhaps the state is going to go ahead with Act 200 implementation. That isn't what the sees the All Board meeting for. Rather, what is the process? How do we as a community and a group of appointed board members play a role? What is our process with Act 200? Not specifically about the Triangle development. He doesn't want to get tied up in a discussion they initiate which is not productive at this point.

Ms. Hallsmith said there are two parts to Act 200. One is the city's part. The city's part of Act 200 is maintaining a master plan, which they are actively in the process of doing in the most public way possible through the enVision Montpelier process. The state's part, though, is the part that has never been implemented. The state is actually supposed to produce a statewide land use plan that is reviewed at the local, regional and state level and approved, and all of the planning that goes on is supposed to be in alignment with that plan. But it has never been done. That is a dilemma for a development like this. To say the state is not in compliance with Act 200 statewide is not specific to Montpelier.

Mr. Kaufman said he isn't against the state developing. Perhaps the worst case is the city attorney needs to file an amicus brief about why this is done. Mr. Jones said there is probably a range of those questions. Meeting with our state legislators and Buildings and Grounds would be good. Is there a way that the intent of Act 200 can be met in terms of state development in Montpelier working with Buildings and Grounds and having a couple of public forums which would have led to the sort of plan that Act 200 required? That would benefit Montpelier and probably not require us to go to court. To what extent City Council, Development Review, Design Review, Conservation Commission and the Historic Preservation Commission would think this an interesting discussion but one that would yield a productive outcome? We probably do have to talk to the city attorney about how to react with the state. He would also like to talk to our legislative delegation.

Mr. Kaufman said the city doesn't want this to go to court.

Mr. Borgendale asked if Act 200 had any kind of consequences written into it, or does it say the state shall do this?

Mr. Jones said in terms of approving certain developments there may be some consequences, but it hasn't been in place for at least five years.

Mr. Paterson said in the spirit of being somewhat democratic for the All Board meeting that we need to determine what topic the All Board meeting needs to be. Perhaps they can suggest two or three alternatives and have Gwen talk to some of the other boards and commissions to find out what their preference is.

Mr. Jones asked if they could develop a short summary of alternatives for the All Board meeting.

Mr. Paterson said there is the subject of the budget.

Mayor Hooper said this is a question that comes up with large developments in general. How do you have interaction between the developer and different interested parties?

Ms. Hallsmith said what she had for an agenda for the All Board meeting is general city/state relationships, budget priorities, how we translate vision into action with the enVision Montpelier process, review process in general. That's a good list. She would suggest on the review process that they have a process that works. There's a lot of back and forth between the reviewers and the developers through sketch plan, preliminary plan and final plan. There are quite a lot of opportunities for the public and the city to have input into what is going on. Maybe there are some gaps as to how other boards get notified.

Mr. Jones agreed that process exists but whether it encompasses enough of the range of impacts on the city, especially as it relates to transit and parking, is questioned. Granted, if you look at the requirements in ordinances with regards to parking and look at Act 250 with regards to traffic, that probably isn't good enough. We are probably looking at a future that is going to have a significantly different transit and parking situation. We don't

know what that future is. How should these developments fit into a transit plan? The current review process is good about getting developers to be prepared for the full range of issues that are in an ordinance, but it probably isn't good enough. This would be a good time for all of the boards and commissions to have this discussion together.

Mr. Paterson said every community has a problem where you have a master plan but the individual decisions don't add up to what is envisioned in the master plan. As we go through the enVision Montpelier process and as we take on these broader topics, it is going to become much more complicated if we don't start talking about the process for how to keep that going in a productive way across all of the boards and commissions. We are going to be facing a real process challenge.

Ms. Campbell said there is a much more immediate and practical concerns to address with respect to the review process and development proposals than this. Our Master Plan advocates strongly for housing and various kinds of development, but the practicalities are such that with the Barre Street condominiums, which the developer was required to build the condominiums by the DRB for some in effect inclusionary zoning but now they are left with unsold condominiums. By the time you get through the review process the development becomes prohibitively expensive to do. Nobody has any jurisdiction or say over that. A number of proposals that come before the DRB don't happen. Another example would be in the Sabin's Pasture process. The entire negotiation consensus that was used with Sabin's Pasture was something we proposed at the very start of the process, it went through several years of grief before it came to that. Is there a way to improve on such proposals before needing to go through all of the review?

Ms. Hallsmith said another example, which she has raised with the Technical Review Committee and City Council, are the goals for Stone Cutters Way. This is an area where we want to encourage bicycle and pedestrian access and we developed it in a way that would be bicycle and pedestrian friendly which one would hope would encourage one to bike and walk to get there. Yet all of our development requirements still force us to assume that is everybody is going to drive there and park there, which means there are significant costs around traffic analysis and traffic mitigation and significant costs around parking development for the area that can make the process prohibitively expensive or impossible depending upon what is being proposed. When she worked with Calgary they had transit oriented development, which was to put large office complexes right smack on top of the transit centers. This multi-story office building was proposed literally on top of a transit stop. The highway folks in the city made sure that it wasn't allowed because we still have to assume everyone is going to drive there. She said they need to figure out a way that all of the kinds of policy directions the city implements percolate down through the different departments so the departments won't have to consider every single person that approaches the development as being a driver that has a car that needs to be parked.

Ms. Hallsmith said that could also be addressed in a zoning revision. It's not impossible to put that into code, and that is also the goal of enVision Montpelier and the planning process they are engaged in. That is to get a broad community consensus around some of the bigger changes we need to make to the codes so they aren't so hard to implement. Our zoning code, even though it has been just revised, could use changing.

Ms. Hallsmith said there are some things outside the purview of city government that those people bring to the table, like fire safety. You aren't going to get around some of the basic code issues around fire safety regardless of what the policies are.

Ms. Campbell said there is a lot of ambiguity even within fire safety. If there is a sprinkler ordinance on the one hand but you require a full turn-around for a fire truck where it is sprinklered, it becomes cost prohibitive. You might have a relatively small development proposal in an already burdened traffic area, which has a tiny impact, but it is the straw that breaks the camel's back. That little developer has to bear the cost of the entire problem by them being the ones who do the traffic study which then turns out to be prohibitively expensive. Ms. Hallsmith said the mitigation would be prohibitively expensive. That happens all of the time in communities.

Mr. Borgendale said he is hearing there are a lot of cases where we are imposing conditions where the definition of the condition is subjective and subject to broad interpretation. In those cases there seems to be a crying need to tighten up regulations so we do define what it is we are talking about.

Ms. Hallsmith said the requirements have actually been relatively standardized and followed in a similar format for years. What she is arguing for, and what Anne is speaking about, is if we are talking about sustainable development and new approaches to development that we need to look through a different lens at things like traffic impact. Some cities, for example, have intentionally allowed their downtowns to become very congested specifically to discourage people from driving there. Other cities have imposed tolls on anybody who wants to drive into the downtown. London has just done that. Vancouver is doing that. Portland is doing that. They are much bigger cities than Montpelier, but there is a lot of different thinking about how you handle traffic that isn't traditional.

Mr. Jones said he thinks the first four items we can talk about at an All Board meeting. He said he would draft the options and circulating them to members, and then submit them to the other boards and commissions. Mayor Hooper asked him to think about the timing. If they are going to talk about the budget, that needs to be in the first couple weeks of November. Mr. Jones said he was hoping to get this out within 10 days to the different boards and commissions so they can set a date by the first of October. Ms. Hallsmith said it could be November 1 or November 8th.

Act 200:

Mr. Jones said he would like to talk about whether there is something the Planning Commission can do to raise the issue, cultivate a little discussion about what some of the options are with Buildings and Grounds or with Montpelier's legislative delegation. The State is coming down with a development, and as that development goes forward there may be ways they can benefit the city and make it easier for us to do the rest, which is what Act 200 was intended to accomplish. Is there a way we can promote some discussion with the state so that as their development goes further towards implementation we might get some positive benefit?

Mr. Kaufman said he believed the City Council should speak to our legislators as the elected body politic. This shouldn't be raising flags but just a discussion. We should become involved with our counterparts at the Regional Planning Commission and State Buildings and Grounds just asking questions, and answers to those questions will provide information about what the next steps should be.

Mr. Paterson suggested that the spirit of the conversation should be what is the spirit of Act 200 and not necessarily what is the letter of the law. How can Montpelier live up to the spirit of Act 200? Recognizing that the State/City Commission is inactive right now, we don't have a vehicle right now to deal with some of the issues.

Mayor Hooper said there isn't a formal vehicle for doing it the way they did before, but there has always been an ability to talk with state government and Montpelier has routinely done that. We need to put this issue front and center. She suggested it is rather important for the city to be unified in its conversation with the state. We need to figure out what the city's position is. What if the city/state commission is sunsetted? We can still ask them all to a meeting.

Mr. Jones said what he is hearing said is that we ask our counterparts about the mechanisms to exchange information and become a part of the decision making process.

Mr. Borgendale inquired whether the Legislature had authorized the funding for this facility, or is this going to have to go through the capital budget process.

Mayor Hooper said some funds have been authorized twice. There was an analysis that said they could put the archives there. This last legislative session there was approval of the development funds.

Ms. Hallsmith said what she understands (and this is hearsay) is that the amount of money which has been allocated right now is only enough to remove the 187,000 cubic yards of rock that would need to be blasted to actually make the area developable for their purposes.

Mayor Hooper said the area was given to the state with deep restrictions which Gwen referred to. The entity that gave the land to the state has some serious concerns about what is being proposed there. When this was going through the legislative session, she expressed to one of Montpelier's representatives a concern about what was being proposed and the city ought to be involved. It got lost at the end of the session so the city wasn't engaged the way she would have hoped would have happened. The city never went in and testified and offered an opinion about this.

Mayor Hooper said when they are talking about Act 200 she is bothered by the state failing to comply with the downtown law which states very clearly that the state government is obligated to locate any new building and existing function in downtowns. They have to affirmatively find designated downtowns. They have to affirmatively find that what they are proposing to do does not work before they can do something else. The Archives building probably met that test. They affirmatively found they could not locate downtown. She is told that the soils in Montpelier's downtown are not sufficient to support the proposed use on any of their properties in the Capitol Complex. She doesn't know that anything was done about the Department of Motor Vehicles, and the EOC was something added at the last moment. They failed to comply with that portion. She also wonders if it meets the city's test for an office park, which is what that is designated as today. An office park requires master planning.

Mr. Kaufman asked if the state could define a master plan for a single use facility.

Ms. Hallsmith said the city's zoning regulations require anything in the Office Park District to submit a master plan for the property they are developing, not just piecemeal. This is similar to the AI-PUD districts where they are supposed to submit a master plan for the entire property. She raised that issue with them and they said this was the master plan. They aren't actually talking about the Department of Motor Vehicles going in there next year. That is a phase 3 kind of project. The deed restrictions actually do constrain them to the areas they have proposed developing. She thinks there is still an open question on whether the deed restrictions will prohibit the parking lot they are proposing along the interstate access, which we think of as Memorial Drive. In fact, once you hit Dog River Road, from then on out it is not considered Memorial Drive. It is actually the access ramp for the interstate. It is right along that side of the access ramp they are proposing the parking.

Mr. Jones asked how many parking spots they were talking about. Ms. Hallsmith said there were 400 plus.

Mayor Hooper remarked this is parking right at the entrance to the city.

Ms. Hallsmith said another interesting question is whether this is a gateway. There is something in the ordinance regarding gateway versus non-gateway and the landscaping and view issues related to that. They are trying to make the case this isn't a gateway. This is one of the most traveled entrances to the city of Montpelier.

Mr. Jones asked if there was a way the Planning Commission could ask City Council to consider talking with the city's legislative delegation about this.

Mr. Paterson said he would like to have a joint discussion with the Planning Commission and City Council about what is going on and what are the various issues.

Mr. Jones said how can the city work with the state in the development of a place like the Triangle. How do we institutionalize a communication so that as each of those issues arise there is some representation of city interests? The first representation is to establish a mechanism so that there is a way for the city to work with the state on the continuing development of that parcel. Is there a way to do that? Do they want to establish a technical review process with more representation from the city?

Mayor Hooper suggested the way to begin is a meeting with the City Manager, Mayor and the Planning Commission Chair with someone from State Buildings. We have the administrative branch and have that conversation. We could also have the same conversation with the city's legislative delegation.

Mr. Jones said that conversation should mention that the City of Montpelier is trying to establish a relationship with Buildings and Grounds and please do what you can to support that. The Planning Director should be included, also.

enVision Montpelier:

There is a stakeholders' meeting on September 11th. The meeting is at 6:30 p.m. in the Vermont College Chapel. Ms. Hallsmith said they would start with introductions and an overview of the process because of the level of outreach the VISTA volunteers have done over the last few weeks they anticipate new folks attending. They are going to talk about an election of facilitators for the stakeholder group. Up until now she and Ken Jones have been serving in that function. One of the models that has worked well in other places is to have the co-chairs of the individual subcommittees rotate responsibility for facilitation. That means a lot more diverse voices are heard, it develops leadership skills in members of the community, and it provides each of the committees with an opportunity to highlight some of the issues they have been talking about on the agenda for each meeting.

Then, they have scheduled times for each subcommittee to break out and do some of the scheduling. This will be able to incorporate the new people a chance to serve on a committee. Then, there will be a break with apple pies. After the break there will be a large group discussion. Ken Jones will lead a discussion on growth.

Mr. Jones said the topic of growth seems to be over arching. Is the city going to grow? He will take about a half hour to have individuals give their reactions to what it would be like if we had growth, both in terms of population growth and job growth. Which do you react negatively to, and which do you react positively to? Why?

Ms. Hallsmith said then they will adjourn at the end of Ken's presentation on growth.

VISTA Outreach Efforts:

Ms. Hallsmith said there were two VISTA volunteers who started a couple of weeks ago. They started by doing a community profile that they are required to do for their VISTA work, which at a minimum included identifying all of the different organizations in Montpelier that serve youth. Part of their focus is on youth. She expanded that to try and identify all of the different organizations. They have come up with a pretty impressive list of about 400 different groups that all received a notice of the meeting. The VISTA volunteers have been trained at the ORCA studio to run the camera and have been busily working on PSAs for the enVision Montpelier process. They have been doing some "man on the street" interviews and asking people what they think Montpelier will look like 100 years from now.

Steering Committee:

They hope to have the first meeting by the end of September. All of the elected co-chairs are on the Steering Committee. There could be two representatives from City Council and two representatives from the Planning Commission serve on it. Ms. Hallsmith said she pictures the Mayor as being the Chair of the Steering Committee. Mr. Jones said the Planning Commission should decide now what their representation should be on the Steering Committee. Mr. Kaufman said he believed there should be rotating representation of two members.

Ms. Hallsmith said the main functions of the Steering Committee are general oversight of the program, which all of the members of the Planning Commission are actively involved in now. One of the functions that steering committees she has worked with in the past have also taken on is to make sure that the public outreach and participation is as thorough as possible. The most interesting and important function is the administration of the grants. The Steering Committee would be making the decisions about the grant applications they receive for the Mazer Foundation funding. She thinks each meeting would consider grant applications. What she likes about this approach is that it would give all of the Planning Commissioners who wanted to an opportunity to participate. It would also force communication.

Mr. Paterson moved that there be two rotating members from the Planning Commission on the enVision Montpelier Steering Committee. Mr. Kaufman seconded the motion. The motion was voted unanimously.

Ms. Hallsmith said the first meeting could be scheduled for September 25th or 27th at 5:30. Mr. Jones said he intended to be a member to start and Chris Paterson.

Mr. Borgendale moved that the Planning Commission direct the Chair to appoint the two members to start. The motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Jones said tentatively it will be he and Chris Paterson serving on the Steering Committee.

Ms. Hallsmith said part of the Steering Committee's first task will be to decide on the process for proposal advertisement, development and acceptance criteria for acceptance. There are some things we are constrained by in the grant. We haven't done a specific RFP yet for the grant. That is a topic she would like the Steering Committee to address rather than her just drafting something.

Mr. Jones said at the last meeting the Planning Commission agreed that during the September 24th Planning meeting they will have an update of how the enVision Montpelier process is going. We will have had the stakeholder meeting to get a sense of how the different working groups are going.

Municipal Planning Grant Application:

At the last Planning Commission meeting they had anticipated putting in for the grant that week, but they were not going to be able to meet the requirements. That specific grant was for supporting Montpelier's efforts in the growth center designation process. The Planning Commission members still had enough uncertainty as to how the process should progress to even put the proposal together to say nothing of the requirements. We need to discuss whether that should be the focus of an application for the planning grant. He asked members who were most interested in the growth center designation process to consider how the funding might support that effort.

Mr. Paterson said the Orton Family Foundation is based in Middlebury. They work with communities in Vermont and the surrounding northeast states, as well as the Colorado area, to develop different types of planning tools to help with land use planning decision making. In particular, they have done a lot of work around GIS based visualization tools. He talked with the CEO of Orton about the possibility of a useful planning grant.

Ms. Hallsmith said she was familiar with Community VIZ and what Orton does. The primary question is, are we ready to engage in a discussion about the growth center itself? If we were to hire a consultant she would prefer to have someone who could lay the groundwork they would plug into Community VIZ on the task first.

She said there are also a couple of other ideas that have come up for what they would use the municipal planning grant to do besides laying the groundwork for a growth center designation. We talked today about parking and transit planning. One of the concerns she has heard about the current parking issues are that we have a piecemeal approach to it. City Council gets a request from some angry neighbors about a particular street, and the neighbors want to restrict parking to residents only, and the City Council doesn't have the over arching policy context to consider that request. Obviously, transit is an important piece of that. If people were moving around town differently, then the parking demands would be different. They could combine the parking and transit policy issues. Ken's survey, City Council's frustrations, and her limited experience with the issue does demand some level of focused effort to address what all of the existing policies are. She thinks people might be surprised to learn all of the different parts of town that have different parking restrictions and different rules that apply to who can park there and for what period of time.

Ms. Hallsmith said she was reluctant to consider growth centers prior to the enVision Montpelier process being complete because the kinds of dialogue we have in that process will inform the formation of new growth centers. Some of the possibilities of land that is coming on the market made her think we should think about this faster.

Mr. Jones said he thinks the growth center designation process is very timely. He is very concerned that Sabin's Pasture discussion does not fall into the path we have fallen into before. There will be some time in the next one

to two years, and maybe less, a proposal to develop Sabin's Pasture. To him it is intimately linked with this question. Does the growth center for Montpelier go down Barre Street? He agrees enVision Montpelier will help, but he thinks that a focus on the growth center topic will also help enVision by providing some structure. That is why he would like to encourage them to get the growth center development piece moving because he thinks it will work well with what they want to do with Sabin's Pasture.

Mayor Hooper said it isn't just Sabin's Pasture, but Vermont College, Elks Country Club, energy issues, and beyond that particular parcel. It would be nice to do some planning that isn't just focused on those 100 acres.

Ms. Hallsmith said the thing about growth centers is you have to decide where it is going to go.

Mr. Jones said they talked last week to look at the river corridors as being our very first broad consideration about where the growth center designation would be. It's the river going downstream, the river going upstream, and the North Branch along Elm Street.

Mr. Kaufman inquired what they were going to do about the grant.

Ms. Hallsmith said they should have a subcommittee meet with the Planning Department soon for people interested in the topic. If we decide the growth center is the way to go and we develop a scope of work part of which Community VIZ would fit we could certainly give it to them. She doesn't think it is what they need at this phase of the process.

Parking Survey Update:

Mr. Jones circulated a very brief summary of the parking survey results. They are up to about 115 responses. One of the things that became clear to him is as we continue to work on the parking issue we have to recognize that some people are not going to be happy to know that parking is an issue. There are people who are altering their behaviors because of parking. We know that some of the specific development decisions that are happening are related to parking. We need to be aware that as we move forward addressing parking that there is an audience out there that we need to communicate with that it is a problem for people to park.

Parking at the State Office Complex is a big domino. When parking is a problem there it kicks into our downtown. We have bigger problems parking when the Legislature is in session than when they aren't here. We need to keep our attention on what is happening with the state parking. Those are the two broad conclusions from the survey.

In addition to this they are ready for the next article in *The Bridge*. Jon Anderson and Carl Etnier met and had a discussion about a parking garage. The way the article is being framed is the reason for doing a parking garage. Even if the world changes and the transit changes, then what a parking garage has done is opened up more land for development downtown, thereby really allowing for infill. We might be able to convert surface parking to new development. That is the rosy scenario that we get a transit pattern that doesn't rely so much on cars. Still there would be great benefit to having a parking garage because you would free up some space. That is the pro parking garage argument. The anti-parking garage argument is that the money necessary to invest in a parking garage if it were invested in other alternatives would move us more rapidly the more non-individual car transit scenario. Both are very supportive of the other argument.

Floodplain Maps:

Mr. Jones said in terms of the floodplain language he understands this would be a change to the city's ordinances. He asked Gwen to get a sense of deadlines when it needs to be completed. Can we wait until we are ready for another zoning rewrite?

Ms. Hallsmith said they couldn't wait. It should be done by the end of the year. It was all contingent when those initial maps came out. They need to complete it before the next flood insurance round because the city's flood insurance is contingent upon the changes. The Regional Planning Commission has done us a real service by going through the bylaw and looking at how we need to bring it into compliance. We need to go through the

process of zoning which means the Planning Commission has to review it and then submit it to City Council for adoption. It needs to be done soon.

Adjournment:

Mr. Borgendale moved adjournment, with Ms. Campbell seconding the motion. Planning Commission adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Gwen Hallsmith, Director
Planning and Community Development

Transcribed and Prepared by:
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