

Draft Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 8/1/2022

Calvin Coolidge Conference Room, 6th Floor, National Life Bldg., Montpelier & Via GoTo Virtual Meeting

Members Present (9):

- Josh Hanford (*Chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Michele Boomhower, designated by the Secretary of Transportation
- Billy Coster, designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources
- Michael Desrochers, designated by the Commissioner of Public Safety
- Laura Trieschmann, State Historic Preservation Officer
- Jaime Lee, appointed by the Governor, representing the Vermont Natural Resources Council and the Preservation Trust of Vermont.
- David Allaire, designated by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Michael McDonough, appointed by the governor, representing local government
- Bruce Cheeseman, appointed by the Governor, representing local government
- Chip Sawyer, designated by the Vermont Planners Association
- Sabina Haskell, Chair of the Natural Resources Board
- Charlie Baker, designated by the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
- Cathy Davis, appointed by the Governor, representing the Vermont Association of Chamber Executives

Attending Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members (4): Richard Amore, Jacob Hemmerick, Caitlin Corkins, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (14): Angela Dwyer; Debra Burchard; Jonas Rosenthal; Nancy Mark; David Conger; Jim Sullivan; Mary Ann Goulette; David Roberts; Bronwyn Cooke; Karl Marchessault; Polly McMurtry; Rowan Jacobsen; Thomas Badowski; and Karla Nuisl.

Josh Hanford brought the meeting to order at 1:10pm.

Additions or Deletions to Board Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the board agenda.

1. Public Comment Period

Josh Hanford opened the meeting to public comment: there were no comments.

2. Consent Agenda Items:

- June 27, 2022, Draft Meeting Minutes
- Craftsbury Village Center Designation Renewal
- Craftsbury Common Village Center Designation Renewal
- Lower Granville Village Center Designation Renewal
- Upper Granville Village Center Designation Renewal
- Marlboro Village Center Designation Renewal
- Middletown Springs Village Center Designation Renewal

Dave Allaire made a motion to approve the consent agenda items, and Michael McDonough seconded. Ayes: Bruce Cheeseman, Cathy Davis, Charlie Baker, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

3. Village Center Designations

Town of Stamford – Village Center Designation New Application

The proposed boundary runs along Route 100 and includes some properties on Stebbins Lane, Mill Road, and Jepson Road, and includes the country store, two churches, former grange hall, town offices, elementary school, firehouse, community pavilion, commercial businesses, and single-family and multifamily residences. The Town worked with staff to define the recommended boundary; however, the town wishes to submit a larger boundary that includes large areas of residential properties.

Debra Burchard, with the Town of Stamford, reported that the town has overcome several obstacles to get to this application submitted. She is excited to report back to the Planning Commission on the outcome of the meeting.

Jim Sullivan, with the Bennington Regional Planning Commission, added that he was looking forward to the discussion around designation program changes, specifically about sidewalks as a criterion to consider for village center designation.

Board members commented that they were excited to see Stamford come into the program. Additional comments and board discussion ensued about a residential parcel, the former Grange Hall (current residence), which the town included in the boundary submitted, that department staff recommended to remove. Board members commented that the Grange Hall parcel should be included in the boundary.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve village center designation for Stamford with the boundary staff recommended, with the addition of the former Grange Hall property, and Sabina Haskell seconded. Ayes: Bruce Cheeseman, Cathy Davis, Charlie Baker, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

Town of West Rutland – Boundary Amendment

The town is requesting a boundary amendment to add three additional properties that are being redeveloped into a 20+ unit housing development in partnership with Evernorth and the Housing Trust of Rutland County. The proposed boundary runs along Main Street and Maple Street and includes the Town Hall, fire department, and the proposed location of the new housing development, commercial businesses, and single-family and multifamily residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary amendment that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Mary Ann Goulette, Town Manager, spoke with board members about three income producing parcels the Town wished to include in their village center designation boundary.

Adding the parcels, will provide an opportunity for additional benefits which can be used to renovate much needed housing in the village center and state.

Charlie Baker made a motion to approve West Rutland's village center boundary amendment, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. Ayes: Bruce Cheeseman, Cathy Davis, Charlie Baker, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

Town of Cabot – De-designation

No renewal application submitted. Cabot was originally designated in January 2014 and were unable to update their town plan in time to meet statutory requirements. The Town of Cabot intends to reapply for village center designation later this year.

Board members commented that while the designation programs are under review, the municipal plan requirement should be examined as well.

Josh Hanford made a motion to de-designate Cabot's village center designation, and Laura Trieschmann seconded. Ayes: Bruce Cheeseman, Cathy Davis, Charlie Baker, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

4. New Town Center – Berlin Update

Tom Badowski and Karla Nuisl, with the Town of Berlin, joined the meeting to provide updates to the board on the Town's New Town Center designation, which recently went into effect in June 2022. The board asked the town to report back on conditions in April of 2023, but Tom advised so much has happened they wanted to provide an update. Karla added that the town has focused on the discussions and concerns of board and has used that information to focus, move forward, and concentrate on goals. The following are updates the board received:

- School parcel at Route 62 gateway – The five towns represented in the school district all voted in favor of transferring the parcel to the Town of Berlin. Tom reported that the mylar has been submitted, and the subdivision approved. [This is a task that could help the Town meet the public facility requirements.]
- Fisher Road - The town received a grant from VTrans to study Fisher Road, specifically to address citizen concerns regarding pedestrian and bicycle safety, and the cost of a multi-use path.
- Stormwater - The town has applied for a revolving loan to study stormwater in the New Town Center.
- Senior Housing – The 98-unit memory, senior, and assisted living development recently opened.
- Fox Run Housing – A priority housing project has received approval and funding, and they are excited to break ground.
- The town has drilled a 4th well for drinking water zto serve the NTC.
- Once standards are met, the town will take over the maintenance of the mall access street.

Board members welcomed the updates on the town's responsive accomplishments and commended the town on all the hard work they have put forth into meeting the conditions. The Board stated that they look forward to hearing an update next year.

5. Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits

Caitlin Corkins presented a spreadsheet of the tallied and ranked scores for the FY2023 Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit applications. Board members submitted their scoring to staff in advance of the meeting and applications were then tallied and ranked from highest to lowest based on the average score.

The resulting scores, and increase in funding, will allow full funding for all 49 Tax Credit, and 1 Sales Tax Reallocation applications that applied.

Board members inquired about the remaining funding not allocated, Caitlin advised the goal is to hold a second round of applications this winter, and market the program to towns and projects within the Neighborhood Development Area designation. Additional board members inquired about the competitive criteria, specifically the Statement of Scope and Need, those two questions were often answered similarly and they would like to see the questions asked in a way to get unique and distinct answers to each. Other board comments and discussion was held around NDA's getting added to the program, the reporting requirement, and not having a sufficient amount of time to gather data to report on.

Josh Hanford advised board members that the department will also look at the 45-day decision requirement, and research legislative options for flexibility in the future.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve and fund the slate of Tax Credit applications, and Charlie Baker seconded. Ayes: Bruce Cheeseman, Cathy Davis, Charlie Baker, Chip Sawyer, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

6. Old Business / New Business

Josh Hanford opened a conversation with board members around potential future changes to the board meeting structure. Discussion centered around having fewer meetings, but more content at each meeting; the need for a couple in-person meetings, but mostly virtual with less hybrid meetings; holding more rounds of grant and tax credit funding; and providing per diem and mileage for board members. The conversations will continue, with some requests like a budget for per diems requiring legislative approval.

7. Adjourn

Bruce Cheeseman made a motion to adjourn, and Laura Trieschmann seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie