

**Approved Minutes**  
**Vermont Community Investment Board**  
**9/23/2024**  
**Calvin Coolidge Conference Room and MS Teams Virtual Meeting**

**Members Present (14):**

- Alex Farrell (*Chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Adam Grinold, representing the Regional Development Associations, virtual attendance, left the meeting at 3:06pm
- Billy Coster, designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources
- Bruce Cheeseman, appointed by the Governor, representing local government
- Cathy Davis, appointed by the Governor, representing the Vermont Association of Chamber Executives
- Charlie Baker, designated by the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
- Chip Sawyer, designated by the Vermont Planners Association
- Jaime Lee, appointed by the Governor, representing the Vermont Natural Resources Council and the Preservation Trust of Vermont, virtual attendance
- Kevin Chu, representing the Office of Racial Equity
- Laura Trieschmann, State Historic Preservation Officer
- Michael Desrochers, designated by the Commissioner of Public Safety
- Michael Gaughan, designated by the Vermont Bond Bank, attendance by phone until arrived in-person at 1:25pm
- Michael McDonough, appointed by the governor, representing local government
- Mike Pieciak, State Treasurer, virtual attendance
- Michele Boomhower, designated by the Secretary of Transportation
- Sarah Hadd, designated by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns

**Attending Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members (7):** Richard Amore, Chris Cochran, Gary Holloway, Natalie Elvidge, Jacob Hemmerick, Susie Powers, and Jenni Lavoie.

**Guests (24):** Christian Meyer, CVRPC; Richard Tinsley, Middlebury; John Hood, Topsham; Jim Clark, Topsham; Laura LaRosa; Kathi O'Reilly, Colchester; Cathyann LaRose, Colchester; Steve Whitaker; Valerie Capels, Bristol; Courtney Radford, Bristol; Mike Miller, Montpelier; Matthew Zambrano, MPM, LLC.; Keegan Tierney; Joseph Castellano; Jess Phelps; Sharon Miller-Dombroski; Clair Purcell; Sarah Rooker; Paul Simon; Richard Busch; David Delcore; Betsy Liley; Leigh Seddon; Kurt Motyka.

**Start of Meeting:**

Alex Farrell brought the meeting to order at 1:02 pm and welcomed new board member Kevin Chu, who is representing the Office of Racial Equity.

**Additions or Deletions to the Board Agenda**

There were no additions or deletions to the board agenda.

**1. Public Comment Period**

Alex Farrell opened the meeting to public comment.

Two members of the public, Laura LaRosa and Steve Whitaker, provided comments opposing the Montpelier Growth Center boundary amendment. Ms. LaRosa expressed concerns about the walkability of the proposed boundary and other zoning-related issues. Mr. Whitaker submitted written comments regarding growth center statute compliance, which have been included at the end of these minutes.

Paul Simon did not speak during the public comment period but submitted written comments on Colchester’s Growth Center 5-year Check-In, which are also included at the end of these minutes.

**2. Consent Agenda Items:**

- July 22, 2024, Draft Minutes
- Village Center Designation Renewal (1):
  - Town of Woodstock – Woodstock Village Center

Michele Boomhower motioned to approve the consent agenda items, and Cathy Davis seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

**3. Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits**

Caitlin Corkins presented a summary of the FY25 round of Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit applications. There were 48 tax credit applications, and 1 sales tax reallocation application, with requests totaling over \$7.6 million for \$4.1 million in available funding. This was enough to fund the thirteen top-scoring applications, including the sales tax reallocation application. The four next-ranked applications will be alternates for funding, in ranked order.

Cathy Davis motioned to accept the funding recommendations and award the tax credits; Charlie Baker seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed, and one abstention by Kevin Chu. The motion carried.

**4. Village Center Designations – 3 new applications**

**Town of Topsham, Topsham Village Center Application**

The proposed boundary runs along Powder Spring Road, Topsham/Corinth Road, Galusha Hill Road, and Harts Road and next to the Tabor Branch of the Waits River. It includes the

town hall and town clerk's office, fire department, post office, Presbyterian Church, local businesses, and single and multi-family residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

John Hood shared that the town has development goals for the village. Currently, they are building a new town hall just by the village center. There are also a few dilapidated buildings within the village center that they hope can benefit from the tax credit program.

Charlie Baker motioned to approve Topsham's village center application and award designation, and Chip Sawyer seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

### **Town of Topsham, Waits River Village Center Application**

The proposed boundary runs along VT Route 25 and includes the New Hope United Methodist Church, Waits River Country Store, Carl Sweet Woodworking Shop, Historic Waits River Schoolhouse, and local businesses, and single and multi-family residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Jim Clark shared that the Waits River store suffered a fire, and the owners are struggling. They are hopeful that with designation the owners can apply for the tax credit program.

Bruce Cheeseman motioned to approve Waits River village center application and award designation, and Michael Gaughan seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

### **Town of Topsham, West Topsham Village Center Application**

The proposed boundary runs along VT Route 25 and includes the post office, Riverside Grange, fire department, community hall, Countryside Baptist Church, Gramp's Country Store, and local businesses, and single and multi-family residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Jim Clark shared that there is a Community Hall in the village that was built entirely by volunteers in 1953. The building is a 45 x 100-foot building that's in spectacularly great shape. As a result of that building, the town has formed an organization called Friends of Topsham. Their objective is to renovate and revitalize that part of town so they can host dances, birthday parties, and anniversary parties. Additionally, there is a new sense of growth in town with participation from a younger population.

Cathy Davis motioned to approve West Topsham's village center boundary amendment request, and Chip Sawyer seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

## **5. Downtown Designation - 1**

### **Town of Bristol Downtown Designation Renewal**

The Town of Bristol received Downtown Designation in 2006, and last renewed in 2016. The Town worked with staff on the application to ensure all program requirements are met and to offer any recommendations. The application is complete, no boundary changes proposed, and it meets all the program's requirements.

Courtney Radford, with Bristol CORE, shared recent town successes including town gateway signage, continuing the beloved Main Street flower basket project, the Bristol trail network, new bus shelters, and the Stoney Hill business infrastructure project. Once the Stoney Hill business infrastructure project was completed, All Earth Renewables of Williston, which got its start in Bristol, moved back to their hometown. Town events such as the farmers market, restored Pocock Rocks music festival, Cool Yule celebration, and Bristol's celebration of fire and light have brought thousands of people into the downtown. Challenges the town faces includes high turnover with the Executive Director of the downtown organization, local businesses struggle with foot traffic, and employment opportunities within the town are limited. Gary Holloway emphasized the importance of the Downtown Vibrancy Fund in supporting downtown organization capacity which allowed Bristol Core to hire a new executive director with expanded hours.

Chip Sawyer motioned to approve Bristol's downtown designation renewal request, and Adam Grinold seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

## **6. Growth Center Designation – 2**

### **Town of Colchester, 5-Year Check-In Review**

The Town of Colchester was due for a check-in prior to the enactment of 181, which was delayed due to June and July conflicts. The Board's August meeting was cancelled. According to the Board's policy, reviews due before July will be finalized. This is the third, five-year review for Colchester's Growth Center (year 15 of 20). Five-year reviews focus on changes that may have occurred over since the last check in that may affect the findings of fact in the Designation Decision and any compliance with designation conditions, if applicable.

Cathyann Larose, Colchester's Planning and Zoning Director, shared that she understood board members' concerns related to the New Town Center's civic building, and civic public space (which anchors the Growth Center), and she explained that the town has been focused on that for the past three years. The town has been programming the space and been focused on letting people know that is a town-owned, public, accessible space. There are now several daycare businesses within the Growth Center, and the town has had the police and fire departments visit. They have a lending library and bike racks installed and held the third annual autumn market.

Board members inquired about the enterprise activity, and what the standards and metric expectations were 15-years ago, and what information is being captured. Staff responded that about a decade ago, the board established the metrics that Growth Center communities

would report on now: enterprise square footage, lot creation, and dwelling unit creation. Staff noted that the metrics are harder to achieve when the growth center is a lower percentage of the total area of the community, which is the case for Colchester, but not all growth centers. Although enterprise and subdivision metrics are not likely to be met in the next 5 years, the dwelling unit production goals appear like they will be met, with 600 additional units undergoing development review now. As a point of reflection on the program as the growth center program ends over the next two year and is transferred into the new designation framework, staff highlighted the program's success at providing benefits for municipalities to make development-enabling investments that might not otherwise have been possible or occurred, while also acknowledging that the growth center has, in some cases, not delivered the intended outcomes.

Michele Boomhower motioned to approve the staff recommended motion, that the Colchester Growth Center continues to meet the standards for designation in effect at the time it was originally designated, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. All were in favor, none opposed, and one abstention. The motion carried.

### **City of Montpelier, Boundary Amendment**

The City requests approval of an amendment to the existing growth center boundary. The City presented two proposed boundaries. One proposal would add the 'Country Club Road property.' The second proposal would additionally add the properties in the 'Residential 9000 district.' Staff found that portions of second, Residential 9000 area did not yet meet statutory requirements but could through additional capital planning and regulatory requirements that ensure safe transportation mode choice and walkability. Both areas were mapped in 'attachment 4' of the City's submission. An existing sidewalk map was also included.

Mike Miller, Montpelier Planning Director, shared with board members the progress Montpelier has made on several projects since the last five-year check-in including: the adoption of Unified Development Regulations, which were substantially redone; expansion of administrative permitting for faster approvals; completion of a Downtown Streetscape Master Plan, many flood resiliency projects, and the Country Club Road Actionable Plan. He provided an overview of the Country Club Road concept.

Board members inquired if the city has a PUD process for the Country Club site, or do they believe their base zoning can handle it. Mr. Miller advised they have PUD rules that could be used, but most of the base zoning allows enough flexibility to not require a PUD. Additional board comments addressed concerns raised by the public regarding the relationship between the City's Municipal Plan, and the most recent slate of amendments to the Bylaws that increase density, and consistency between the application, regulations and plan. Mr. Miller said that they don't overlap quite as much because the City plan was adopted in 2017, and they are currently in the process of writing a new plan that will contain this integration. The existing plan didn't call for Country Club Road to be included because it was a golf course at the time that plan was developed, but the plan did include increasing density in neighborhoods. Staff noted that the review considered Board the authority of the Board to interpret statute and past precedent for this designation (and among the designated growth

centers), Board policy on growth center boundary amendments and that the standard findings did not require specific plan language.

Michael Gaughan motioned to approve the staff recommended motion, approve the boundaries in proposed expansion areas 1 & 2, except proposal 2 (Zoning District: Residential 9000) parcels that do not front a street with an existing sidewalk connected to the designated downtown, authorizing the Chair to approve the final boundary, Charlie Baker indicated he would second the motion, with the additional language authorizing the Chair to sign and issue the written decision based on staff findings and finalize the boundary. Michael McDonough further amended the motion to additionally authorize the Chair to modify the boundaries if future sidewalks are constructed. The mover and seconder agreed to agree to incorporate this language into the motion. Charlie Baker seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Bruce Cheeseman, Cathy Davis, Charlie Baker, Chip Sawyer, Kevin Chu, Michael Desrochers, Michael Gaughan, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Mike Pieciak, Sarah Hadd, and Alex Farrell. No: Jaime Lee. The motion carried.

## **7. Old Business / New Business**

### **Proposed Adjustment of Board Meeting Schedule**

Alex Farrell advised that since the board scope has changed under Act 181 to have less focus on boundary-making and more focus on investment coordination, the frequency of board meetings no longer needs to be monthly. Staff proposed a quarterly day-long meeting with the following proposed schedule of January, April, September, and October starting in 2025.

### **Update on RPC Technical Assistance Pilot NDA Grant Program**

This topic has been postponed until the October meeting.

## **10. Adjourn**

Charlie Baker motion to adjourn the meeting, Kevin Chu seconded. Alex Farrell adjourned the meeting at 3:11 p.m.

The next Community Investment Board meeting will be on October 28, 2024.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie