

Approved Minutes
Vermont Community Investment Board
4/28/2025
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
- ☒ Jen Mojo, 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
- ☒ Christian Meyer, 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
- ☒ Kevin Chu, representing the Office of Racial Equity
- ☐ Laura Trieschmann, State Historic Preservation Officer
- ☒ Geral (GJ) Garrow, (alternate) designated by the Commissioner of Public Safety
- ☒ Michael Gaughan, designated by the Vermont Bond Bank (arrived 10:40am)
- ☒ Michael McDonough, appointed by the governor, representing local government
- ☒ Peter Trombley, (alternate) State Treasurer's Office
- ☒ Amy Bell, (alternate) designated by the Secretary of Transportation
- ☒ Josh Hanford, designated by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (arrived 10:55am)

Attending Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members (6):
Chris Cochran, Jeff Dube, Gary Halloway, Natalie Elvidge, Susie Powers, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (7): Michael Moser, UVM; Andrew Brown, UVM; Luca Joffray, UVM; Miranda Degreenia, UVM; Ben Doyle, PTV; Andy Julow, RDC; Shelly Pottorf, Town of Sudbury.

1. Start of Meeting:

Alex Farrell brought the meeting to order at 10:35 am. Alex welcomed everyone to the meeting and facilitated introductions.

2. Additions or Deletions to the Board Agenda

The presentation order of the guest speakers was switched to accommodate the later arrival of Ben Doyle, Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV). There were no further additions or deletions to the board agenda.

3. Public Comment Period

Alex Farrell opened the meeting to public comment; there were no public comments.

4. January 27, 2025, Draft Meeting Minutes

Christian Meyer made a motion to approve the January 27, 2025, Meeting Minutes, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

5. Presentation: Vermont Evaluation of Rural Technical Assistance project (VERTA)

Andrew Brown, MPA, Social Science Research Project Specialist, Center for Rural Studies presented slides to share an overview of their work and mission.

VERTA is a statewide initiative designed to assess and enhance the coordination and delivery of technical assistance (TA) to Vermont's rural communities. The effort aims to build a more effective, accessible, and equitable support system for municipalities facing complex challenges.

With a generous grant from the Leahy Center for Rural Partnership, UVM's Center for Rural Studies is serving as the lead partner for this initiative. UVM is responsible for researching other state programs, gathering baseline data about TA in Vermont, conducting in person focus groups, facilitating consensus-building, and helping map the state's ecosystem of technical assistance providers. The Center will also develop actionable recommendations to address long-standing issues in rural Vermont – such as limited municipal capacity, aging infrastructure, economic decline, and the impacts of climate change.

This work will culminate in a statewide summit, where stakeholders will evaluate, refine, and prioritize the proposed recommendations. A final report will then be submitted to the General Assembly to inform future investments and policy decisions.

When asked about the driving force behind the VERTA partnership, staff from DHCD explained that many rural communities are being left behind due to a lack of capacity, expertise, and sustained support from the federal government. They emphasized that finding ways to expand and better coordinate state level technical assistance is essential to reversing this trend. Several board members echoed this sentiment, noting that the initiative could have a significant and lasting impact by strengthening the delivery of services to villages in Vermont.

6. Presentation: Village Trust Initiative

Ben Doyle, Executive Director of the Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV), presented an overview of the new Village Trust Initiative – a partnership between PTV, the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD), and the Vermont Community Foundation (VCF). Made possible by a \$10 million Congressionally

Directed Spending award secured by Senator Leahy's office in 2023, the initiative will support revitalization efforts in 20 Vermont villages.

Now in its first year, the program has selected seven villages across six counties to receive support. The Village Trust Initiative is a community-led effort to reinvigorate village centers by promoting local ownership, economic resilience, and small-scale development. Through flexible funding, technical assistance, and capacity-building, it helps communities acquire and redevelop key properties – such as vacant storefronts and underused civic buildings – to meet local needs and strengthen long-term vitality. The initiative fosters collaboration among residents, municipalities, nonprofits, and state partners to create sustainable, locally driven solutions for Vermont's rural communities.

7. Village Center Designation – New Application

Town of Sudbury

The proposed boundary runs along Rt 30 and Huff Pond Rd. It includes the Sudbury Meeting House and Town Offices, Village Green, Cook properties, and single-family residences.

Shelly Pottorf, Member of the Planning Commission for the Town of Sudbury and representative of SudHub, shared that the town wants to revitalize buildings, and the designation is critical so that the community can work to create a cluster community in the center of town with the potential for senior housing and a community club. Sudbury would mark the 251st designated Village Center.

The Board emphasized Sudbury's unique opportunity to leverage its remarkable collection of historic structures along the Route 30 corridor for economic development. This cluster of buildings offers an open canvas for revitalization and reinvestment.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve Sudbury's village center application and award designation, and Jamie Lee seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

8. Boundary Amendment – Amendment Request

Town of Poultney

The Town of Poultney is requesting a boundary amendment to their existing designated downtown boundary to include property within and immediately adjacent to the newly created Green Mountain College Adaptive Reuse Zoning District. (GMCAR). The GMCAR District was recently established as part of Poultney's Bylaw Modernization project which resulted in updated unified bylaws adopted in December 2024.

The former Green Mountain College campus, now owned by Regenerative Land Holdings LLC, presents a significant opportunity for adaptive reuse and economic development in Poultney. Amending the designated downtown boundary will

preserve the connection between the campus and downtown. The Board reinforced how essential it is to maintain Poultney's character and expressed support for a vision that includes new housing and community amenities on the former campus to encourage a vibrant, well-connected downtown.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve the Town of Poultney's amendment request, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. All were in favor, none opposed, Jamie Lee recused. The motion carried.

9. Downtown Transportation Fund Grant Awards

The Downtown Transportation Fund (DTF) supports transportation-related capital improvement projects such as new sidewalks, lighting and other pedestrian and streetscape improvements in designated downtowns and eligible designated village centers. Eligible projects must be within or serving the downtown district or village center and support economic development.

For the grant application cycle for FY2025, the Downtown Transportation Fund (DTF) received 14 eligible grant applications. The total requested was \$2.39 million, for \$1.5M available in funding. The applications were reviewed and checked for completeness and accuracy by DHCD staff.

Jaime Lee made a motion to award the top 8 scoring applications, and to designate the alternate as proposed by staff. Michael Gaughan seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

FY26 Downtown Transportation Fund

DHCD staff informed the board that now that all one-time funding has been awarded, the annual program appropriation will revert to a modest \$500k and only be available for designated downtowns. As such, staff are recommending that the maximum grant award amount for FY26, and future rounds, be lowered back to the prior program maximum of \$100,000 per award.

Board members engaged in a robust discussion of options regarding potential maximum grant awards, and other application details and enhancements.

Adam Grinold made a motion to adjust the Downtown Transportation Fund maximum grant award from \$200k to \$100k, Jamie Lee seconded. After additional board discussion, Adam Grinold amended his motion to change the award amount from \$100k to \$125k per application. Jamie Lee seconded. Ayes: Adam Grinold, Jen Mojo, Bruce Cheeseman, Christian Meyer, Jaime Lee, Kevin Chu, Amy Bell, GJ Garrow, Michael Gaughan, Michael McDonough, Peter Trombley, Josh Hanford, and Alex Farrel. ANo: Chip Sawyer. The motion carried.

10. Old Business / New Business Legislative Preview

Alex Farrell provided the board with a brief update on the housing bill focusing on new programs to support infrastructure. Chris Cochran reported that the Governor's proposed \$2 million increase to the Tax Credit awards has been removed from the budget. He also noted that work is underway to define the board's role in reviewing the Regional Planning Commissions' future land use maps.

11. Spring Bus Tour

To give board members an opportunity to connect in person, visit Vermont communities, and see a sample of projects funded, DHCD staff are planning a spring bus tour, tentatively in July, in collaboration with the Preservation Trust of Vermont.

12. Adjourn

Amy Bell made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Kevin Chu seconded. All were in favor. Alex Farrell adjourned the meeting at 1:52 p.m.

The next Community Investment Board meeting will be on September 22, 2025.

Respectfully submitted, Susie Powers