

Draft Minutes
Vermont Community Investment Board
1/27/2025
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, 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
- Michael McDonough, appointed by the governor, representing local government
- Ashlynn Doyon, (alternate) State Treasurer's Office
- Amy Bell, (alternate) designated by the Secretary of Transportation
- vacant*, designated by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns

Attending Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members (5): Chris Cochran, Jeff Dube, Natalie Elvidge, Susie Powers, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (3): Heather Bouchard, Town of Whiting; Steve Quenneville, Town of Whiting; Katherine Sonnick, Town of Essex.

Start of Meeting:

Alex Farrell brought the meeting to order at 1:02 pm. Alex welcomed new DHCD employee, Jeff Dube. New board member, Jen Mojo, was introduced. Jen is designated by the Agency of Natural Resources and replaced Bill Coster.

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.

There was no public comment.

2. Consent Agenda Items:

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Christian Meyer motioned to approve the consent agenda items, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. Ayes: Adam Grinold, Amy Bell, Bruce Cheeseman, Cathy Davis, Chip Sawyer, Christian Meyer, Jaime Lee, Kevin Chu, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, and Alex Farrell. No: None. Abstained: Ashlynn Doyon and Jen Mojo. The motion carried.

3. Presentation: Conflict of Interest/Code of Ethics

Maxwell Krieger, Esq., General Counsel with DHCD spoke to share an overview of ethics that board members must abide by. Each board member has taken the Code of Ethics class. Max explains two types of conflict of interest: actual conflict and perceived conflict. As a board member, any conflicts need to be disclosed and discussed. Christian Meyer asks if a board member recuses themselves, should they leave the room? Christian Meyer asks if a board member can vote for a village if it is in their RPC. With specific questions, board members should speak to either Max Krieger or consult with the Vermont Ethics Commission. Public meeting law was outlined, and CIB role as a public body. The quorum is 50% of board attendees plus 1 board member.

4. Village Center Designations – 2 New Applications

Town of Essex, Essex Village Center Application

The proposed boundary runs along Center Road/ Rt 15, Towers Road, Browns River Road, and Jericho Road. It includes the library, grange hall, elementary school, local businesses, and single and multi-family residences.

Katherin Sonnicks, Community Development Director for the Town of Essex, shared that the town wants to revitalize buildings and build identity in their community. There are historic buildings within the village center that they hope can benefit from the tax credit program.

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

Town of Whiting, Whiting Village Center Application

The proposed boundary runs along S. Main Street. It includes the old Whiting library, Community Church, Post Office, old schoolhouse, town offices, town hall, fire station, preschool, local businesses, and single and multi-family residences.

Heather Bouchard, Whiting Town Clerk, shared that Whiting has a population of 405 residents. The town was encouraged to obtain village center designation by the new

owners of the General Store in the village. Additionally, the town has many historic properties that could benefit from funding opportunities provided by the program.

Christian Meyer motioned to approve Whiting’s village center application and award designation, and Chip Sawyer seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

5. Downtown Transportation Fund – 2 Amendment Requests

City of Essex Junction

The City of Essex Junction is seeking an amendment to their existing 2023 Downtown Transportation Fund grant to extend the term and adjust the scope of work.

Board members asked, if the extension is granted, would it change the original funding source, or would it impact the ranking of projects scored in that round? Staff advised that DTF funding is purely state funds only, so funding would not be an issue for the amendment. Additionally, staff advised that all projects in this round were awarded. Approving this amendment would not negatively impact any other applicants.

Bruce Cheeseman motioned to approve Essex Junction’s DTF amendment request, and Jamie Lee seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

Town of Williston

The Town of Williston seeks to amend their scope of work after two failed bond attempts in the town.

Board members inquired about the reason for the amended budget requested. Staff explained that Williston asked voters to approve a bond which would have increased the available funding for this project, and that bond vote failed twice. Because the bond failed, the project scope needed to be adjusted.

Additional board questions were regarding the impact on applicants. The board wants to ensure that this request would not negatively impact on any projects not funded. Staff advised all projects in the 2024 round were awarded.

Chip Sawyer motioned to approve Williston’s DTF amendment request, and Christian Meyer seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

6. The Vermont Futures Project

Keven Chu, CIB member and Executive Director of Vermont Future’s Project, presented Vermont’s Economic Action Plan to the board. He views his role as translating data to inform policy and decision-making. Vermont’s future relies on its people and places. Using data, he explores how the state’s economy can evolve to support a thriving future with opportunities for all. Vermont has the lowest fertility rate in the nation and faces a labor and housing

shortage, high living costs, and an aging population. As a result, Vermont can lead in developing solutions—or serve as a cautionary example of what not to do.

7. Old Business / New Business

Legislative Preview

Alex Farrell discussed the Administration’s omnibus housing bill, highlighting key proposals for the current legislative session. The bill includes substantial infrastructure funding, reforms to the appeals process, and updates to Act 181. He also introduced the *Off-Site Construction to Meet Vermont’s Housing, Workforce, and Climate Goals* study.

Chris Cochran provided updates on DHCD’s legislative reports on land banks and affordable housing. He announced that DHCD and UVM’s Center for Rural Studies received a \$250,000 grant from the Leahy Institute to support a consensus-building process aimed at developing recommendations to enhance technical assistance for rural towns.

Spring Bus Tour

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

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

8. Adjourn

Amy Bell motion to adjourn the meeting, Christian Meyer seconded. Alex Farrell adjourned the meeting at 2:29 p.m.

The next Community Investment Board meeting will be on April 28, 2025.

Respectfully submitted, Susie Powers