

**Approved Minutes  
Vermont Downtown Board  
1/23/2023**

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

**Members Present (12):**

- Josh Hanford (*Chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Amy Bell, alternate designated by the Secretary of Transportation, arrived at 1:13pm
- 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 (7):** Chris Cochran, Richard Amore, Gary Holloway, Jacob Hemmerick, Amy Tomasso, Alice Dodge, and Jenni Lavoie.

**Guests (17):** Brittany Butler, Town of Cabot; Michael Hogan, Town of Cabot; Jeff Mobus, Town of Springfield; Jessica Martin, Springfield on the Move; David Upson, Town of Hardwick; Shari Cornish, Town of Hardwick; Tracy Martin, Town of Hardwick; Gary Michaels, Town of Hardwick; Heather Carrington, consultant Town of Hardwick; Jennifer Murray, Town of Middlebury; Cathyann LaRose, Town of Colchester; Cathy Walker-O'Reilly, Town of Colchester; Paul Simon; Jen Miner, Town of Cabot; Alison Low, NVDA; Sue Westa, WRC; Fred Kenney, ACEDC, and Bethany Dunbar.

Josh Hanford brought the meeting to order at 1:02pm via MS Teams virtual conference call.

**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:**

- November 28, 2022, Draft Meeting Minutes
- Londonderry Village Center Designation Renewal
- South Londonderry Village Center Designation Renewal

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

### **3. Village Center Designations – 1**

#### **Town of Cabot – Cabot Village**

Originally designated in January 2014 and de-designated in July 2022 due to the town plan requirement on designation. Cabot was re-applying for village center designation and requesting the addition of five additional properties including the Cabot Creamery, one additional commercial property, two residential properties, and the recreation fields. The proposed boundary runs along Main Street, and includes the town offices, the Cabot school, United Church, Masonic Hall, post office, general store, hardware store, fire station, historical society, village common, senior center, Cabot Creamery, recreation fields, small businesses, multifamily and single-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. Staff recommended that the application be approved and the award designated.

Brittney Butler, Zoning Administrator, shared with board members several slides of daily life in Cabot, along with the many community events held throughout the year.

Board members commented that it would be wrong to have a list of village centers without including Cabot, and it was great they were coming back into the program.

Michael McDonough made a motion to approve village center designation for the Town of Cabot, and Chip Sawyer seconded. Ayes: Amy Bell, Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Charlie Baker, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

### **4. Downtown Designation – 2**

#### **Town of Springfield – Renewal Application**

Springfield received Downtown Designation in 2000, one of the first communities to receive the distinction, and last renewed in 2014. The town worked with staff on the application to ensure all program requirements are met and to offer any recommendations. The application was complete, with no boundary changes proposed, and met all the program's requirements; staff recommended that the renewal be approved.

Jeff Mobus, Town Administrator, provided board members a detailed overview of projects and improvements Springfield has undertaken in the past year including; two scoping studies, DTF grant for wayfinding signage, infrastructure improvement projects at either end of the gateway into town, Comtu Falls Park, and sidewalk improvements that extend to the senior center.

Bruce Cheeseman made a motion to approve renewal of Springfield's designated downtown, and Laura Trieschmann seconded. Ayes: Amy Bell, Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Charlie Baker, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

#### **Town of Hardwick – New Application**

Hardwick was originally designated as a Village Center in 2003 and attended the meeting to request consideration for Downtown Designation. The town worked with staff on the application to ensure the standards of the program were met and to create a boundary which meets the statutory definition. The town is expanding the current Designated Village Center boundary to include properties that are mostly within the Central Business District and/or

State Registered Historic District and 5-minute walking distance from the center of the village center. The boundary meets the statutory definition of a downtown and provides opportunities for future development and improvements to existing infrastructure and public spaces. Staff recommended that the application be accepted, and the designation approved. Approval will also conclude Hardwick's Village Center designation.

Heather Carrington, consultant hired by the town, provided board members a detailed explanation of the application preparation process, including how the proposed downtown boundary was developed to better align with the central business zoning district.

Board members commended the town on an application with exceptional detail and body. Staff added that Hardwick's approach to village center designation is a model for other Vermont communities.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve Hardwick as a designated downtown and Charlie Baker seconded. Ayes: Amy Bell, Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Charlie Baker, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

## **5. Neighborhood Development Area Designation – 1 Town of Middlebury – New Application**

The Town of Middlebury submitted an application for Neighborhood Development Area designation. This application proposes boundaries beyond the planning area, requiring that at least 80% and no fewer than 7 members of the Downtown Board reviewing the NDA agree that the boundary meets criteria (A)-(D) in the application. The board reviewed the proposed boundaries, including changes to the original application recommended made by staff in consultation with the Town and agreed to the Town. Staff found that the proposed Neighborhood Development Area meets the requirements for designation, and recommended approval of the designation.

After a review by staff on the application, board members asked about lower density areas there are initially considered by the Town (but excluded in the final application), the rationale behind the inclusion of a shopping area, and if there are pending housing projects proposed for this area. Staff explained why lower density areas were not included, the shopping center inclusion is due to a mixed-use development zoning area, and there is one existing housing development proposed on Seminary Road. Staff also clarified for board members that the initial boundary was amended to stop where public sidewalks end.

Charlie Baker made a motion to approve Middlebury's Neighborhood Development Area designation, acknowledging that the boundaries of the NDA will extend beyond the planning area and meet the established criteria for such an extension; Amy Bell seconded. Ayes: Amy Bell, Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Charlie Baker, Chip Sawyer, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

## **6. New Town Center – 1**

### **Town of Colchester – Renewal Continuation & Suspension of Benefits**

The Town of Colchester requested a continuation of its New Town Center designation with benefits suspended for six months, while it prepares its renewal application. The Town anticipates submitting its application within the next several months.

Cathyann Larose informed board members that while the Town is requesting a six-month extension, they plan to bring the renewal application to the board well before that timeframe is up. Board members clarified that if the Town submits a complete renewal application prior to the six month deadline, would benefits resume from that date. Staff advised that if the board approves the renewal, benefits would immediately be reinstated.

Charlie Baker made a motion to continue the Colchester New Town Center designation, with benefits suspended, until the town submits its application for renewal or until the July 2023 Downtown Board meeting, whichever is first; Laura Trieschmann seconded. Ayes: Amy Bell, Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Charlie Baker, Chip Sawyer, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

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

Josh Hanford provided board members with an overview of the three housing bills introduced in the legislature. Advised that the February meeting will be a review of the special round of Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit applications. Also mentioned was extending an invitation to the Downtown Coalition to come and speak to the board about the formation of the coalition and their future plans for downtowns.

Gary Holloway shared with board members the administrations request for base funding for the Downtown Organizations, the proposal appears to have wide support and staff are hopeful this will be passed.

Chris Cochran informed board members that Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, will be Downtown Day in the Card Room of the Statehouse and invited them to participate.

### **8. Adjourn**

Chip Sawyer made a motion to adjourn, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 3:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie & Alice Dodge