

**Approved Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
6/26/2023
MS Teams Virtual Meeting**

Members Present (8):

- Josh Hanford (*Chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Michele Boomhower (*Vice-chair*) 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.
- 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
- Sarah Hadd, designated by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns

Attending Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members (6): Chris Cochran, Richard Amore, Jacob Hemmerick, Amy Tomasso, Alice Dodge, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (6): Delsie Hoyt, Town of West Fairlee; Todd & Angela Ulman, Taftsville Country Store; Michael Gaughn; Steven Bauer and Eric Duffy, Town of Woodstock.

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:

- May 22, 2023, Draft Minutes
- Village Center Designation Renewals:
 - Town of Northfield – Northfield Village

Chip Sawyer made a motion to accept the consent agenda, and Sabina Haskell seconded. Ayes: Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Jamie Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

Richard Amore noted that the Town of Northfield is working towards downtown designation, and we will likely see their application within the next six months.

3. Village Center Designations – 2

Town of West Fairlee – West Fairlee Village Center

Previously designated from May 2005 to May 2018 but designation lapsed due to town plan expiration. The proposed boundary runs along Beanville Road and VT Route 113, and includes the elementary school, Bean Hall, community building, Erin’s General Store, fire department, Congregational Church, numerous 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.

In recent years, the town has installed an outdoor pizza oven, expanded their fire department, and improved their community building. Their General Store reopened under local ownership during the pandemic. Delsie Hoyt, Selectboard Chair, shared with the board that the town is spread out due to historical fires, that they have a new school building and civic offices but that they are currently weighing how to use Bean Hall, which will likely be the focus of village redevelopment. The village has many recreational opportunities, including a 1,300-acre town forest, which are drawing young families to move to the town.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve the Village Center designation for West Fairlee Village Center, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. Ayes: Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Jamie Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

Town of Woodstock – Taftsville Village Center

The proposed boundary runs along US Route 4, Happy Valley Road, and Covered Bridge Road and includes the Taftsville Covered Bridge, Post Office and Country Store, 2 Inns, the Mennonite Chapel, several 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.

The Town of Woodstock approved a new Town Plan in 2023 with a focus on village center designation. The Taftsville Covered Bridge was rehabbed after damage from Tropical Storm Irene, and there have been significant recent improvements to the Taftsville Country Store and post office, including adding an apartment above the store, accessibility and efficiency improvements, replacing all major building systems, improving parking, and adding a seated restaurant operation to the store. Further planned improvements include pursuing the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits to add additional housing units and support future improvements to the store. The Taft House Apartments have been rehabbed, with two separate dwelling units added, and renovations and improvements are currently underway at the Applebutter Inn.

Steven Bauer (Town of Woodstock) noted that Taftsville Village is truly a gateway into Woodstock from the east, and that credit is due to the many people who have maintained historic properties there over the years. Todd and Angela Ulman, who own the Taftsville Country Store, spoke to the positive community impact of the store and how the designation will add to the sense of community cohesion in the village.

Jaime Lee made a motion to approve the Village Center designation for Taftsville Village Center, and Chip Sawyer seconded. Ayes: Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Jamie Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

4. Old Business / New Business

- **S.100 Summary**

Josh Hanford gave the Board an update on S.100 (Act 47), the HOME Act, which was signed by the Governor on June 5th. The Act was subsequently amended during the June 20th veto session advancing the effective date of the municipal zoning provisions (section 2) to July 1. The Governor and legislative leaders made the change

to do everything possible to alleviate the housing crisis. Chip Sawyer noted that St. Albans has passed interim zoning to give guidelines to comply with the Act. Michael McDonough inquired as to specific supports that will be offered to designated downtowns. Chris Cochran said DHCD has a [Home Act webpage](#) with resources to support local implementation. DHCD is also working with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and the RPCs to develop a FAQ and supplemental guidance to support implementation. Finally, there is additional funding to help cities and towns with bylaw updates. Chris also noted the Act 250 changes made in the Act that enabled more housing in designated centers.

- **Designation Reform**

Amy Tomasso gave the Board an update on the Designation Reform process currently underway with consultants Smart Growth America and Community Workshop. This summer, they are working on evaluation and engagement, and will be moving on to establishing goals and visions in the early fall and then shaping recommendations as we move into late fall and winter, in advance of the next legislative session. There will be a statewide workshop September 12th at VTC in Randolph, which Amy asks the board to include on their calendars. The consulting team will be in touch to gather input and data from board members and the organizations they represent. They will be seeking to interview staff, and to learn how designations have been used and related programs implemented at each agency and organization, including collecting any available data. Amy asks to please let us know if there are specific ways you would like to participate in the engagement process.

- **July Meeting**

The July meeting will be an in-community meeting. We will have an optional walking/driving tour of Poultney in the morning of July 24th, then gather in Rutland, where we will have lunch, convene the board meeting from 1-2:30pm, and then take a tour of Rutland. We will be sending the agenda out soon.

- **Tax Credit Applications**

Applications for the tax credit program are due July 3, but this year we have more time to consider and process them. We will discuss and vote on the applications at the September meeting.

Michele Boomhower recognized the Natural Resources Board and DHCD for all the work done during the recent legislative session.

5. Adjourn

Michael McDonough moved to adjourn, Chip Sawyer seconded. Ayes: Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Jamie Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried, and meeting was adjourned at 1:48pm.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie & Alice Dodge