

Draft Minutes
Vermont Community Investment Board
10/28/2024
Calvin Coolidge Conference Room and MS Teams Virtual Meeting

Members Present (12):

- Alex Farrell (*Chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development, joined at 1:04pm
- Adam Grinold, representing the Regional Development Associations
- Amy Bell (*alternate*), designated by the Secretary of Transportation, joined at 1:05pm
- 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
- Christian Meyers, 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
- 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
- Gavin Boyles, (alternate) State Treasurer's Office
- Sarah Hadd, designated by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Kevin Chu, representing the Office of Racial Equity

Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members (5): Chris Cochran, Gary Holloway, Natalie Elvidge, Jacob Hemmerick and Susie Powers.

Guests (10): Richard Noel, Town of Highgate; Ed Bove, Rutland Redevelopment Authority; Andrew Strniste, City of Rutland; William Fraser, City of Montpelier; Mike Miller, City of Montpelier; Orca Media; David Delcore, Times Argus; Stephen Whitaker, Montpelier resident; Phil Dodd, The Bridge; Chris Gaboriault.

Start of Meeting:

Alex Farrell brought the meeting to order at 1:02 pm.

Additions or Deletions to the Board Agenda

Public comment was moved prior to the Growth Center item (informal, no vote taken)

1. Consent Agenda

- September 23, 2024, Draft Meeting Minutes
- October 15, 2024, Special Meeting Draft Minutes

Chip Sawyer motioned to approve the consent agenda items, and Kevin Chu seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

2. Downtown Designation – Boundary Amendment – 1

Town of Waterbury

The Town of Waterbury is requesting a boundary amendment to include the Stanley Wasson site within the state office complex. The site has not been subdivided yet, but the Town is working with the State on a purchase and sale agreement. The Town recently updated the zoning bylaws on July 1, 2024, including a modification to the design review district, to include the entirety of the State Office Complex, including the Stanley Wasson site. One of the goals is to work with a developer to build multi-unit housing on the site.

Board members inquired if there were any provisions for flood zones, and about the lot not being subdivided. Staff responded not in this case, and that the town had recently submitted a survey of the property. It was confirmed that in July 2023 the State Hospital did not flood.

Chip Sawyer motioned to approve Waterbury's boundary amendment, and Christian Meyer seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

3. Neighborhood Development Area Technical Assistance

Staff provided a brief update on one-time technical assistance funding being used to bridge DHCD staff capacity gaps, develop regional planning commission staff technical knowledge and capacity for designation support, and assist municipalities with application preparation and bylaw reviews.

4. Neighborhood Development Area – 2

New Application – Town of Highgate

The Town submitted a new NDA application to designate the village center corresponding with Highgate's new Town Center zoning district. The proposed NDA is entirely within the planning area and therefore does not require special findings or approval by a supermajority of the Board.

Highgate town volunteer provided information on a parcel that town was interested in acquiring with the potential to build a library, and stated that with this designation the town intends to begin plans for a wastewater system. Board members commended Highgate for their work, and they are succeeding in maintaining the core identity of the town, while also making valuable improvements.

Michael McDonough motioned to approve Highgate’s application and designate Neighborhood Development Area designation, and Laura Trieschmann seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

Boundary Amendment – City of Rutland

The City submitted an application to amend their designated Neighborhood Development area to add an area at the intersection of US Routes 4 & 7. The proposed addition is within the planning area.

Representatives from the City advised that the area is focused around one of the busiest junctions in Vermont, and that the City intends to apply for a TIF district. Board members inquired about the focus on acknowledging that the NDA extends beyond the planning area. Staff advised that in statute, a supermajority of the board must approve extensions outside of the planning area.

Christian Meyer motioned to approve Rutland’s boundary amendment, and Adam Grinold seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

5. Public Comment

Mr. Whittaker commended staff for their work and reaffirmed his interest and support of housing and affordable housing, provided it follows program rules and statute.

**6. Growth Center Designation
City of Montpelier**

The Board continued its consideration of the Montpelier Growth Center designation begun September 23, 2024, and previously continued October 15, 2024. Christian Meyer, board member, recused himself from the proceeding due to conflicts of interest.

In addition to the materials previously provided, staff prepared a detailed memo responsive to the Board’s October 15th request for additional information. The memo addressed the approval/review history, review process, application requirements, standards of review, the application’s context within the *Growth Center 5-year Review Process policy/ Act 181 designation/Act 250 exemptions*, and potential reconsideration questions.

The City also provided a revised map of the proposed growth center boundary in response to the Board’s motion on September 23, 2024 Board, which was included in the Board’s materials.

The staff memo recommended two actions listed below based on the testimony, evidence, discovery and due diligence.

Board members inquired about the *5-year Review Process* policy’s consistency with statute as it relates to amendments and Act 181. Staff explained its conclusion that the policy appears to directly conflict with the growth center statute and Act 181 ended 5-year reviews.

The applicant objected to major changes to a process /policy in place since 2012, emphasizing that it was open to approval with the municipal plan condition.

Members of the Board acknowledged the difficulty of the matter, the need for responsible and necessary due diligence that follows the statute, and their intent to support successful outcomes for the City, as allowed, in a time of major land use and designation program reform.

Repeal the 2012 5-year Review Process – A motion to repeal the Growth Center 5-year Review Process Policy adopted in 2012, and any amendments thereto.

Chip Sawyer motioned to repeal the Growth Center 5-year Review Process Policy adopted in 2012, and any amendments thereto, and Sarah Hadd seconded. Ayes: Adam Grinold, Amy Bell, Chip Sawyer, Jaime Lee, Kevin Chu, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Gavin Boyle, Sarah Hadd, and Alex Farrel. Ano: None. Recusal: Christian Meyer. The motion carried.

Remove/Revoke the 9/23/24 boundary amendment approval – A motion to remove the approved Growth Center boundary expansion approval issued September 23, 2024.

Amy Bell motioned to remove the approved Growth Center boundary expansion approval issued September 23, 2024, and Chip Sawyer seconded. Ayes: Adam Grinold, Amy Bell, Chip Sawyer, Jaime Lee, Kevin Chu, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Gavin Boyle, Sarah Hadd, and Alex Farrel. Ano: None. Recusal: Christian Meyer. The motion carried.

7. Old Business / New Business

None

8. Adjourn

Alex Farrell adjourned the meeting at 2:14 p.m.

The next Community Investment Board meeting will be on January 27, 2025.