

Town of Topsham – West Topsham Village

New Application

Complete application. All requirements met.

- Cover letter and application received on 08/29/2024
- Authorization from selectboard on 10/23/2023
- Town planning process confirmed on 09/27/2023 by TRORC
- TRORC notified and GMEDC notified on 07/01/2024
- Color photographs included
- Town does not have zoning or historic district
- Village is not served by a public water or wastewater system
- Boundary map included and it was developed in coordination with DHCD staff

Staff Recommendation

Approve application and award designation

Town of Topsham – West Topsham Village

Revitalization Efforts

- Updated the town plan with a focus on village revitalization in 2023
- The West Topsham Food Shelf recently added an ADA-compliant entryway on the ground level
- The Rest Haven Bed and Breakfast recently upgraded the heating system

Town of Topsham – West Topsham Village

Photographs



A: Eastern Approach to Village (VT Route 25)



C: Gramp's Country Store



B: A Gathering Place



D: Countryside Baptist Church of West Topsham

Town of Topsham – West Topsham Village

Photographs



E: Old West Topsham Cemetery. West Topsham Community Hall. The Old West Topsham Cemetery is located behind the Community Hall.



G: Tri-Village Fire Department



F: West Topsham Community Hall. The Old West Topsham Cemetery is located behind the Community Hall.



H: Rest Haven Bed and Breakfast

Town of Topsham – West Topsham Village

Photographs



I: Riverside Grange 455



K: New West Topsham Cemetery



J: West Topsham Post Office



L: Western Approach to Village (Batten RD)

Town of Topsham – West Topsham Village

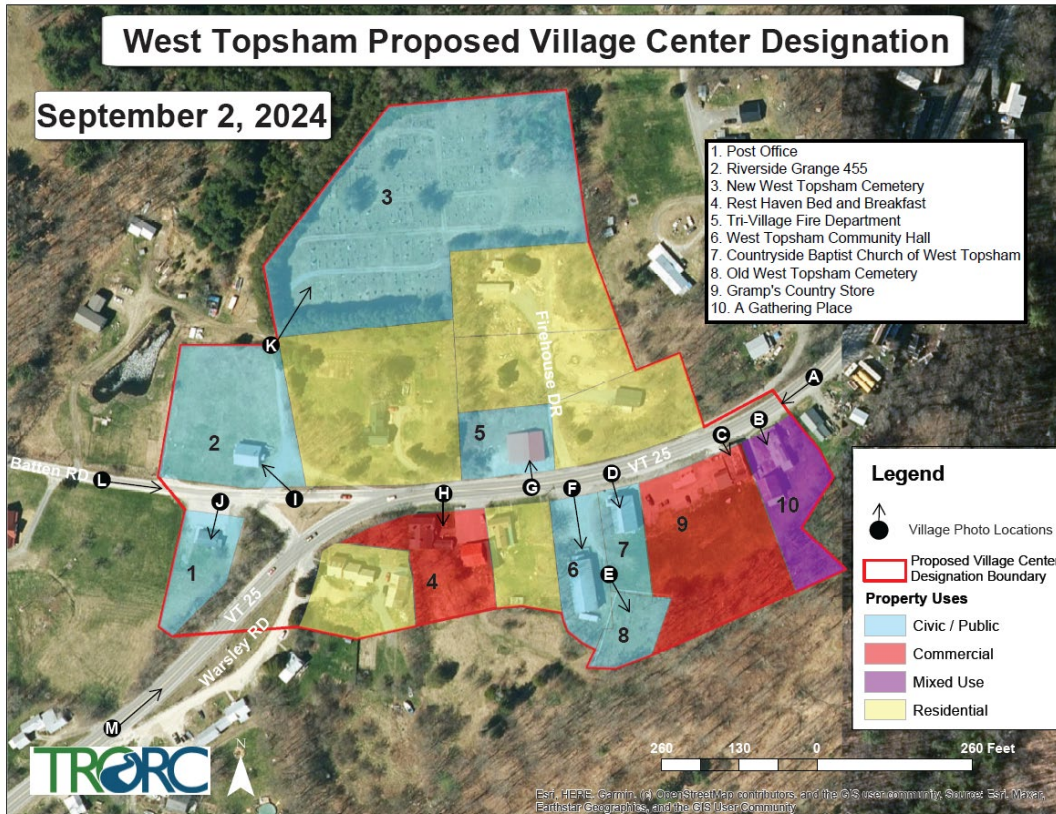
Photographs



M: Southwestern Approach to Village (VT Route 25)

Town of Topsham – West Topsham Village

Proposed New Boundary Map

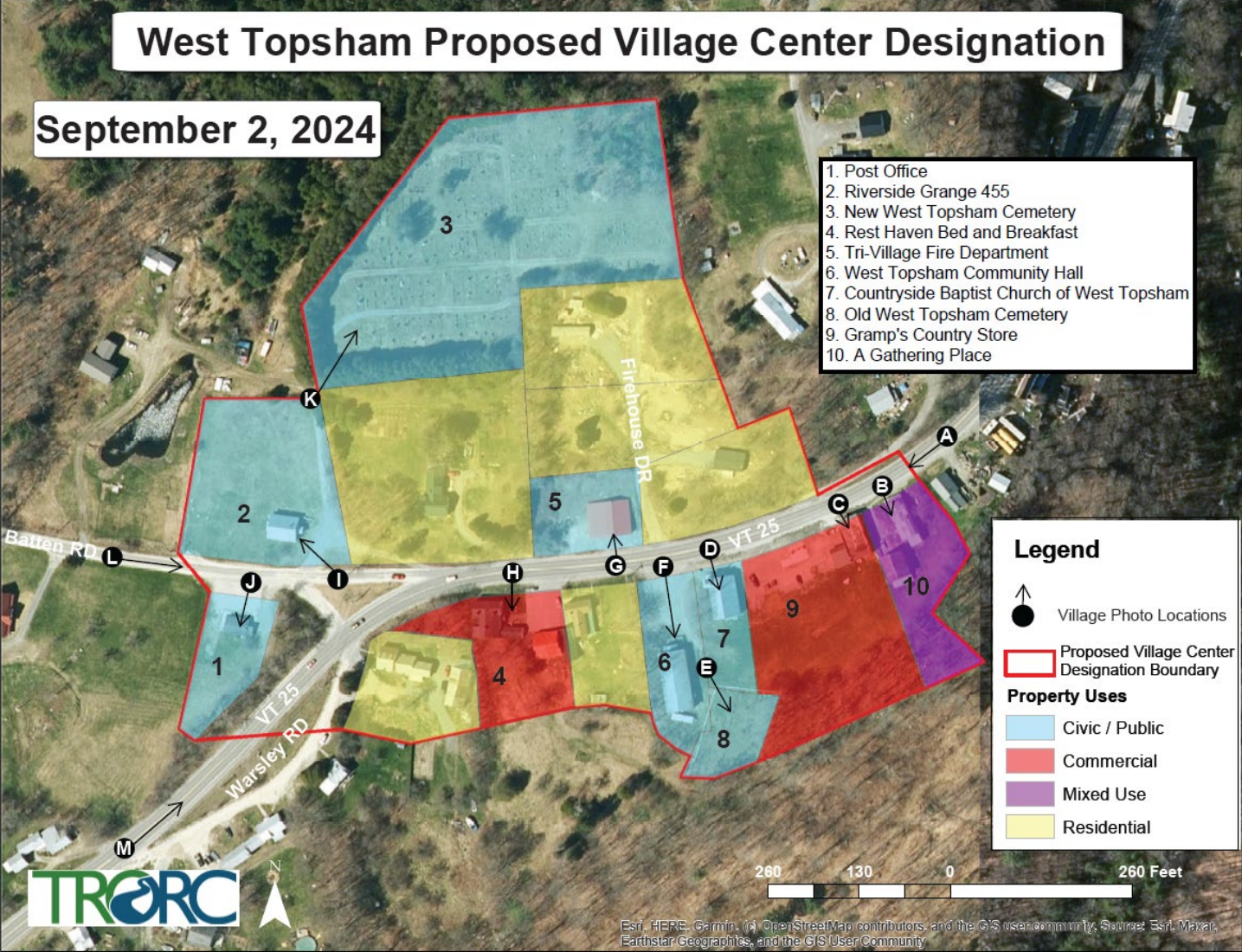


The proposed boundary runs along VT Route 25 and includes the post office, Riverside Grange, fire department, community hall, Countryside Baptist Church, Gramp's Country Store, and local businesses, and single and multi-family residences.

The town worked with staff to define the new boundary that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Town of Topsham – West Topsham Village

Proposed New Boundary Map



Town of Topsham – West Topsham Village

Discussion/Questions and Motion



Staff Recommendation
Approve application and award designation

September 2nd, 2024

Richard Amore
Vermont Village Center Designation Program
Division for Community Planning and Revitalization
Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
One National Life Drive, 6th Floor
Montpelier, VT 05620

Dear Richard,

On behalf of the Town of Topsham, please find the following application materials for the Village Designation for West Topsham. This package includes the following required elements:

- Photos of important locations in West Topsham, keyed on boundary map
- Minutes from the Selectboard meeting on October 23, 2023, showing approval to apply
- Notification to TRORC and GMEDC of intent to apply for designation
- Letter from TRORC confirming planning process and approved plan
- Village Center Designation Proposed Boundary Map

Settled in 1795, West Topsham sits atop a hill with a scenic view of the Waits River Valley. Vermont Route 25 transits this valley along the Waits River and connects West Topsham to the Village of Waits River some 4 miles east. The Village of West Topsham contains a small number of commercial and civic establishments that front onto Route 25 and are walking distance from each other. These establishments include:

- The West Topsham Community Hall - Built by an entire corps of volunteers beginning in 1953, has served the town as a dance hall, reception facility for weddings and memorial services, and countless other gatherings.
- The Countryside Baptist Church of West Topsham – Built in 1901, this church anchors the center of West Topsham. Sandwiched between the country store and the Community Hall, the church provides a convenient site for wedding ceremonies.
- Gramp’s Country Store – This is a two-story enterprise has an apartment overhead and a deli within the convenience store on the ground level.
- Rest Haven Bed and Breakfast – Recently reopened, this is steps away from the country store and provides much needed lodging for folks traveling through central Vermont.
- The West Topsham Grange (formerly the West Topsham Village Schoolhouse) – Located just off Route 25 on Batten Road and across the street from the Post Office, this building remains very active, hosting frequent community building gatherings. The West Topsham Food Shelf is located in the basement of the West Topsham Grange.
- The West Topsham Post Office and The West Topsham Volunteer Fire Department are also located on Batten Road in the center of the village proper.

West Topsham does not have a municipally-owned water or wastewater system. The Village's needs are served by private water wells and septic systems. The Town also does not have zoning bylaws.

The Town recognizes the need for economic development and the need to support the existing and potential businesses within the village area. The Town is applying for Village Designation status to support the continued revitalization efforts with the financial incentives, training, and technical assistance necessary to attract new business and growth to the Town.

List of Recent and Current Revitalization Activities

- The West Topsham Food Shelf recently added an ADA-compliant entryway on the ground level.
- The Rest Haven Bed and Breakfast recently upgraded the heating system.

Boundary Justification

The historic, social, and economic center of West Topsham is at the intersection of VT Route 25 and Batten RD (see boundary map for more details). The Riverside Grange 455 and Post Office anchor the western end along Batten Rd, while A Gathering Place and Gramp's Country Store anchor the eastern end along VT Route 25. The New West Topsham Cemetery and Fire Department anchors the northern end along VT Route 25, while the Rest Haven Bed & Breakfast, West Topsham Community Hall, Baptist Church, and the Old West Topsham Cemetery anchor the southern end along VT Route 25.

Municipal Plan Integration

Topsham's current Town Plan integrates language that supports Village Center Designation. On page 33 of the Current and Future Land Uses chapter, the Plan states the following goal: "It is a goal of the town to maintain a viable village center through good planning and development." The Plan identifies Waits River, West Topsham, and East Topsham as proposed Village Center areas.

On pages 32-33 of the Current and Future Land Uses chapter, the Plan describes how Village Center Designation would advance the Town's goals and statewide planning goals: "The purpose of areas designated as Village Center is to provide locations in the community that are central to the various sub-regions of the community that will act as civic and commercial centers. Land uses in these areas should be more densely populated than the more rural parts of the community. In accordance with state planning goals, residential development should favor multi-family housing when possible. All new development within the Village Center areas should be consistent with existing development in terms of appearance and scale."

Important Locations in West Topsham

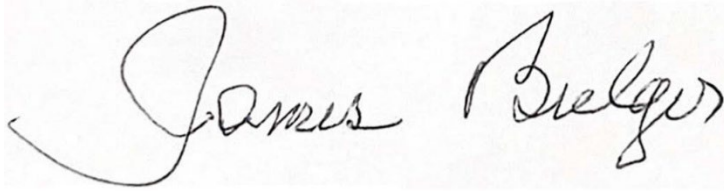
The following pages include a selection of photographs of some of West Topsham's key areas and buildings. Letters correspond to the notations on the Village Center Designation Proposed Boundary Map.

Primary Contact:

Jim Bulger, Topsham Selectboard Chair
PO Box 69
6 Harts RD East Topsham, VT 05076
802-439-5505
jbulger@tops-tele.com

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me or Bryan Kovalick (TRORC Planner – BKovalick@trorc.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Bulger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Jim Bulger
Topsham Selectboard Chair



A: Eastern Approach to Village (VT Route 25)



B: A Gathering Place



C: Gramp's Country Store



D: Countryside Baptist Church of West Topsham



E: Old West Topsham Cemetery. West Topsham Community Hall. The Old West Topsham Cemetery is located behind the Community Hall.



F: West Topsham Community Hall. The Old West Topsham Cemetery is located behind the Community Hall.



G: Tri-Village Fire Department



H: Rest Haven Bed and Breakfast



I: Riverside Grange 455



J: West Topsham Post Office



K: New West Topsham Cemetery



L: Western Approach to Village (Batten RD)



M: Southwestern Approach to Village (VT Route 25)

MINUTES
TOPSHAM SELECT BOARD MEETING
Monday, October 23, 2023

Present: Jim Bulger (Chair) Bradford Calhoun, Carl Hildebrandt, Thomas Otterman (Select Board), Cynthia Flannigan (Town Clerk/Treasurer), Richard Sampson (Road Foreman) and via Microsoft Teams Janice Emerson (Administrative Assistant)

Absent: Jake Thompson

Visitors: Les Frost, Jim and Nancy Clark, Fred Smith, and via Microsoft Teams Amber Downing

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm.

Motion made by Tom Otterman and seconded by Carl Hildebrandt to approve minutes from meeting of October 9, 2023 with the following change under General – TRORC – Town Plan Approval: “Jim Clark reported that the Planning Commission has started looking into the village designation for the three villages.” Passed unanimously.

VISITORS

Friends of Topsham will be having a holiday flea market November 18 at the Grange Hall.

HIGHWAY

Road Report – Richie Sampson updated the Board on roadwork and equipment.

Garage Site – Fred Smith reported he has hit ledge, which may affect costs. Will be discussed later in Executive Session.

VTrans – Bridge on Route 25 in West Topsham. Update on project, no changes from when it was initially presented.

VTrans – Municipal Grant Applications for 2024. Deadline December 8 by email. Grants are to be used for storm water mitigation.

Sale of Property – Motion made by Brad Calhoun and seconded by Carl Hildebrandt to use Laurie Kirkpatrick for the sale of the Ben Dexter Road Property. Passed by a vote of 3. Jim Bulger, Brad Calhoun and Carl Hildebrandt voted yes, Tom Otterman voted no.

GENERAL

Animal Control Ordinance – Needs Signatures. The Board signed.

Employee Policy – Will be discussed at next meeting.

MERP- Details of inspection – Needs signature. Motion by Tom Otterman and seconded by Carl Hildebrandt for the chair to sign. Passed unanimously.

Community Hall – Phase One environmental assessment is being completed.

CORRESPONDENCE

Outdoor Recreational Planning – Will keep on file.

Flood Recovery on Private Forest Land – The Board reviewed.

Roger Vance – Gates at Transfer Station – Carl Hildebrandt will handle.

GMP – Zero Outage Initiative – The Board reviewed.

Beech Tree Leaf Disease found in VT – Will be on file.

EC Fiber Annual Report and Proposed District Budget – will be posted.

VLCT – Adding underinsured and uninsured to policy. Motion by Tom Otterman and seconded by Carl Hildebrandt for the chair to sign electronically. Passed unanimously.

Clean Water Budget – VT seeks input – The board reviewed.

Request for Funds

CTERT – Will be included in 2024 Budget

Tri-Village Fire – Will be included in 2024 Budget

TRORC 2024 Dues – Will be included in 2024 Budget

VNA & Hospice of VT and NH – Will be included in the warning for Town Meeting

Orange County Restorative Justice Center – Will be included in the warning for Town Meeting

Little Rivers Health Care – Will be included in the warning for Town Meeting

Tax Sale – Will be held January 24.

FINANCIAL

The Board reviewed and signed Order #2320 in the amount of \$1,313,822.08 for accounts payable and \$8,327.13 for payroll.

OTHER

Budget Committee – Select Board, Donna Otterman, Yvette Tomlinson, Sue Pratt, Janice Emerson.

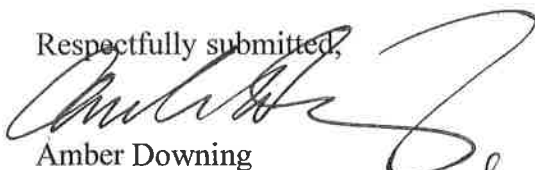
The first meeting will be immediately before the select board meeting on November 13.

Planning Commission – Motion by Tom Otterman and seconded by Carl Hildebrandt for the planning commission to work on the village designation for West Topsham, Waits River, and East Topsham. Passed unanimously.

Motion by Tom Otterman and seconded by Carl Hildebrandt to go to executive session for contractual discussions and to discuss personnel. Passed unanimously. Fred Smith and Cindy Flannigan were invited to attend. Meeting adjourned to executive session from 7:59pm to 8:24pm. No action taken.

Meeting adjourned at 8:26pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Amber Downing

A True Copy, Attest,



Assistant Town Clerk.

from the office of

Selectmen
Town Clerk
Treasurer
Tax Collector

Tel. 439-5505

Town of Topsham

V E R M O N T

July 1, 2024

*Mailed on
6/25*

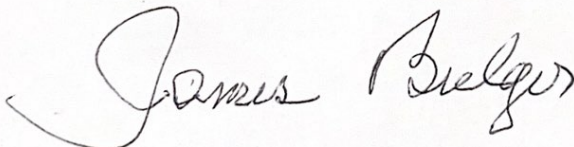
Peter Gregory, Executive Director
Two Rivers - Ottauquechee Regional Commission
128 King Farm Rd.
Woodstock, VT 05091

Dear Peter,

This is to advise you that the Topsham Selectboard is preparing to submit an application to ACCD – Department of Housing and Community Development for 3 Village Center Designations: East Topsham, West Topsham, and Waits Rivers. Pursuant to application guidelines, written notification to the Regional Planning Commission of Topsham's intention is required.

The objective in seeking this designation is to bring financial incentives, training and technical assistance to Topsham's villages in order to promote revitalization. This application is supported in our most recent town plan.

Sincerely,



Jim Bulger

Topsham Selectboard

from the office of

Selectmen
Town Clerk
Treasurer
Tax Collector

Tel. 439-5505

Town of Topsham

V E R M O N T

July 1, 2024

*Mailed
on 6/25*

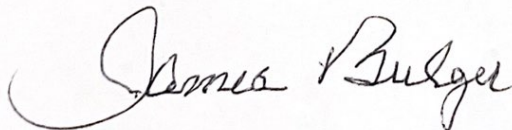
Erika Hoffman-Kiess
GMEDC
35 Railroad Row, Ste. 101
White River Junction, VT 05001

Dear Erika,

This is to advise you that the Topsham Selectboard is preparing to submit an application to ACCD – Department of Housing and Community Development for 3 Village Center Designations: East Topsham, West Topsham, and Waits Rivers. Pursuant to application guidelines, written notification to the Regional Development Commission of Topsham's intention is required.

The objective in seeking this designation is to bring financial incentives, training and technical assistance to Topsham's villages in order to promote revitalization. This application is supported in our most recent town plan.

Sincerely,



Jim Bulger
Topsham Selectboard

August 5th, 2024

Richard Amore
Vermont Designated Village Center Program
Division for Community Planning and Revitalization
Department of Housing and Community Development
One National Life Drive, 6th Floor
Montpelier, VT 05620

RE: Topsham's Confirmed Planning Process

Dear Richard:

On behalf of the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC), I would like to acknowledge that the Town of Topsham has an officially confirmed planning process as stipulated under 24 V.S.A § 4350. Their Town Plan was approved by the TRORC Board of Directors on September 27, 2023. If you require further information about their last review, please contact me at 802-457-3188 x3011.

Sincerely,



Bryan Kovalick
Planner

West Topsham Proposed Village Center Designation

September 2, 2024

1. Post Office
2. Riverside Grange 455
3. New West Topsham Cemetery
4. Rest Haven Bed and Breakfast
5. Tri-Village Fire Department
6. West Topsham Community Hall
7. Countryside Baptist Church of West Topsham
8. Old West Topsham Cemetery
9. Gramp's Country Store
10. A Gathering Place

Legend

↑
● Village Photo Locations

▭ Proposed Village Center Designation Boundary

Property Uses

- ▭ Civic / Public
- ▭ Commercial
- ▭ Mixed Use
- ▭ Residential

260 130 0 260 Feet

