

Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 9/28/2020

Meeting held via conference call in compliance with the Executive Order 01-20

Members Present (12):

- Josh Hanford (*Chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Michele Boomhower, 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
- Patricia M. Sears, 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
- Greg Boulbol, designated by the Chair of the Natural Resources Board
- Ed Bove, alternate designated by the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
- Tom Torti, appointed by the Governor, representing the Vermont Association of Chamber Executives

Attending Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members (5): Chris Cochran, Richard Amore, Jacob Hemmerick, Gary Holloway, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (7): Carrie Johnson, Town of St. Albans; Dave Culver, Town of Grafton; Allyn Kahle, Town of Ira; Bob Toppins, Town of Ira; Robert Landlaid, Town of Troy; Emily Kofft, Northwest Regional Planning Commission; Irene Nagle, Northeastern Vermont Development Association.

Josh Hanford brought the meeting to order at 1:02 pm via GoTo Meeting 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:

There were no questions on the following agenda items:

- July 27, 2020 Meeting Minutes
- Stowe, Downtown Designation, 4-Year Review
- Winooski, Downtown Designation, 4-Year Review
- Grafton, Village Center Designation Application

- Ira, Village Center Designation Application
- Orange, Village Center Designation Application
- St. Albans Town, Village Center Designation Application
- Troy, Village Center Designation Application
- North Troy, Village Center Designation Application

Board members inquired if future Downtown Designation 4-Year Review conversations can include information pertaining to any development within the downtown in the four-year period that is under review. Gary Holloway advised he would include development questions going forward.

3. Growth Center Designation Request – Jacob Hemmerick

The Town of Hartford was originally scheduled for review in March of 2020. At the January meeting, the Downtown Board extended the deadline to September 2020 at the request of the Town to address a convergence of critical work items and the prospect of a sewer line extension to Norwich, which could affect Growth Center findings and boundaries. Due to the challenges of COVID, the Town of Hartford requests an additional 90-day extension for submittals, from the date the emergency order expires. Approval of this request -- under the current order -- would postpone review until April 2021, with submissions in January 2021.

Trish Sears made a motion to postpone the Growth Center 5-year review submission deadline to January (for April 2021 review) or no more than 90 days from the expiration of a future emergency declaration extension, Chip Sawyer seconded. Ayes; Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Ed Bove, Greg Boulbol, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Trish Sears, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

4. Old Business / New Business

Chris Cochran and Josh Hanford provided board members with an overview of legislation that passed during the shortened summer session:

- Tax Credits – The budget bill included a \$400,000 increase to the downtown and village center tax credit cap taking it to \$3M annually. Efforts to expand the program eligibility to the neighborhood development areas failed. The increase will enable a winter round of tax credits.
- S237 – The legislature passed modest but important changes to streamline local permitting for housing. Specifically, the bill exempts character based appeals for small housing projects, enables the use of existing smaller lots that can connect to water and sewer infrastructure, makes it easier to build an accessory dwelling unit on a single-family home lot, allows municipalities to regulate short-term rentals, limits new covenants and deed restrictions that local regulations allow, and directs DEC to assist in the implementation of Brattleboro's Tri-Park master plan. The bill awaits the Governor's signature.
- Act 250 – The legislature sent the Governor a slimmed down bill with modest changes for forests integrity and trail permitting for his signature. We expect the legislature will take the exemptions for designated centers and reintroduce other unfinished businesses from this biennium in January.

Board members asked if at an upcoming meeting if the applications for the New Town Center, Growth Center, and Neighborhood Development Areas could be reviewed and updated as needed. DHCD staff will schedule these reviews for an upcoming meeting.

5. Adjourn

Trish Sears made a motion to adjourn and Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 1:29p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie