

## Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 11/23/2020

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

### Members Present (11):

- 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
- Robert Sponable, alternate, 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, arrived at 1:15pm.
- Chip Sawyer, designated by the Vermont Planners Association
- Greg Boulbol, designated by the Chair of the Natural Resources Board. left at 1:27pm
- 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 (6):** Chris Cochran, Richard Amore, Jacob Hemmerick, Gary Holloway, Caitlin Corkins, and Jenni Lavoie.

**Guests (6):** Rod Francis, Town of Norwich; Randy Williams, Town of Glover; Elizabeth Nelson, Town of Glover; Nick Kramer, Jenna Koloski, and Paul Costello, Vermont Council on Rural Development.

Josh Hanford brought the meeting to order at 1:04 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:

- September 28, 2020 Meeting Minutes
- Barre, Downtown Designation, 4-Year Review
- Bellows Falls, Downtown Designation, 4-Year Review
- Glover, Village Center Designation Application

- West Glover, Village Center Designation Application
- Norwich, Village Center Designation Application

### 3. VT Proposition Project – 1 – Vermont Council on Rural Development

Paul Costello, Jenna Koloski, and Nick Kramer, with the Vermont Council on Rural Development joined the meeting to share and gather feedback from the Downtown Board regarding The Proposition for the Future of Vermont. The proposition is a set of goals aimed at driving shared action to create a more resilient future. Board members appreciated seeing the wide-ranging needs and opportunities in one place. They suggested that the state's housing needs should be made more prominent as well as a balancing of the working lands goals with the need to invest in infrastructure, housing, and development in compact centers. A greater emphasis on the state's long-standing demographic challenges and beyond the need to welcome new Vermonters was also suggested.

### 4. Old Business / New Business

- **Better Places Pilot Program** – In coordination with its funding partners, DHCD will announce the Better Places Pilot program in December. Thanks to the generous support from the Vermont Community Foundation, the Vermont Arts Council, the Preservation Trust of Vermont, and the National Life Group Foundation, the program will offer as much as \$90,000 in grants for locally driven placemaking projects.
- **Better Connections Program** – The Better Connections is an interagency funding program designed to strengthen the vitality of community centers. The program was paused last fiscal year to conduct an external review. The program will be relaunched in 2021 with small tweaks as recommended by the review. The program will award 3 grants next year.
- **Joint Fiscal Office Report on Downtown Tax Credits** – The Joint Fiscal Office shared a copy of its draft report on the Downtown Tax Credit program with DHCD. The report makes favorable findings about the program's outcomes and the hard work of the Downtown Board and staff.
- **January Tax Credit Round** – The legislature increased the program's funding for this fiscal year, and combined with recapture, the program will have \$700,000 to award in January.
- **Downtown Transportation Fund, Clean Water Funding** – The program assists designated downtowns on a variety of transportation related improvements. DHCD received \$100,000 increase to the Downtown Transportation Fund this year. This will allow DHCD to offer approximately \$490,000 in awards, with an additional \$67,000 in Clean Water capital funds for projects.
- **Berlin New Town Center Draft Application** – Berlin submitted its draft New Town Center application. The draft application is under a coordinated review with ANR, VTrans, NRB, and DHCD. DHCD expects the complete application to be submitted for the board to review in the first quarter of 2021.
- **December Meeting Canceled** – There will be no December meeting. The next meeting is January 25, 2021. Tax Credit applications will be main agenda item.
- **Board Member Updates** – Long-serving board member Tom Torti of the Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce announced he intends to step down from the board when his term expires in February 2021. He will be replaced by Cathy Davis, who took the reins at the Chamber this summer.

### 5. Adjourn

Chip Sawyer made a motion to adjourn and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 2:23p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie