

## Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 04/26/2021

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

### Members Present (10):

- 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
- Jaime Lee, 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
- Tasha Wallis, designated by the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
- Cathy Davis, appointed by the Governor, representing the Vermont Association of Chamber Executives

**Attending Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members (4):** Chris Cochran, Richard Amore, Gary Holloway, and Jenni Lavoie.

**Guests (3):** Lilian Shen, Nick Clark, and Orin Pacht.

Josh Hanford brought the meeting to order at 1:03 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:

Board members removed the March 22, 2021 draft minutes, and April 12, 2021 special meeting minutes off the consent agenda for further discussion.

There were no questions on the following consent agenda items:

- Village Center Designations, Town of Thetford
  - East Thetford
  - North Thetford
  - Post Mills
  - Thetford Center
  - Thetford Hill

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve the consent agenda, and Chip Sawyer seconded. Ayes: Cathy Davis, Chip Sawyer, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Tasha Wallis, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

### **3. March 22, 2021 Draft Minutes**

Board members requested that under, #4 New Town Center Application – Town of Berlin, “Several Board members expressed concern about the volume of information and requested a pause for further coordination” be amended to read “Several Board members expressed concern about the volume of information received that day, and requested a pause for further consideration”.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve the March 22, 2021 draft minutes as edited, and Chip Sawyer seconded. Ayes: Cathy Davis, Chip Sawyer, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Tasha Wallis, and Josh Hanford. Michael Desrochers and Michele Boomhower abstained. The motion carried.

### **4. April 12, 2021 Special Meeting Draft Minutes**

A board member asked for review of the member who seconded a motion at the special meeting, staff will review the meeting recording to determine. Additional concerns were shared regarding broad statements in the minutes, which give the appearance of having board consensus versus specifying board comments by name. One typo was noted to be fixed as well.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to table the approval of the April 12, 2021 special meeting draft minutes, until the next scheduled board meeting, and Jaime Lee seconded. Ayes: Cathy Davis, Chip Sawyer, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Tasha Wallis, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

### **5. Downtown Transportation Fund Grants**

Board members reviewed and individually scored all Downtown Transportation Fund grant applications prior to the meeting. Gary Holloway presented the tallied and ranked scores of the 9 eligible applications requesting a total of \$691,952 for an available \$498,500 in funding. Based on tallied and averaged board scores full funding could be made available to applications from Montpelier, St. Albans City, Middlebury, Poultney, Springfield, and Newport. The remaining \$81,548 could be offered to the next highest scoring application from Brattleboro.

Board members also reviewed and individually scored the Downtown Transportation Fund Clean Water Fund grant application prior to the meeting. Gary Holloway presented the tallied and ranked scores of the two eligible applications requesting a total of \$94,200 for an available \$67,000 in funding. Based on the board score full funding will be made available to the application from Montpelier.

Cathy Davis made a motion to accept the ranking and to fully fund the Downtown Transportation Fund grants for Montpelier, St. Albans City, Middlebury, Poultney, Springfield, and Newport, to offer remaining funds to Brattleboro, and accept the ranking and offer the Clean Water Funds to Montpelier. Tasha Wallis seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Cathy Davis, Chip Sawyer, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Tasha Wallis, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

### **6. Old Business / New Business**

#### **Legislative Updates**

Chris Cochran provided the board with updates on bills that have passed either the House or the Senate.

**S.101** – Includes a proposed increase of \$1.75M to the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit program, which aims to expand tax credit eligibility to properties within Neighborhood Development Areas. It also proposes for municipalities, \$500,000 in grants to update zoning bylaw and qualify for Neighborhood Development Area designation. Finally, the bill includes \$100,000 appropriation to DHCD to train small scale builders on how to use the state and federal funds for housing improvement and to support them through the permitting process.

**H159** – Would stand up the Better Places crowdgranting program with a proposed \$5M in grant funding. This would provide “placemaking” grants which aim to revitalize and improve public spaces as a means to speed local economic recovery and community development efforts.

**Transportation Bill** – Currently includes \$5M in one-time funding to the Downtown Transportation Fund program and would expand eligibility to villages who have undergone additional planning processes through the Better Connections grant program. This one-time funding could be expended over the next couple years as an added economic stimulus for communities to invest in transportation related infrastructure.

### **May Meeting Canceled**

Due to an anticipated light agenda, the May board meeting will be canceled.

### **7. Adjourn**

Tasha Wallis made a motion to adjourn and Greg Boulbol seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 1:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie