

**Draft Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
06/28/2021**

**Calvin Coolidge Conference Room, 6th Floor, National Life Bldg., Montpelier
& Via GoTo Virtual Meeting**

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
- 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 (arrived at 1:21pm)
- 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 (5): Dean Bloch, Charlotte Town Administrator; Michael Russell, Charlotte Planning Commission Chair; Eric Durocher, Dover Economic Development Director; Shannon Barsotti, Bennington Community Development Director; Jenni Lavoie, Danville Planning Commission Chair.

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

- April 12, 2021 Special Meeting Minutes
- April 26, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- East Charlotte Village Center Designation

- North Danville Village Center Designation
- East Dover Village Center Designation
- West Dover Village Center Designation
- Brandon Downtown Designation 4-Year Check-in
- Vergennes Downtown Designation 4-Year Check-in
- Waterbury Downtown Designation 4-Year Check-in
- White River Junction Downtown Designation 4-Year Check-in

Board members requested to remove the West Charlotte village center designation application item off the consent agenda for additional review and discussion.

While a formal vote is not required to move an item from the consent agenda to the regular agenda, Michael McDonough made a motion to remove West Charlotte village center designation application off the consent agenda, and Tasha Wallis seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Dave Allaire, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Tasha Wallis, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

Village Center Designation – West Charlotte

The proposed boundary runs along Ferry Road and Route 7 and includes the post office, town offices, fire/rescue, library, senior center, children’s center, Old Brick Store, local businesses, and single-family and multi-family residences.

Board members inquired about the proposed village center boundary. Specifically, a commercial property on the easterly edge of the boundary, along Route 7. Staff advised that the boundary meets statutory definition as the village center designation boundaries must be anchored by either a civic or commercial property.

Charlotte Town Administrator Dean Bloch, and Michael Russell, Planning Commission Chair, informed board members of future redevelopment plans for the site, past history of the site, including the potential of a new public transit stop being added at this location.

Bruce Cheeseman made a motion to approve West Charlotte’s village center designation, and Dave Allaire seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michele Boomhower, Tasha Wallis, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

Consent Agenda Vote

Dave Allaire made a motion to approve the remaining consent agenda items, and Tasha Wallis seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michele Boomhower, Tasha Wallis, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

4. Downtown Designation Boundary Amendment – Bennington

The Town is requesting a boundary amendment to include additional properties located adjacent to the current Downtown Designated Boundary. The current boundary extends on Route 9 east on Main Street just past Valentine Street. The boundary amendment would include the old Bennington High School property which has been abandoned for 15 years. The building was recently purchased by a developer and is partnering with the Town and Berkshire Family YMCA to renovate the auditorium and gymnasium for community recreation programs. In the future, they plan to further redevelop the property by converting old classrooms to housing units.

Shannon Barsotti, Bennington Community Development Director, shared that the Town had been looking for reuse options for the building for several years. The proposed housing will

include mostly studio, and one-bedroom apartments, but will also have a couple two-bedroom apartments. Additionally, the owner has already received all permits needed for the project to commence.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve Bennington's downtown designation boundary amendment, and Jaime Lee seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michele Boomhower, Tasha Wallis, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

5. Old Business / New Business

Chris Cochran informed board members of the historic increase of funding the Department of Housing and Community Development received this past legislative session including; the \$5M increase in one-time funding for the Downtown Transportation Fund program, this funding expands eligibility to those communities that have gone through the Better Connections planning process, and to communities in Chittenden County that have gone through a similar planning process. Staff will work on how to reimagine the program and will engage with the board in the next few months.

Chris noted that in person board meetings will resume in September. While pandemic-driven consent agenda was efficient, everyone misses the local community engagement enabled by in person presentations. The team will develop recommendations to make future in person meetings more efficient and productive. Remote meeting participation will continue to be an option for board members and the public, as it was before the pandemic.

The July meeting will focus on awarding the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits. Caitlin Corkins will offer application training to any board members with interest.

6. Adjourn

Billy Coster made a motion to adjourn and Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie