

**Draft Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
09/27/2021**

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

Members Present (11):

- Josh Hanford (*Chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Michele Boomhower, designated by the Secretary of Transportation, arrived at 1:09pm
- Billy Coster, designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources, arrived at 1:05pm
- 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, arrived at 1:45pm
- 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, arrived at 1:09pm

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

Guests (7): Deb Brighton, Town of Salisbury; Elaine Haney, Village of Essex Junction; Fred Kenney, Addison County Economic Development Corporation; Gail Fallar, Town of Tinmouth; Katie Raycroft-Meyer, Addison County Regional Planning Commission; George Tyler, Village of Essex Junction; Robert Lloyd, Town of Tinmouth.

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

- July 26, 2021 Draft Meeting Minutes
- East Montpelier Village Center Designation Renewal
- Fairfax Village Center Designation Renewal

Ayes: Billy Coster, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, and Josh Hanford.

3. Village Center Designation – 2 – Richard Amore

Salisbury Village – New Application

The proposed boundary runs along Maple Street, School House Road, and Smead Road, and includes the town offices (former village school), congregational church, library (old town hall), historic blacksmith shop, post office, commercial block building (currently vacant), and single-family residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Katie Raycroft-Meyer spoke to her work with the town on amendments to their Municipal Plan to promote housing in the village, and to other areas in the town to encourage growth.

Fred Kenney, indicated his support of the town's village center application, as both a resident and as Executive Director of the Addison County Economic Development Corporation.

Deb Brighton, informed board members of the exciting time in the town as they renovate their Town Hall, and work to develop a trail system connecting the village to Lake Dunmore, and to the old mill area. She also indicated that the town had been looking into installing sidewalks, but this proved to be cost prohibitive, so they are moving forward with a walking trail which is more economically feasible.

Billy Coster made a motion to approve village center designation for Salisbury village and Michele Boomhower seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michele Boomhower, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

Tinmouth Village – New Application

The proposed boundary runs along Mountain View Road and Route 140 and includes the two firehouses, town offices and library, old creamery, community church, community center, elementary school, town garage, pizza/bake oven, playground and sports field, local businesses, and single-family residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Robert Lloyd, commended the residents of Tinmouth and wanted to emphasize to the board the extraordinary amount of morale and volunteerism within the community. The town has residents who volunteer as needed, as well as residents who have made donations, including a recent donation of funds for a town community center. He added that with the help of volunteers, the town was able to build an overnight cabin on the Tinmouth Mountain trail. The town is also served by a publication, The Tales of Tinmouth, which has been in existence for thirty-five years. If awarded village center designation, the town intends to use designation in future grant applications.

Gail Fallar added, she appreciates the board's consideration of their application.

Board members commended the Town of Tinmouth and said they set a great example to other communities within the state.

Jaime Lee made a motion to approve village center designation for Tinmouth village and Laura Trieschmann seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Cathy Davis, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michele Boomhower, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

Village of Essex Junction – Proposed Charter Change and Request to Transfer Designations

The Village of Essex Junction requests to transfer its village center designation and neighborhood development area designation to a newly incorporated City of Essex Junction by means of a new municipal charter. Charters become effective upon approval by the governing body, voters, legislature, and Governor. Voters will consider approval of a new city charter in November and as part of the transition plan, the State designated village center and neighborhood development area would transfer to the new municipality in the new municipal charter. Based on the existing and proposed boundaries and timelines, DHCD supports the transfer by charter so long as there is no underlying change in the charter to the general law established in Chapter 76A of the Title 24 (the designation chapter).

George Tyler, village trustee, advised board members that this proposed charter change needed to be voted on by the community, and that they need to present as much detail as possible, including carrying over of the existing designations to the proposed charter. He added that they are also planning to apply for Downtown designation in the future.

Board members inquired if a request such as this has ever come to the board before, and if the proposed area was within the village boundaries. Richard Amore advised this was the first, and that staff consulted with DHCD General Counsel to ensure proper process was followed. Richard also confirmed that this area was within the existing village boundaries.

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve the transfer of village center and neighborhood development area designations from the Village of Essex Junction to the City of Essex Junction, effective upon enactment of the municipal charter change, and Chip Sawyer seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Cathy Davis, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michele Boomhower, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

4. Downtown Transportation Fund

Gary Holloway reviewed with board members the current program requirements and funding, as well as the additional one-time appropriation the program received from this past legislative session. Staff have consulted with VTrans leadership and have suggested some proposed changes including; increasing the maximum award from \$100k to \$200k, reducing the match percentage from 50% to 20%, and utilizing the one-time appropriation over two – three years. There will be some proposed changes to the competitive criteria in the application which will be added to the October meeting for board consideration. Michele Boomhower added that VTrans has consulted with the legislative transportation committees and Regional Planning Commissions who prepared a document showing potential demand is upwards of \$59M.

Board members inquired if funding could be used for project preparedness. Gary advised that he needs to check statute to see if that was an allowable expense, but emphasis would be on ready to go, high quality projects. Additional questions included the possibility of extending the granting term from the 30-month current program term, and many comments regarding inevitable delays in the start of construction – due to the worker shortage and the existing demand on construction companies. The proposed program and application changes will be added to the October board meeting.

5. Old Business / New Business Vermont Climate Commission

Chris Cochran informed board members about the efforts of the Vermont Climate Commission and the various sub-committees as they work to prepare their Climate Action Plan, due December 1. Policies and investments that support compact settlement are an important part of the conversation. The Vermont Climate Commission has a survey to learn more about Vermonter's priorities. Chris encouraged board members to complete the survey

and engage in the public engagement events.

Tax Credit Ceremony

The Governor will host a scaled down Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit ceremony in St. Johnsbury on September 30th, at the St. Johnsbury Distillery. All board members are invited.

Brookings Institute

Richard Amore shared with board members that Vermont's Better Places program was featured in a new report by the Brookings Institute. The Better Places program has \$1.5M in funding to award to communities for projects that create, revitalize, or activate public spaces. DHCD is currently in the procurement process and aims to select a crowdfunding partner in the next few weeks.

Downtown Coalition

Gary Holloway notified board members that representatives of the Downtown groups gathered mid-September in Montpelier, reviving the annual Downtown Retreat, which hasn't happened since the start of the pandemic. At the retreat the formation of the Vermont Downtown Coalition was discussed, the coalition includes a leadership team who will work with the legislature and state leaders to align their needs and priorities with state goals.

5. Adjourn

Chip Sawyer made a motion to adjourn, and Laura Trieschmann seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 2:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie