

## Draft Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 10/25/2021

### 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
- 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 *arrived at 1:10pm*
- 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
- Cathy Davis, 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, Gary Holloway, Jacob Hemmerick, and Jenni Lavoie.

**Guests (3):** Kati Gallagher, VNRC; Jenny Carter, VT Law School; Josh Jerome, Town of Randolph.

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

- September 27, 2021 Draft Meeting Minutes
- Manchester Village Center Designation Renewal
- Manchester Neighborhood Development Area Renewal

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve the consent agenda items, and Chip Sawyer seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Chip Sawyer, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Ed Bove, and Josh Hanford.

The motion carried.

### **3. Proposed Neighborhood Development Area Application Amendment**

In pre-application consultations, staff discovered that the current standard findings for approval of a neighborhood development area designation would require exclusion of National Register Historic Districts without design review. In discussions with the State Historic Preservation Officer, Laura Trieschmann, and Devin Colman, the State Architectural Historian, Division staff learned that a requirement to link National Register listing, whether individual or historic district designations, is strongly discouraged by the United States Department of the Interior and is not viewed as a best practice. Amendment of the standard findings would allow the State Board to designate National Register Historic Districts that do not have design review.

Laura Trieschmann added that she is in support of this amendment and wants to ensure that designations don't omit National Register Historic Districts.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve the amendment to the NDA program as proposed by staff, and Laura Trieschmann seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Ed Bove, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

### **4. Neighborhood Development Area Application – Town of Randolph**

The department received a complete application from the Town of Randolph. The proposed Neighborhood Development Area meets the requirements for designation with a change to exclude of the inadvertently included flood hazard and river corridor area and add the National Register Historic District. The Town of Randolph's updated bylaws succeed in meeting the NDA bylaw requirements for density, protection of natural resources and a walkable pattern of development.

Josh Jerome, with the Town of Randolph, shared with board members that the town is looking forward to implementing the program if awarded. He also shared information about current projects and developments underway including, cleanup of a brownfields site, and the Salisbury Square housing development. Jenny Carter, with the Vermont Law School, offered that updating Zoning Bylaws can be an impediment to designation, and thought the new Bylaw Modernization grants would be a great tool to advance this work. She acknowledged and thanked Jacob Hemmerick for his incredible assistance supporting her efforts with understanding the bylaws to meet the program's requirements.

Board members inquired if staff had a mechanism to evaluate other towns in the state that are eligible to apply for the designation. Staff indicated that they are working with several towns interested in designation and are also working with the RPCs to determine which towns may be eligible. Staff also indicated that the \$500,000 allocated to bylaw grants will help more towns achieve the designation.

Bruce Cheeseman made a motion to approve the Randolph Neighborhood Area Development designation as proposed by staff, including the mapped National Register Historic District and excluding all areas of parcels containing ANR-mapped river corridors and flood hazards, and Billy Coster seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Ed Bove, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

### **5. Downtown Transportation Fund Application Updates**

This year the Downtown Transportation Fund program received a one-time \$5 million boost to help more communities implement projects that prosperous and healthy communities need. With a significant increase in funding availability and the recognized need for many

communities to make transportation infrastructure investments, we have proposed updates to the application. Key changes include:

- Reduction of the cash match from 50% to 20%;
- Increase the maximum grant from \$100,000 to \$200,000;
- Total available funding in 2022 \$2.5M (plus the normal allocation of approximately \$400K);
- 24 months to start project (18 months previously) and 36 months to complete (30 months previously) ;
- Updates to the selection criteria.

Board members agreed with the staff recommendation to combine the prior Community Need and Community Impact into one question, Public Benefit. Additional comments focused on Public Outreach and providing examples for communities on how best to respond to equity and inclusiveness considerations. Board members noted the challenge in assessing readiness and asked that staff explore options to assess this and score this for the board. Discussion ensued on the process that applicants would need to follow to document permit readiness. Staff agree to include guidance and information on the permits typically required for municipal projects. Applicants will be required to attach the report from ANR's online Permit Navigator Tool with their submission. Staff will incorporate board input into the final draft of the application.

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve and accept staff recommendations to amend the Downtown Transportation Fund grant application, and Laura Trieschmann seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Greg Boulbol, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Ed Bove, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

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

Chris Cochran reported to the board that the Governor's Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit award ceremony in St. Johnsbury was a success.

The Community Planning & Revitalization team is welcoming Jackie Cassino, formally of VTrans, to the Division starting in November.

## **7. Adjourn**

Laura Trieschmann made a motion to adjourn, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 2:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie