

## Draft Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 11/22/2021

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

#### 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
- 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, Jacob Hemmerick, Jackie Cassino, and Jenni Lavoie.

**Guests (5):** Walter Elander, Town of Berkshire; Emily Klofft, NRPC; Kati Gallagher, VNRC; Phillip Bannister, Town of Putney; Peter Paggi, Windham and Windsor Housing Trust.

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:

- October 25, 2021, Draft Meeting Minutes
- Maple Corner Village Center Designation Renewal
- East Calais Village Center Designation Renewal

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

### **3. Village Center Designations – 2 – Town of Berkshire**

#### **East Berkshire Village Center**

The proposed boundary runs along Route 105 and Montgomery Road, and includes the Our Lady of the Lourdes church, the historical society, cemetery, Barn Owl Bistro and Goods, small businesses, and multi-family 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.

Walter Elander, planning commissioner with the Town of Berkshire, shared that while there is a lot of local and destination traffic going through the village, there hasn't been a lot of interest in developing this area. The Planning Commission and Selectboard believe that village center designation, along with the new bistro that just opened, will help to gather local interest to develop and improve the housing stock and add vitality within the designated area.

Board members inquired if the section of Route 118 that goes over the river will remain in the designated area as this area has potential to develop pedestrian connections. Walter and program staff advised that Route 118 would be in the designated area, and that a sidewalk already exists on the bridge portion of the road.

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve village center designation for East Berkshire, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michele Boomhower, Ed Bove, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

#### **West Berkshire Village Center**

The proposed boundary runs along West Berkshire Road, Cross Street, and Potato Hill Road, and includes a vacant church, the Phoenix House restaurant, small businesses, and multi-family 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.

Emily Klofft with Northwest Regional Planning Commission stated that West Berkshire is a great example of a smaller village center with many historic buildings. Village center designation will provide the opportunity to further economic development goals in this area, as well as to promote the historic nature of the village. Walter Elander, Berkshire's planning commissioner, added that from a transportation point of view, this area is a popular route for Canadians who come across the border.

Board members inquired about the addition of residential properties within the boundary, and program staff advised the addition of these properties as they are multifamily properties and are adjacent to commercial uses in the heart of the village.

Billy Coster made a motion to approve village center designation for West Berkshire, and Dae Allaire seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michele Boomhower, Ed Bove, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

### **4. Neighborhood Development Area Designation – Town of Putney**

Application materials from the Town of Putney are complete. The proposed Neighborhood Development Area meets the requirements for designation. The Town of Putney's updated bylaws succeed in meeting the neighborhood designation bylaw requirements for density, protection of natural resources and a walkable pattern of development.

Peter Paggi with Windham and Windsor Housing Trust advised board members of the plans to build 25 units of mixed-income housing in the heart of the village, near the food co-op and community gardens. Phillip Bannister, with the Town of Putney, there is the potential for infill lots that are served by water and sewer. The town has experienced a flat level of population growth and development for quite some time. The town hopes that the housing project will draw interest.

Board members inquired about a small triangular portion of the proposed boundary that didn't appear to be served by municipal water and sewer. Phillip Bannister and Peter Paggi responded that the area in question is where the Town Fire Department is located, and to the best of their knowledge that area is served by water and sewer (program staff subsequently confirmed this information).

Dave Allaire made a motion to approve Neighborhood Development Area designation for Putney, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michele Boomhower, Ed Bove, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

#### **5. Old Business / New Business**

Josh Hanford noted that the December board meeting has been canceled. The next scheduled board meeting is on Monday, January 24, 2022

#### **6. Adjourn**

Chip Sawyer made a motion to adjourn, and Michele Boomhower seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 1:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie