

Draft Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 1/24/2022

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
- ☒ Chip Sawyer, designated by the Vermont Planners Association
- ☒ Sabina Haskell, 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 (4): Chris Cochran, Gary Holloway, Jacob Hemmerick, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (1): Matt Osborn, Town of Hartford

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:

- November 22, 2021, Draft Meeting Minutes
- Downtown & Neighborhood Development Area 4-year Check-in – City of Burlington

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve the consent agenda items, and Ed Bove seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Cathy Davis, Chip Sawyer, Ed Bove, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Josh Hanford. Sabina Haskell abstained. The motion carried.

3. Growth Center – Town of Hartford

The Town of Hartford five-year review of its growth requested that the Board determine that the designation continues to meet the standards for designation in effect at the time it was originally. The Town's submission was complete, and notice was issued in accordance with Board policy. The Town was originally scheduled for review in March of 2020. At the January meeting, the Downtown Board extended the deadline to September 2020 at the request of the Town to address a convergence of critical work items and a prospective project that could have affected Growth Center findings and boundaries. Due to the challenges of COVID, the Town of Hartford requested an additional 90-day extension for submittals, from the date the emergency order expires, which the Board approved.

Matt Osbourn, with the Town of Hartford, said the Town's incredible revival is due to many factors, including: zoning bylaw updates that created overlay districts, tightened zoning to prevent rural sprawl and protect natural resources; state programs such as the downtown, village center, and growth center designations, municipal planning grants, TIF district, and the tax credit program.

Board members inquired about the requirement that 50% of all new subdivisions must occur within the growth center, noting that Hartford has not yet met this requirement at year 10 of the 20-year designation. Jacob Hemmerick noted that Hartford faces unique constraints with their transportation corridor, highway access, and topography that may make the requirement harder to achieve. He also noted that while subdivisions did occur outside of the growth center, almost all of these were within or proximate to the planning area around the designated villages within the town. Matt Osborn added that some of the subdivisions listed were boundary line adjustments, and the reporting doesn't differentiate between the two -- so the report technically includes applications that did not result in the creation of new buildable lot. Additional board comments commended the town for being great stewards of their historic resources, that they have done development in the right way, and that the board appreciated their great comprehensive report.

Ed Bove made a motion to approve the staff recommendation that the Hartford Growth Center continues to meet the standards for designation in effect at the time it was originally designated, and Billy Coster seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Cathy Davis, Chip Sawyer, Ed Bove, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

4. Old Business / New Business

Chris Cochran provided the board with legislative updates:

S.234 – This Act 250 reform aims to revive long-stymied efforts to update the Vermont's land use law. Few expect this new effort will gain any traction. H.511, is a more targeted Act 250 reform bill that aims to make neighborhood designation easier to achieve and more beneficial to small towns welcoming more homes. The bill has support from House and Senate leadership as well a broad base of stakeholders.

S.101 – This bill passed both chambers last year, but it did not make it to the Governor's desk. It makes several changes to designated centers including an increase to the downtown and village center tax credits and expanded eligibility to neighborhood areas. The Senate plans to include this language in its Omnibus Housing bill.

5. Adjourn

Chip Sawyer made a motion to adjourn, and Michele Boomhower seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie