

Draft Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 4/25/2022

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, Richard Amore, Gary Holloway, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (1): Karen Davis

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:

- March 28, 2022 Draft Meeting Minutes
- Keeler Bay Village Center Designation Renewal
- South Hero Village Center Designation Renewal
- Newport Downtown Designation 4-Year Check-In
- Wilmington Downtown Designation 4-Year Check-In

Board members inquired if designation boundary maps can be added to the village center renewal applications, and downtown designation check-in documents. Staff will include these maps in future renewals.

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

3. Village Center Designations – 1 – Town of Wardsboro

Wardsboro Village Center

The proposed boundary runs along Main Street and VT Route 100, and includes the library, Methodist church, town hall, park, town office, fire & rescue, post office, local businesses and a restaurant, and single-family and multifamily residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements

Karen Smith, with the Town of Wardsboro, shared with board members that the town discovered village center designation after missing out on a potential grant opportunity due to lack of designation. There are several building owners in town that could use this designation to help finance renovations for public buildings. Karen also shared that even though the town has a small population and many second homeowners, Wardsboro was a bustling village pre-COVID-19. The town offers a free digital and print newspaper, *The Bucketville News*, and are trying to bring back many of the annual community events that were sidelined during the pandemic.

Board members commented that Wardsboro is a great example of a quintessential Vermont village that cannot be found directly off an interstate.

Michael McDonough made a motion to approve the Wardsboro's village center designation, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Ed Bove, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

4. Downtown Transportation Fund Grants

Board members reviewed and individually scored all Downtown Transportation Fund grant applications prior to the meeting. Gary Holloway and Jenni Lavoie presented the tallied and ranked scores of the 15 eligible applications requesting a total of \$2,098,094 for an available \$2,900,000 in funding. Based on tallied and averaged board scores and recognizing that more funding was available than being requested, full funding could be made available to all applications. Board members also reviewed and individually scored the Downtown Transportation Fund Clean Water Fund grant application prior to the meeting. There was one request of \$26,400, for the available \$60,000.

Board members engaged in a discussion if all the eligible applications should be funded, or to only fund the "shovel ready" applications. Additional discussion ensued regarding scoring the equity and inclusion criteria, and methods of helping or training municipalities on best practices to engage and gather feedback from underserved and historically marginalized populations.

Gary Holloway requested feedback on the revised application and shared his plans to poll local appetite and the timing for the next round of funding. Board members noted that scoring application quality may not be needed, as this can be scored in other criteria and appears duplicative.

Jaime Lee made a motion to award all 15 Downtown Transportation Fund applications, and the one Clean Water application, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Ed Bove, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

5. Old Business / New Business

Chris Cochran provided brief legislative updates which included support for: the increase of funding to the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit program; statutory changes to the Neighborhood Development Area program that will make it easier for smaller towns to qualify for the designation; and funding for an external review of all the state designation programs.

He also noted that the May board meeting will be canceled. The next scheduled board meeting is on Monday, June 27, 2022, in-person at the National Life building in Montpelier.

6. Adjourn

Billy Coster made a motion to adjourn, and Laura Trieschmann seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie