

Draft Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 1/28/2019

Calvin Coolidge Conference Room, 6th Floor, National Life Bldg., Montpelier

Members Present (12):

- Katie Buckley (*chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Michele Boomhower, designated by the Secretary of Transportation
- Peter Walke, designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources (departed at 2:15pm)
- Robert Sponable (alternate), designated by the Commissioner of Public Safety
- Laura Trieschmann, State Historic Preservation Officer
- Patricia M. Sears, appointed by the Governor, representing the Vermont Natural Resources Council and the Preservation Trust of Vermont
- Gabrielle Ciuffreda, designated by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Michael McDonough, appointed by the governor, representing local government
- Liz Gamache, appointed by the Governor, representing local government (via phone)
- Chip Sawyer, designated by the Vermont Planners Association (arrived at 1:15pm)
- Donna Casey, designated by the Chair of the Natural Resources Board
- Tasha Wallis, designated by the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
- Tom Torti, 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, Caitlin Corkins, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (6): Cathy Swain, Barton Village; Alison Lowe, NVDA; John Morley, Orleans Village Manager; Curtis Koren, Brookfield Village; Jim Robert, North Wolcott Village; Meghan Rodier, LCPC.

Katie Buckley brought the meeting to order at 1:02 pm in the Calvin Coolidge Room, 6th floor of the National Life Building, Montpelier.

Additions or Deletions to Board Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the board agenda.

1. Approval of Minutes from November 26, 2018

Robert Sponable made a motion to approve the November 26, 2018 minutes, no edits noted, and Tasha Wallis seconded. The motion carried 9-0, with one abstention.

2. Public Comment Period

Katie Buckley opened the meeting to public comment: there were no comments.

3. Village Center Designation New – 4 – Richard Amore

Barton Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for the village center designation. The proposed boundary runs along Main Street (Route 5), School Street and Water Street, and includes: the Pierce Block, public library, three churches, post office, Barton Academy, historical society, village offices, town offices, St. Paul's Catholic School, fire station, numerous commercial

businesses, and multifamily 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.

Cathy Swain, Barton Village Trustee, shared with board members the revitalization efforts in the village including an adaptive reuse of the historic Pierce Block and potential uses for the now empty historic fire station.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve village center designation for the Barton village and Peter Walke seconded. The motion carried 10-0, with one abstention.

Orleans Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for the village center designation. The proposed boundary runs along Main Street, Church Street and East Street, and includes the Ethan Allen Manufacturing plant, fire department, general store, hardware store, town offices, village utility offices, senior center, restaurants, numerous commercial businesses, and multifamily and single-family residences. The Town worked with staff to define the recommended boundary; however, the town proposes to expand the boundaries to include residential areas (along Church, East, Liberty and Union Streets) and industrial areas along the southwestern border of the boundary. Including these residential properties and industrial areas conflict with the statutory definition of a village center as well as board precedent because they are not anchored by civic/commercial uses, do not contain a mix of uses, are not part of the cohesive traditional core, and do not include sidewalks.

John Morley, Orleans Village Manger, shared with board members a potential housing development project in a currently vacant building and that Maplefield's has shown interest in taking over a gas station property currently scheduled to close.

Board members engaged in a robust discussion over parcels excluded from the staff recommended boundary, but included in the initial application, including the Ethan Allen Furniture property. Ultimately the board decided to keep the portion of the Ethan Allen property included as submitted and approve the staff recommend boundary with one addition to include the barn property across from the municipal building and park.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve village center designation for the Orleans village, including the staff recommended boundary except for inclusion of the barn property along the northern portion of the boundary, Peter Walke seconded. The motion carried 12-0.

Brookfield Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for the village center designation. The proposed boundary runs primarily along Route 65 and Stone Road, and includes the Old Town Hall, town offices, First Congregational Church, post office, the Fork Shop, Green Trails Inn, and several multifamily 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.

Curtis Koren, Brookfield Community Partnership, shared with board members the successful reuse of the historic town hall building and challenges facing the village with the closing of local restaurants and potential loss of the Post Office. The village looks forward to utilizing the technical assistance and incentives that comes with designation.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve village center designation for the Brookfield village and Michele Boomhower seconded. The motion carried 12-0.

North Wolcott Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for the village center designation. The proposed boundary runs along North Wolcott Road, and includes the North Wolcott Country Store, former North Wolcott Methodist Church, and a couple multifamily 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.

Jim Robert, Wolcott Planning Commission, and Meghan Rodier, Lamoille County Planning Commission, shared with board members efforts underway to encourage development and multi-family housing within the village; including changes to zoning bylaws to encourage growth and businesses within the village, and making connections to recreation areas.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve village center designation for the North Wolcott village and Peter Walke seconded. The motion carried 11-0, with one abstention.

4. Growth Center Designation Condition Check-in – 1 – Jacob Hemmerick

Town of Williston

When the Town of Williston received Growth Center Designation in 2007 the following condition was imposed: *Williston shall develop a policy, and incorporate it into their Town Plan, calling for the identification and protection of archaeological resources prior to the first five-year review of its growth center designation by the Expanded Board. At the five-year review in 2012, the board extended compliance with this condition to the ten-year review in 2017. Although the Comprehensive Plan was readopted in 2017, it did not address archaeological resources, and there was minimal mention in the 10-year report. The 2017 board decision indicated that the Town shall amend the Comprehensive Plan to address archaeological resources in keeping with condition #7 by submitting the adopted language to DHCD by November 30, 2018.*

Jacob Hemmerick advised board members that working with the Division for Historic Preservation the Town of Williston has adopted language that fully satisfies this condition and has the potential to serve as a model for other Municipalities. Laura Trieschmann added that due to the growth of the town, they have lost archaeological resources – this language addresses this concern and serves as a model for other communities.

Laura Trieschmann made a motion that Williston has developed a Town Plan policy calling for the identification and protection of archaeological resources, satisfying condition 7 of the original Growth Center designation approval and Michael McDonough seconded. The motion carried 11-0.

5. Tax Credit Criteria and Application Update – 1 – Caitlin Corkins

At its last meeting, the Downtown Board discussed ways to improve the scoring process for the Downtown and Village Center tax credits. Based on this feedback, a new application and scoring criteria were drafted. The updates aim to make a clear connection between the questions asked in the application and the scoring criteria by which projects are evaluated.

Board members were pleased with the proposed updates. Caitlin explained her next steps are to develop additional guidance for board members and applicants, including an optional webinar to assist applicants through the process. She will also update the application for the Sales Tax Reallocation program to improve consistency among the two programs.

6. Designation Program 4-Year Check-In Policy (Act 147) – 1 – Jacob Hemmerick

The 2018 legislature changed the expirations for designated Downtowns, New Town Centers and Village Centers from five to eight years, and for the downtowns and new town centers, an interim review at four years is required. This proposed procedure describes the interim review for each of the designations. For interim reviews that raise no concerns, we are

recommending a board process like a consent agenda, providing a brief written summary for board review but with no board discussion on the interim review unless a member has questions or concerns and requests it.

Board members supported the policy, but wanted to ensure the check-in process was not overly complicated for municipalities with limited capacity. There was also a concern about overlooking village centers as they are now required to renew every 8 years. Staff indicated that the check-ins are intended to be a “light touch” and we view them as opportunities to identify any local concerns or issues and provide support as needed. The board requested that staff draft a sample community questionnaire to help them better understand the nature of these check-ins.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve the Designation Program 4-Year Check-in policy with a board review of the check-in details and Michael McDonough seconded. The motion carried 11-0.

7. Old Business / New Business / Announcements

Legislative Updates: Act 250, Tax Credit Housekeeping

Chris Cochran provided board members with an update on the Act 250 reform effort as well as the Administration’s proposal to increase the cap on the Downtown and Village Center tax credits to \$2.6M.

8. Adjourn

Tasha Wallis made a motion to adjourn and Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie