

Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 6/25/2018

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

Members Present (11):

- Katie Buckley (*chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Michele Boomhower, (*vice-chair*), designated by the Secretary of Transportation
- Peter Walke, designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources
- Michael Desrochers, 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
- Chip Sawyer, designated by the Vermont Planners Association
- Donna Casey, designated by the Chair of the Natural Resources Board (arrived at 1:18pm)
- 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, Gary Holloway, Caitlin Corkins, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (14): Cheryl Michaels, East Hardwick; Gary Michaels, East Hardwick; Kristen Leahy, Zoning Administrator, Town of Hardwick; David Gross, East Hardwick; Tracy Martin, East Hardwick; Heidi Britch-Valenta, Town Administrator, Town of Highgate; John Haverstock, Town Manager, Town of Pittsford; Steve Belcher, Town of Pittsford; Baird Morgan, Town of Pittsford; Win Johnson, Selectboard Chair, Town of West Windsor; Al Keiller, Town of West Windsor; Stephanie Bonin, Executive Director, Downtown Brattleboro Alliance; Sue Fillion, Planner, Town of Brattleboro.

Katie Buckley brought the meeting to order at 1:01 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 April 23, 2018

Tom Torti made a motion to approve the April 23, 2018 minutes, with a misspelled name noted and Gabrielle Ciuffreda seconded. The motion carried 11-0.

2. Public Comment Period

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

3. Village Center Designation New – 5 – Richard Amore East Hardwick Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for East Hardwick's village center designation. The proposed boundary runs primarily along Main Street, Church Street and East Church Street including the post office, First Congregational Church, Caledonia Grange, former East Hardwick Library, art gallery, Perennial Pleasures, several commercial businesses and multifamily and single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definition and provided a map that met program requirements.

Cheryl Michaels of East Hardwick and Kristen Leahy, Zoning Administrator with the Town of Hardwick, shared the outcomes of a recent community engagement efforts, local project priorities, and shared information about a project to improve the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail segment that connects East Hardwick to Hardwick.

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve village center designation for East Hardwick and Trish Sears seconded. The motion carried 11-0.

Highgate Falls Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for Highgate Falls' village center designation. The proposed boundary runs primarily along Route 207 and Park Street including the Episcopal Church and Cemetery, village green, Swanton Hydro Dam Power Plant, Historic Truss Bridge, the Northern Forest Canoe Trail Portage and Boat Launch, a couple of commercial businesses and multifamily and single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definition and provided a map that met program requirements.

Heidi Britch-Valenta, Town Administrator with the Town of Highgate, shared future planning goals for the village including moving the concerts in the park to the village green and obtaining funding to construct a pavilion.

Tom Torti made a motion to approve village center designation for Highgate Falls and Donna Casey seconded. The motion carried 11-0.

Highgate Springs Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for Highgate Spring's village center designation. The proposed boundary runs primarily along Route 7 and Old Dock Road including Martin's Store, the post office, Tyler Place Resort, Chevalier Well Drilling, Historic White Church, commercial businesses and multifamily and single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definition and provided a map that met program requirements.

Heidi Britch-Valenta, Town Administrator with the Town of Highgate, described how Tyler Place Resort attracts visitors to the area, future town investment in infrastructure improvements and beach upgrades, and how designation benefits could assist local businesses.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve village center designation for Highgate Springs village center and Michael Desrochers seconded. The motion carried 11-0.

Pittsford Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for Pittsford's village center designation. The proposed boundary runs primarily along Route 7 and Pleasant and Arch Street including two country markets, two churches, Pittsford Village Farm, senior housing, the elementary school, library, historical society, fire station, several commercial businesses and multifamily and single-family residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary; however, the

town would like to include the residential parcels along Arch Street within the designated area. The staff recommendation was to remove the residential properties along Arch Street.

John Haverstock, Town Manager Town of Pittsford, and residents Steve Belcher and Baird Morgan, described recent water and wastewater infrastructure improvements, new sidewalks along Arch and Pleasant Streets and the newly established community gardens at the Pittsford Village Farm.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve village center designation for Pittsford village center with the staff recommended boundary and Tasha Wallis seconded. The motion carried 11-0.

Brownsville Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for Brownsville's village center. The proposed boundary runs primarily along Route 44 and the Brownsville-Hartland Road including the Brownsville General Store, fire department, historical society/Grange Hall, library, elementary school, community church, Story Memorial Hall (town offices), several commercial businesses and multifamily and single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definition and provided a map that met program requirements.

Win Johnson, Selectboard Chair with the Town of West Windsor, along with Al Keiller, shared how working with the Trust for Public Land and having strong community engagement helped the success of acquiring the Ascutney ski area, establishing the nonprofit Ascutney Outdoors and creation of the Friends of the Brownsville Store.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve village center designation for Brownsville village center and Trish Sears seconded. The motion carried 11-0.

4. Village Center Renewal– 1 – Richard Amore Chelsea Village Center

Richard presented the complete renewal application for Chelsea's village center. The designated boundary was unchanged, and the map was updated to meet program requirements. The application was complete and met the program's requirements.

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for Tunbridge village center and Liz Gamache seconded. The motion carried 11-0.

5. Village Center De-designation– 1 – Richard Amore Richmond Village Center

Richmond's municipal plan does not currently meet statutory requirements and therefore an application for renewal of village center designation for Richmond village center was not submitted. The town is working to update their municipal plan and intends to reapply for designation later this year. Staff recommends that the Board proceed with de-designation.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to de-designate Richmond village center and Gabrielle Ciuffreda seconded. The motion carried 11-0.

6. Downtown Designation Renewal – 1 – Gary Holloway Town of Brattleboro

Gary presented the complete renewal application that meets all statutory requirements for Brattleboro's downtown designation and highlighted the following items from the application to the board: financial commitment from the town through the Downtown Improvement District (DID), Downtown Brattleboro Alliance budget demonstrating investments in the downtown, significant private investment resulting in 57 net new jobs, emerging new businesses including restaurants, shops, services and co-working spaces; and municipal parking lot improvements. Gary recommended renewal of the designation with the following recommendations:

- Diversify DBA funding with additional revenue streams including sponsorships, grants or other fundraising opportunities.
- Keep the momentum going by supporting downtown businesses with ongoing promotions and events and marketing available property to prospective businesses.
- Collaborate with Vermont Tourism and Marketing, Think Vermont and other regional and state initiatives to attract visitors and businesses to the area with an emphasis on Brattleboro's unique assets.

Sue Fillion, Planner with the Town of Brattleboro and Stephanie Bonin, Executive Director of Downtown Brattleboro Alliance, presented highlights of the past five years to board members including: the successful restoration of the Brooks House and Market Block, upgrades to parking and municipal parking lots in the downtown, increased engagement in the Town's social media presence, and community promotions such as the "Parking Hero" and golden ticket winners for free parking for a year. Additionally, they expressed current challenges such as the retention and recruitment of workers and businesses, attracting a larger visitor base, fundraising opportunities, and panhandling in the area.

Board members commended the town on the undertaking of many successful endeavors. Members that work and visit the downtown remarked on the firsthand improvements they've witnessed with the additional parking, ease of pedestrian travel, and general increased walkability of the downtown.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve renewal of the downtown designation for Brattleboro, Tom Torti seconded. The motion carried 11-0.

7. Tax Credit Scoring Overview

In preparation for the July round of downtown and village center tax credit applications and sales tax reallocation applications, Caitlin walked the board through the score sheets and the review process and updates to the competitive criteria. Board members reviewed sample applications and discussed strategies to ensure consistency in scoring.

Board members expressed concern about tax credits supporting the creation of short term rental units (for lease on AirBNB) does nothing to address the state's shortage of housing. Staff noted that the goal of the program is to stimulate investment needed to put older and historic buildings back into use. The program does not stipulate how the building will be used. Discussion moved to the limited utilization of the tax credit for technology infrastructure and potentially updating that credit through future legislative action.

8. Old Business / New Business Announcements

Chris Cochran provided updates to the board on Act 197 that extends the term of downtown and new town center designations from 5 to 8 years with a review after 4 years; and extends the term of village center designations from 5 to 8 years without a 4-year review.

The successful and sold out 2018 Historic Preservation and Downtown conference held in Bristol and the upcoming 20th Anniversary of the Downtown Program in 2019.

Passage of the Capital Bill that provides \$100,000 for a pilot program to integrate storm water reduction features into infrastructure improvement projects supported by the downtown transportation grants.

Potentially holding a board meeting in St. Albans this fall.

The new Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE) program will be announced by the Governor's office sometime within the next month.

11. Adjourn

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Tom Torti made a motion to adjourn and Tasha Wallis seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie