

**Draft Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
3/25/2019**

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

Members Present (10):

- Josh Hanford (*Acting chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Michele Boomhower, designated by the Secretary of Transportation (departed at 3pm)
- 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 (by phone, departed at 3:15pm)
- Vacant, 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 (departed at 3:30pm)
- Donna Casey, designated by the Chair of the Natural Resources Board (attended from 1:05-3:35pm)
- Tasha Wallis, designated by the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (departed at 3:45pm)
- 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 (5): Jessica Draper, Town of Richmond; Josh Arneson, Town of Richmond; Janet Currie, Town of Castleton; Jonas Rosenthal, Town of Castleton; Glenn Herrin, Town of Danville

Josh Hanford brought the meeting to order at 1:00 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 January 28, 2019

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve the January 28, 2019 minutes, no edits noted, and Michele Boomhower seconded. The motion carried 8-0, with one abstention.

2. Public Comment Period

Josh Hanford opened the meeting to public comment: there were no comments.

3. Village Center Designation New – 5 – Richard Amore

Castleton Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for the village center designation. The proposed boundary runs along Main Street, and includes: two churches, library, Depot Café, Village Store, Blue Cat Bistro, post office, Birdseye Diner, Village School, D&H Rail Trail, 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.

Jonas Rosenthal and Janet Currie with the Town of Castleton, shared with board members the revitalization efforts in the village including; a new senior housing project and increased enrollment at Castleton University, due to the closure of other colleges, which will require additional housing. A challenge the town reported was the lack of signage for Amtrak. Michele Boomhower acknowledged that Amtrak signage is limited in some areas and she connected Jonas with staff at VTrans to assist.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve village center designation for Castleton village and Laura Trieschmann seconded. The motion carried 10-0.

Castleton Corners Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for the village center designation. The proposed boundary runs along Route 30, and includes: the town office, fire station, police station, community center, post offices, 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.

Jonas Rosenthal and Janet Currie shared with board members community events at the Grange building in the village. Board members inquired about the Grange parcel as it had been omitted in the proposed boundary for the village. Town and DHCD staff determined there was oversight with the parcel and that the boundary could be amended by the board to include the grange parcel, board members agreed to the amendment. Richard will work with the RPC on an updated boundary map.

Michael McDonough made a motion to approve village center designation, with the addition of the Grange parcel, for Castleton Corners village and Liz Gamache seconded. The motion carried 10-0.

Hydeville Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for the village center designation. The proposed boundary runs along Route 4A, and includes: The Harbor View General Store, Lake Bomoseen Inn, a church, a marina, Hydeville Plaza, the village green, 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.

Jonas Rosenthal and Janet Curried shared with board members a proposed housing project in the village that could benefit from state tax credits, upgrades to the marina, and their future plans for sidewalks to connect the villages.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve village center designation for Hydeville village and Laura Trieschmann seconded. The motion carried 10-0.

West Danville Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for the village center designation. The proposed boundary runs along Route 2 and Route 15, and includes: the Danville Beach, library, United Methodist Church, Three Ponds Restaurant, Hastings Store, Joe's Pond Craft Store, the park and ride, Point Comfort Cottages, numerous commercial businesses, and multifamily and single-family residences. The town worked with staff to define the recommended boundary. The town included two boundary proposals with its application. The town's "Alternative West Boundary Line" (anchored by the Antiques business) map meets the statutory definition of a village center. The other proposed boundary is larger and includes undeveloped areas as well as the lodging properties along Joe's Pond. Including these properties is not consistent with the statutory definition of a village center, nor board precedent because they are not part of the cohesive traditional core, their development densities are interrupted with lower density residential properties, and the proposed boundary area is not connected by sidewalks to the village core.

Glenn Herrin shared with board members the revitalization efforts in West Danville including: the recent expansion of the Three Ponds Restaurant; the re-opening of the Charles D. Brainerd library, the smallest library in Vermont; and the growth of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, which has led to increased visitation in the village. Discussion ensued over the two boundary options.

Michael McDonough made a motion to approve the staff recommended "alternative West boundary line" village center designation for West Danville village and Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion carried 10-0.

Richmond Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for the village center designation. The proposed boundary runs along Bridge Street, Main Street and Railroad Street, and includes: the town office, the post office, library, two churches, the Richmond Market, numerous commercial businesses, professional offices, 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.

Jessica Draper and Josh Arneson shared with board members a new mixed-use building being developed in the village, that the town is evaluating changing the existing densities, and that they have plenty of water and sewer capacity for additional growth. Board members commented that Richmond is poised to be a good candidate for Downtown designation. The town advised they are considering that option and that village center designation is the first step in that process.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve village center designation for Richmond village and Peter Walke seconded. The motion carried 10-0.

4. Downtown Program 4-Year Check-In Process – Gary Holloway

Act 147 extended the length of the designations from four to eight years, with a mid-point check-in for several of the state designations. Staff solicited board feedback on the draft document that describes the mid-point community visit process for designated downtowns. As discussed at the last meeting, if no concerns are raised at the community visit, staff will provide a brief written summary of the meeting and place the town's check-in on the consent agenda. Board members may request further discussion of the community visit upon request. If the community visit raises concerns, the community may be invited to attend a future board meeting.

Board members inquired about the length of time the towns would have to prepare for the check-in, Gary said towns are given three months advance notice. Also, the board suggested giving an option of holding two meetings, one with the downtown organization and a joint meeting with the town and downtown organization.

5. Tax Credit Criteria and Application Update – Caitlin Corkins

Board members were provided "mock applications" to test drive the recent changes to the State Tax Credit and Sales Tax Reallocation criteria and applications. The goal was to ensure Board members are comfortable with the new criteria and discuss any final adjustments to the application before it is made public.

Board members recommended edits to clarify that applicants should provide information about the permits needed for their project and they requested related updates to the "project scope" criterion. There was discussion about requiring applicants to check-in with ANR's permit specialists, but it was agreed that this additional step is not always needed and that it could deter small projects. Board members noted that level of detail varies widely between large and small projects and this fact should not bias how smaller projects are scored. Board members were pleased with the updates to the public benefit question. Caitlin will make the final updates to the application materials and aims to publish them in May.

6. Downtown Transportation Fund Grant

The Downtown Transportation Fund (DTF) supports transportation-related capital improvement projects such as new sidewalks, lighting and other pedestrian and streetscape improvements in designated downtowns. Eligible projects must be within or serving the downtown district and support economic development. The total amount of DTF funding available this year is 516,920 with a supplemental \$100,000 for project-related capital investments that improve water quality.

Gary reviewed the application, scoring criteria and process for scoring with board members. Board members discussed how the scoring of the DTF application should be considered when awarding the clean water funds. For example, if a DTF project was not scored highly enough to be funded, but the clean water portion was. Consensus arrived at scoring the two funding sources independently of each other and make determinations based on the scoring.

7. Old Business / New Business / Announcements

Legislative Updates: Tax Credit Funding & Housekeeping

Chris Cochran informed board members that the General Assembly fully supports the administration's 'housekeeping' amendments to the downtown tax credits. The major difference is that the Senate's version of the bill seeks to increase funding by \$300K whereas the House bill recommends \$200K.

8. Adjourn

Liz Gamache made a motion to adjourn and Michael McDonough seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie