

**Approved Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
01/23/2017**

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

Members Present (11):

- Katie Buckley (*chair*), Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- Michele Boomhower (*vice-chair*), Agency of Transportation
- Jen Mojo, Agency of Natural Resources
- Robert Sponable for Michael Desrochers, Department of Public Safety
- Laura Trieschmann, State Historic Preservation Officer
- Vacant, Smart Growth Appointee
- Scott Murphy, Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Michael McDonough, Gubernatorial Appointee from Bennington
- Liz Gamache, Gubernatorial Appointee from St. Albans (by phone)
- Chip Sawyer, Vermont Planners Association (arrived after approval of minutes)
- Diane Snelling, Natural Resources Board
- Tasha Wallis, Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
- Tom Torti, Vermont Association of Chamber Executives

Attending Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members (4): Chris Cochran, Annina Seiler, Richard Amore, and Gary Holloway.

Guests (6): Kate McCarthy, Vermont Natural Resources Council; Hal Wilkins, Peru Zoning Administrator; Dave Atherton, Brandon Town Manager; Bill Moore, Brandon Economic Development Officer; Devin Fuller, Brandon Mainstreet; Al Voegele, Northwest Regional Planning Commission Board.

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

1. Elect Board Chair

Jen Mojo made a motion to nominate Katie Buckley as the Board Chair. Tasha Wallis seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Michael Desrochers, Michele Boomhower, Scott Murphy and Tasha Wallis. Katie Buckley abstained. The motion carried.

2. Additions or Deletions to Board Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the Board Agenda.

3. Approval of Minutes from November 28, 2016

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve the draft November 28, 2016 minutes and Jen Mojo seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower and Katie Buckley. Liz Gamache, Robert Sponable, Tasha Wallis and Scott Murphy abstained. The motion carried.

4. Public Comment Period

Katie Buckley opened the meeting to public comment: Diane Snelling requested that time be added to future agendas for the Board to discuss policy and legislative changes.

5. Village Center Designation – 2 – Richard

Richard Amore and Gary Holloway began by presenting highlights of the village center and downtown designation programs, including several success stories, reinvestment statistics, and information about trainings and the downtown conference. Board members thanked staff for showcasing how the designations advance community revitalization efforts across the state. Per Board request, staff agreed to share the presentation slides, including statistics and figures documenting results.

New Applications (1)

Peru Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for Peru village center. The village center boundary runs along Main Street and includes town offices, post office, congregational church, J.J. Hapgood General Store, Makery, Historical Society, town green and single family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet the statutory definition and provided a map that meets the program's requirements. Staff noted that the originally designated boundary (Peru was de-designated in March 2016) included entire parcels and that the proposed boundary was reduced and cleaned up to meet Board standards and policy.

Hal Wilkins, zoning administrator, spoke to the Board and noted the importance of the J.J. Hapgood General Store as a community center and plans for the upper floor of the Makery. Michael McDonough thanked staff for their work with the community to clean up the designation boundary and noted that communities such as Peru prove that size is not the only indicator of success.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve village center designation for Peru village center and Michael McDonough seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Robert Sponable, Tasha Wallis, Scott Murphy and Katie Buckley. The motion carried.

De-Designations (1)

South Strafford Village Center

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

Michele Boomhower made a motion to de-designate South Strafford village center and Chip Sawyer seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Robert Sponable, Tasha Wallis, Scott Murphy and Katie Buckley. The motion carried.

6. Downtown Designation Renewal Application – 1 – Gary Holloway

Town of Brandon

Gary presented the complete application for renewal of downtown designation for Brandon. The application is complete, all requirements are met, and no boundary changes are proposed. Staff recommendations include continued discussion around mitigating potential impacts of the segment six transportation project, increased funding from the town to support a part time position, and development of a more detailed five-year strategic plan. Staff recommends approval of the designation renewal.

Bill Moore provided the Board with a quick summary of challenges, including Irene and numerous staffing/leadership changes. He continued by highlighting successes, beginning with the Vermont Downtown Action Team, Vermont Economic Resiliency Initiative, Town Barn Raising programs, and the plans for the current construction and upcoming segment six reconstruction of VT Route 7. Michele Boomhower recommended the town pursue grant funding to support downtown businesses during the construction period and staff offered to follow up with grant details. Board members thanked the town for the inspirational story and the hard work they are doing to continue the transformation in Brandon.

Robert Sponable made a motion to approve renewal of downtown designation for Brandon and Jen Mojo seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Robert Sponable, Tasha Wallis, Scott Murphy and Katie Buckley. The motion carried.

7. Downtown Transportation Fund Grant – Amendment Request

City of St. Albans

Gary Holloway presented the amendment request from the City of St. Albans. Liz Gamache and Chip Sawyer recused themselves from any Board discussion. The City of St. Albans was awarded a \$76,643 Downtown Transportation Fund grant in 2012 for a project to replace sidewalks, improve pedestrian crossings, add bicycle lanes, street paving, trees, benches, bike racks, and lighting. The project is substantially complete but due to delays associated with the construction of a new Hampton Inn hotel, which required access to the sidewalk to complete façade work, the city has been unable to complete the project. The final items remaining include tree plantings, landscaping and the installation of hanging ports, banners and light fixtures. The city is requesting an amendment of the grant completion date till the end of the construction season, August 31, 2017. This will allow ample time for completion of the grant project. Staff recommends approval of the amendment extending the completion date to August 31, 2017.

Michele Boomhower made a motion to amend the grant completion date to August 31, 2018. Tasha Wallis seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Robert Sponable, Tasha Wallis, Scott Murphy and Katie Buckley. Chip Sawyer and Liz Gamache abstained. The motion carried.

8. Old Business/New Business

- **Downtown Day at the State House, February 17:** Gary announced the upcoming downtown day planned for the state house. Last year's downtown day was a great success and staff hopes to have downtown organization members and leaders in attendance to meet with legislators.
- **Downtown Conference, White River Junction, June 8:** This year's downtown and historic preservation conference will be hosted in White River Junction. The conference will showcase some of the important tax credit projects in the downtown and the amazing transformation described in the recent renewal application.
- **[Act 157 Report](#):** Chris Cochran summarized recommendations made in the Act 157 report to the general assembly. The steering committee and department staff reviewed existing programs and statutes, gathered stakeholder input, and evaluated housing and infrastructure needs throughout Vermont. The report includes recommendations and methods to improve the quality and quantity of housing and tools to finance infrastructure.

9. Adjourn

Scott Murphy made a motion to adjourn and Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion carried and the Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 2:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Annina Seiler