

Approved Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 06/26/2017

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
- Jen Mojo, designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources
- Robert Sponable for Michael Desrochers, designated by the Commission 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
- Diane Snelling, 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 (4): Chris Cochran, Annina Seiler, Richard Amore, and Caitlin Corkins.

Guests (12): Greg Noyes, Canaan Selectboard; Haven Haynes, Canaan Selectboard; Carol Geery, Clarendon Planning Commission (by phone); Gale LiCausi, Clarendon Planning Commission (by phone); Jonas Rosenthal, Fair Haven Interim Town Manager; Ron Rodjenski, Hyde Park Town Administrator; Seth Jensen, Lamoille County Planning Commission; Karen Horn, Moretown Planning Commission; Horace Scharges, Moretown Planning Commission; Bob McCandless, Newfane Planning Commission; Lynn Forrest, Newfane Planning Commission; Ken Estey, Newfane Planning Commission.

Michele Boomhower brought the meeting to order at 1:03 pm in the Calvin Coolidge Room, 6th floor of the National Life Building, Montpelier.

She began by introducing new Board member Gabrielle Ciuffreda, Guilford Selectboard member and Board representative for the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

1. Additions or Deletions to Board Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the Board Agenda.

2. Approval of Minutes from April 24, 2017

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve the April 24, 2017 minutes. Laura Trieschmann seconded and the motion passed 10-0. Gabrielle Ciuffreda abstained.

3. Public Comment Period

Michele Boomhower opened the meeting to public comment: there were no comments.

4. Village Center Designation – 4 – Richard Amore

New Applications (9)

Canaan Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for Canaan village center. The proposed boundary runs along Route 114 (Gale Street), Route 102 and the Connecticut River. The designated area would include the Grace Community Church, Northland Diner and apartments, Episcopal Church, a motel, the Canaan Memorial and elementary schools, the recreation park, library, Fletcher Park, health center, commercial businesses and multifamily and single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definitions and provide a map that meets the program's requirements.

Greg Noyes and Haven Haynes, Canaan Selectboard members, described recent planning and revitalization efforts, a unique high school program that rehabilitates houses in the village, and efforts to engage the community.

Michael McDonough made a motion to approve village center designation for Canaan village center and Tasha Wallis seconded. The motion passed 10-0. Patricia Sears abstained.

Beecher Falls Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for Beecher Falls village center in the Town of Canaan. The proposed boundary runs along River Road, Route 253 and the Connecticut River. The area proposed for designation includes the post office, general store, deli and apartments, Marquis Hardware, town common, an auto-repair shop, former restaurant, former American Legion building, commercial businesses and multifamily and single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definitions and provide a map that meets the program's requirements.

Greg Noyes and Haven Haynes, Canaan Selectboard members, described a new general store and deli in Beecher Falls, plans to expand the village park, and investments in a community wastewater system.

Tom Torti made a motion to approve village center designation for Beecher Falls village center and Liz Gamache seconded. The motion passed 10-0. Patricia Sears abstained.

Clarendon Springs Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for Clarendon Springs village center in the Town of Clarendon. The proposed boundary runs primarily along Walker Mountain road, Peters Road and Clarendon Springs Road. The designated area would include the Clarendon House Hotel, the Spring House, the Old Pharmacy, the former C.E. Seamons General Store, 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 definitions and provide a map that meets the program's requirements.

Carol Geery and Gale LiCausi, Clarendon Planning Commissioners, described revitalization activities and redevelopment opportunities for the Clarendon House, an important historic building. Carol expressed hope that village center designation and associated benefits will jump start village center revitalization.

Liz Gamache made a motion to approve village center designation for Clarendon Springs village center and Gabrielle Ciuffreda seconded. The motion passed 11-0.

Fair Haven Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for Fair Haven village center. The proposed boundary runs along Main Street and Park Street, including the park, town offices, the fire department, elementary school, village park, post office, commercial businesses, and multifamily single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definitions and provide a map that meets the program's requirements.

Patricia Sears made a motion to approve village center designation for Fair Haven village center and Robert Sponable seconded.

Jonas Rosenthal, Interim Town Manager, described the many amenities and services available in Fair Haven, recent revitalization and community engagement efforts, and regional employers. Michael McDonough, suggested the town work towards downtown designation, noting the number and historic integrity of the buildings.

A vote was taken. The motion passed 11-0.

North Hyde Park Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for North Hyde Park. The proposed boundary runs along Route 100 and Ferry Street including the Old Fire House, post office, grange, historical society, First Congregational Church, Advent Christian Church, 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 definitions and provide a map that meets the program's requirements.

Ron Rodjenski, Town Manager, provided historical background and described a once vibrant logging industry that supported North Hyde Park. The community hopes that designation benefits will support local revitalization efforts and restore vibrancy to the village.

Patricia Sears made a motion to approve village center designation for North Hyde Park village center and Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion passed 10-0. Tasha Wallis abstained.

Moretown Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for Moretown village center. The town worked with CP+R staff to define the boundary. However, the town is asking the Board to consider a boundary larger than the staff recommendation. The town proposed boundary is not anchored by civic/commercial uses, does not meet the statutory definition, and would include areas of land that are not consistent with Board precedence.

Karen Horn and Horace Scharges, Moretown Planning Commissioners, briefly described the impacts and recovery from Tropical Storm Irene and the impressive number of micro-businesses in the village.

Liz Gamache made a motion to approve village center designation for Moretown village center using the staff recommended boundary. Patricia Sears seconded and discussion ensued. Board members agreed that the town proposed boundary represents the greater village but that the staff boundary, in conformance with statute and past precedence, represents the village center/core. Members also noted that single family residential properties excluded from the staff recommended boundary would not be eligible for designation benefits if included. Lastly, members stressed that the town is always welcome to return to the Board for an amendment should any property uses change.

A vote was taken. The motion passed 11-0.

Tasha Wallis suggested that in such cases, where the proposed boundary does not align with the staff recommendation, that Google street view or a video of the village be provided.

Newfane Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for Newfane village center. The proposed boundary runs along Route 30 and includes the common, the Courthouse, Newfane Market, Post office, Town Office, Union Hall, Congregational Church, Four Columns Inn, Library, Historical Society, commercial businesses and multifamily and single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definitions and provide a map that meets the program's requirements.

Bob McCandless, Newfane Planning Commissioner and resident of Newfane village shared a brief history of the village, its many celebrity visitors, recent revitalization activities, the iconic village green, and reasons for pursuing designation.

Tom Torti made a motion to approve village center designation for Newfane village center and Robert Sponable seconded. The motion passed 11-0.

South Newfane Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for South Newfane village center. The proposed boundary runs along Dover Road and includes the former South Newfane General Store, the Baptist Church, the former Inn, Rock River Cabin and Studio, South Newfane School House, commercial businesses and multifamily and single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definitions and provide a map that meets the program's requirements.

Lynn Forrest, Chair of the Newfane Planning Commission and resident of South Newfane village thanked staff for their support and described the loss of the general store, proximity to major tourist destinations, and a little library opened in December 2016.

Tom Torti made a motion to approve village center designation for South Newfane village center and Tasha Wallis seconded. The motion passed 11-0.

Williamsville Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for Williamsville village center. The proposed boundary runs along Dover Road and includes the post office, a preschool, Williamsville Guesthouse and Hall, the Eatery, fire station, Buddhist Center, commercial businesses, and multifamily and single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definitions and provide a map that meets the program's requirements.

Ken Estey, Newfane Planning Commissioner and resident of Williamsville, noted signs of returning life, a new farm to plate restaurant, renovated Bed and Breakfast, and plans for a new park on the site of Tropical Storm Irene buyouts.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve village center designation for Williamsville village center and Jen Mojo seconded. The motion passed 10-0. Patricia Sears was not present for the vote.

Renewal Applications (2)

Jeffersonville village center

Richard presented the complete application for renewal of village center designation for Jeffersonville village center. The designated boundary was not altered and the map was updated to meet program requirements. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of the application for renewal of village center designation for Jeffersonville village center.

Tom Torti made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for Jeffersonville village center and Laura Trieschmann seconded. The motion passed 10-0. Tasha Wallis abstained.

Quechee village center

Richard presented the complete application for renewal of village center designation for Quechee. The designated boundary was not altered and the map was updated to meet program requirements. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of the application for renewal of village center designation for Quechee village center.

Liz Gamache made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for Quechee village center and Jen Mojo seconded. The motion passed 11-0.

5. Review Proposed Tax Credit Criteria Changes – Caitlin Corkins

In preparation for the July round of downtown and village center tax credit applications and sales tax reallocation applications, staff reviewed score sheets, the scoring process, and the competitive criteria. Board members scored sample applications and raised questions, discussed issues, and offered feedback to staff to ensure consistency in scoring. Caitlin also presented an updated definition of co-working and maker spaces, after consulting with Lars Hasselblad Torres from Burlington Generator, as requested by the Board. She recommended using the following definitions to determine if projects qualified as maker or co-working spaces.

- **Makerspace:** a shared shop environment that contains tools needed to design and build things while sharing skills and interests and fostering creative community.
- **Co-working space:** a shared office environment where independent workers can gather to work, share skills and interests, and build creative community.

Tom Torti requested staff delete “creative” from the definition of co-working as noted above.

Board members expressed concerns about using the example of technology-related business under the community need criteria. It was noted that technology alone, without the larger supporting infrastructure, will not necessarily lead to economic development. Staff explained that “technology-related business” was one of many examples for applicants to consider. The aim of the bulleted list is to help applicants improve the quality and consistency of their applications. Technology business is not a priority sector, but certain investments in technology are eligible for tax credits. Discussion moved to the limited utilization of the tax credit for technology infrastructure. Michele Boomhower recommended that staff gather data on its use and to coordinate with leadership to determine if legislative action is necessary.

6. Old Business/New Business

- **Downtown and Historic Preservation Conference:** A sellout crowd of over 300 people attended the annual Downtown and Historic Preservation Conference in White River Junction. The keynote, Joe Minicozzi, hit a home run with his talk that illustrated how investments in downtowns do more to build local revenues than any other type of development.

- **S. 135:** The Governor signed the economic development bill, S. 135, into law. The bill includes an additional \$200,000 for downtown and village center tax credits, enables six new Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, makes state permitting of Priority Housing Projects easier and it updates the definition of affordable housing to encourage more middle-income housing development.

7. Adjourn

Chip Sawyer made a motion to adjourn and Tasha Wallis seconded. The motion passed 11-0. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 3:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Annina Seiler