

**Approved Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
11/23/2015**

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

Members Present:

- Noelle MacKay (*chair*), Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- Joe Segale for Michele Boomhower, Agency of Transportation
- Jen Mojo, Agency of Natural Resources
- Robert Sponable for Michael Desrochers, Department of Public Safety
- Laura Trieschmann, State Historic Preservation Officer
- Peg Elmer Hough, Smart Growth Appointee
- Scott Murphy (by phone), Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Michael McDonough, Gubernatorial Appointee from Bennington
- Ron Redmond, Gubernatorial Appointee Representing Downtown Organizations
- Michael Munson, Vermont Planners Association
- Jon Groveman, 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: Chris Cochran, Annina Seiler and Faith Ingulsrud.

Guests: Tom Marsh, Manager, Town of Windsor; Bob Haight, Director, Downtown Windsor; Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning and Development, City of St. Albans; Sarah Hadd, Director of Planning and Zoning, Town of Colchester; Karen Purinton, Planning Coordinator, Town of Colchester; Patrick O'Brien, S.D. Ireland.

Chair Noelle MacKay brought the meeting to order at 1:04 pm in the Calvin Coolidge Room, 6th floor of the National Life Building, Montpelier.

1. Additions or Deletions to Board Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the Board Agenda.

2. Approval of Minutes from September 28, 2015

Peg Elmer Hough made a motion to approve the draft September 28, 2015 minutes and Michael McDonough seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Joe Segale, Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Robert Sponable, Scott Murphy, Tasha Wallis and Noelle MacKay. The motion carried.

3. Public Comment Period

Noelle MacKay opened the meeting to public comment: there were no comments.

4. Elect Vice-Chair

Peter Gregory, former vice-chair of the Downtown Board, recently resigned his seat and the Board is thereby asked to elect another member to this position. Joe Segale made a motion to nominate Michele Boomhower as the vice-chair of the Vermont Downtown Board and Tasha Wallis seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Joe Segale, Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Robert Sponable, Scott Murphy, Tasha Wallis and Noelle MacKay. The motion carried.

5. Village Center Designation Renewal – 5 – Chris Cochran

Danville Village Center

Chris presented the complete application for renewal of Village Center designation for Danville Village Center. The designated boundary was not altered and the map was updated to meet program standards. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of the application for renewal of the Village Center designation for Danville Village Center.

Michael Munson made a motion to approve renewal of Village Center designation for Danville Village Center and Robert Sponable seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Joe Segale, Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Robert Sponable, Scott Murphy, Tasha Wallis and Noelle MacKay. The motion carried.

East Middlebury Village Center

Chris presented the complete application for renewal of Village Center designation for East Middlebury Village Center in the Town of Middlebury. The designated boundary was not altered and the map was updated to meet program standards. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of the application for renewal of the Village Center designation for East Middlebury.

Michael McDonough made a motion to approve renewal of Village Center designation for East Middlebury Village Center and Michael Munson seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Joe Segale, Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Robert Sponable, Scott Murphy, Tasha Wallis and Noelle MacKay. The motion carried.

Pittsfield Village Center

The complete application for renewal of Village Center designation for Pittsfield Village Center was presented to the Board. The designated boundary was not altered and the map was updated to meet program standards. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of the application for renewal of the Village Center designation for Pittsfield Village Center.

Peg Elmer Hough made a motion to approve renewal of Village Center designation for Pittsfield Village Center and Joe Segale seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Joe Segale, Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Robert Sponable, Scott Murphy, Tasha Wallis and Noelle MacKay. The motion carried.

New Haven Village Center

New Haven's Town Plan does not currently meet statutory requirements and therefore an application for renewal of Village Center designation was not submitted. The town is working to update their plan and intends to reapply for designation in the Spring of 2016. Staff recommends that the Board proceed with de-designation.

Laura Trieschmann made a motion to de-designate New Haven Village Center and Michael Munson seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Joe Segale, Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Robert Sponable, Scott Murphy, Tasha Wallis and Noelle MacKay. The motion carried.

6. Downtown Designation Renewal Application – 1 – Chris Cochran

Town of Windsor

Chris Cochran presented the application for Downtown designation renewal from the Town of Windsor. The application is complete and all requirements are met. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of the application for renewal of Downtown designation. Chris introduced Tom Marsh, Town Manager and Bob Haight, Zoning Administrator and Director of Downtown Windsor. Both guests provided the Board with a presentation on community successes, challenges, and future plans. The Board discussed various revitalization efforts in the community from brush cutting, to the creation of a bike path, and the planned rehabilitation and of an entire neighborhood of former factory housing. Tom spoke to the importance of the downtown program, which has provided the necessary tools for the community to come together, develop a shared vision, and implement the recommended changes in their town.

Peg Elmer Hough made a motion to approve renewal of Downtown designation for the Town of Windsor and Michael Munson seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Joe Segale, Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Robert Sponable, Scott Murphy, Tasha Wallis and Noelle MacKay. The motion carried.

7. Downtown Transportation Fund (DTF) Grant Amendment Request – 1 – Chris Cochran

Chris introduced Chip Sawyer, Planning and Development Director for the City of St. Albans. The City is requesting an amendment to the completion date and scope of work for the Lake and Federal Streets Safety Improvements Project. The city was awarded \$100,000 in DTF grant funds in 2013 for a project to improve the safety of a major intersection in the downtown core by installing a traffic signal. Due to unforeseen challenges with the railroad and cost increases, the city is now requesting an amendment to the completion date, to October 31, 2016. Additionally, the city would like to modify the scope of the grant to allow for the installation of a four way stop instead of the originally proposed signal. The amended project scope also includes improvements to accommodate truck traffic and additional streetscape improvements needed along the core block. Staff recommends approving the amendment to extend the completion date to October 31, 2016 and modify the scope of work. Chip addressed questions from the Board regarding modifications to the scope and reasons for the delay in project commencement.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to accept the amended design and scope of the project and to extend the project completion date to October 31, 2016. The town must provide the Board with a written update by April 30, 2016 regarding the acquisition of right-of-way from two landowners. Michael Munson seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken.

Ayes: Joe Segale, Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Robert Sponable, Scott Murphy, Tasha Wallis and Noelle MacKay. The motion carried.

8. New Town Center Check-in – 1 – Faith Ingulsrud

Town of Colchester

The Town of Colchester's application for renewal of their New Town Center designation was approved by the Board at its meeting on December 1, 2014 with the condition that the town submit a one-year progress report. The report required Colchester to submit information on its lease agreement for the visitor center, and detail its staffing, hours of operation, and the activities and uses in the building. It also required updates on civic uses and public buildings within the New Town Center. The town submitted its progress report and included its executed April 2015 lease agreement for a new public information center. Staff reviewed the progress report and lease and determined they meet the Board's requirements as outlined in the renewal award letter dated December 4, 2014.

A lengthy Board discussion ensued. Peg Elmer Hough noted that though the requirements of the progress report had been met, she continued to have concerns about the community's ability to meet the requirement for public and civic buildings within the center. Additionally, she does not believe that the visitor's center, with its limited staff, hours, and access meets the definition of a public or civic building. She questioned whether the town would ever be able to meet this standard and recommended removing the New Town Center designation. Board members acknowledged the difficulty that this designation presents and the need for clear communication regarding Board expectations. Noelle MacKay noted that removing the designation would impact future development and would no longer allow the Board to have a voice in the continuing development of this area.

Michael Munson noted that the town already has a concentration of civic and public buildings along Blakely Road and expressed concern, as a planner and Board member, that forcing the community to dilute this existing center does not further the goals of the designation. Discussion continued and several newer Board members noted that additional information about the history of Colchester's designation and persistent Board concerns would be helpful in making an informed decision.

Staff proposed a motion that would require the town to return with a progress report in another two years. Michael McDonough questioned whether a motion was really necessary and if two years was enough time for the town to address the issue any further. Sarah Hadd, from the town of Colchester and Patrick O'Brien, representing the developer, noted that the community and developer are committed to addressing Board concerns but would require additional time. Sarah noted that the town has begun work on a recreational facilities needs analysis and is considering the new town center as a possible location for an indoor recreation facility and community center. She expressed a need for clear direction from the

Board and an understanding of what types of civic and public buildings would satisfy the Board. Joe Segale asked whether a building open to the public such as a theater would be satisfactory or if it must be municipality owned. The Board noted that the statute does not define civic or public buildings and that this deficiency increases the need for clear guidance from the Board. Noelle Mackay suggested that a community center, fire station and visitor's center, as proposed, could satisfy the Board's concerns.

Peg Elmer Hough made a motion to remove Colchester's New Town Center designation as it does not meet criteria (F) as defined by statute ([24 V.S.A § 2793b](#)) which requires evidence that civic and public buildings do exist, or will exist in the center, as shown by the capital improvement plan or the capital budget and program, and the official map. Michael Munson seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Peg Elmer Hough, Michael Munson. Nays: Michael McDonough, Robert Sponable, Laura Trieschmann, Joe Segale, Jon Groveman, Scott Murphy, and Noelle MacKay. Abstained: Tasha Wallis and Jen Mojo.

Jon Groveman proposed that the Board bring the issue up again at the next meeting. Staff should provide a draft letter to the town which clarifies the Board interpretation of what types of buildings in the new town center would meet criteria (F). Members will be provided with background information including previous applications for designation and renewal, meeting minutes, and letters sent to the community to inform the discussion. The Board agreed on this course of action and thanked the community for their participation.

9. Electric Vehicle Charging Station Grants – 4 – Chris Cochran

The Agency of Natural Resources has partnered with the Division of Community Planning & Revitalization and the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation to promote and install electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in Vermont's Designated Downtowns and now Village Centers. This is the third round of grant applications with \$49,291 available in funding. Four applicants, from Norwich, Plainfield, Essex Junction Village, and Johnson Village are requesting a total of \$33,376 in funding. There are currently no existing EV charging stations in any of the communities and the proposed locations are in close proximity to major roads or highways. As this was not a competitive round of applications, the Board was asked simply to review applications without scoring or ranking them. If all four projects are funded, roughly \$15,900 would remain for a possible fourth round of funding. The Board discussed opening the grant to the remaining designations including New Town Centers but decided to continue to allow only state designated village centers and downtowns to apply. The Board agreed that staff should request an extension to the current Electric Vehicle Charging Station MOU with ANR to allow for an additional grant round for the remaining funds early in 2016.

Peg Elmer Hough made a motion to fund the applications for Electric Vehicle Charging Station Grant funds from Norwich, Plainfield, Essex Junction Village, and Johnson Village. Michael Munson seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Joe Segale, Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Robert Sponable, Scott Murphy, Tasha Wallis and Noelle MacKay. The motion carried.

10. Review Changes to Downtown Transportation Fund Grant Application

Staff presented changes, based on Board and applicant comments, to the application guidelines for the upcoming FY16 round of Downtown Transportation Fund Grants. Changes include additional language regarding state eligibility requirements, a template for project schedules, questions addressing project management capacity and the development of a realistic budget, and updates to the scoring criteria to allow for an additional point for communities whose project is recommended in a municipal plan as well as an area master plan. The FY16 grants will be due March 7, 2016 with award decisions April 25, 2016, allowing additional time for AOT staff to review project. Chris also noted that statutory changes allow the Board to lower the match requirement but staff does not recommend making this change this year as the program is currently oversubscribed. Board members thanked staff for the changes and requested a few minor edits.

11. Old Business/New Business

- December Meeting: Chris reminded Board members that the December meeting has been cancelled and that the next meeting will be January 25, 2016.
- Announcements: there were no announcements.

12. Adjourn

Robert Sponable made a motion to adjourn and Tasha Wallis seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Joe Segale, Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Robert Sponable, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Tasha Wallis, Scott Murphy and Noelle MacKay. The motion carried and the Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 4:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Annina Seiler