

**Draft Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
11/28/2016**

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

Members Present (10):

- Lucy Leriche (*chair*), Agency of Commerce and Community Development (departed following the Waterbury Downtown Renewal)
- Michele Boomhower (*vice-chair*), Agency of Transportation
- Jen Mojo, Agency of Natural Resources
- Michael Desrochers, Department of Public Safety
- Laura Trieschmann, State Historic Preservation Officer
- Katie Buckley, Smart Growth Appointee (by phone)
- Scott Murphy, Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Michael McDonough, Gubernatorial Appointee from Bennington
- Liz Gamache, Gubernatorial Appointee from St. Albans
- Chip Sawyer for Rod Francis, Vermont Planners Association
- Diane Snelling, Natural Resources Board
- Tom Kennedy for 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 (10): Preston Bristow, Barnard Selectboard Assistant; Jon Groveman, Marshfield Planning Commissioner; Dan Currier, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission; Meghan Rodier, Lamoille County Planning Commission; Seth Jensen, Lamoille County Planning Commission; Karen Wescom, Hyde Park Village Clerk/Treasurer; Steve Lotspeich, Waterbury Community Planner; Karen Nevin, Revitalizing Waterbury Executive Director; Tricia Follert, Morristown Community Development Coordinator; Tommy Gardner, Stowe Reporter.

Lucy Leriche brought the meeting to order at 1:01 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 October 24, 2016

Diane Snelling made a motion to approve the draft October 24, 2016 minutes and Michele Boomhower seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Katie Buckley and Michele Boomhower. Chip Sawyer, Diane Snelling, Michael Desrochers, Tom Kennedy and Lucy Leriche abstained. The motion carried.

3. Public Comment Period

Lucy Leriche opened the meeting to public comment: there were no comments.

4. Village Center Designation – 4 – Richard

Richard began his presentation by highlighting a completed village center tax credit project in Hancock. Hubbard's Country Store was severely damaged during Tropical Storm Irene and later purchased by a local couple who used tax credits to renovate the property and bring the general store back to the village. The project was recently highlighted in an [article](#) in Seven Days.

New Applications (2)

Barnard Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for Barnard village center. The village center boundary runs along Route 12 and include parcels along Stage Road and North Road. The proposed boundary includes the Barnard General Store, the town hall and town offices, the Danforth Library, a church, post office, town beach, small businesses, and single and multi-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. Preston Bristow, from the Town of Barnard, spoke to the Board and shared several revitalization successes and described the transformation of Barnard into a center for food production and the performing arts.

Diane Snelling made a motion to approve village center designation for Barnard village center and Chip Sawyer seconded, A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Tom Kennedy, Katie Buckley, Michele Boomhower, and Lucy Leriche. The motion carried.

Marshfield Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for Marshfield village center. The village center boundary runs along US Route 2 and School Street. The proposed boundary includes the Old-School House Common, the town offices, two churches, a village store, the fire station, several small businesses, and single and multi-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. Jon Groveman, noted the difficulty of moving planning efforts forward in small communities with volunteer commissions and no professional planning staff. He thanked CP+R staff and the regional planning commission for their support completing the village center application. The town was motivated to apply by the designation benefits including priority consideration for municipal planning grant funds.

Diane Snelling made a motion to approve village center designation for Marshfield village center and Jen Mojo seconded.

Tom Kennedy asked if the community had discussed increasing mixed use zoning for the village, currently identified as rural residential. Jon noted that a bylaw revision is planned and that the community hopes to pursue grant funds to hire a consultant to complete this work. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Tom Kennedy, Katie Buckley, Michele Boomhower, and Lucy Leriche. The motion carried.

Renewal Applications (2)

Hyde Park Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for renewal of village center designation for the Village of Hyde Park. The village requested a boundary amendment to clean up the boundary and designate both sides of the street, as has become Board practice. The amendments include additional parcels along Church Street, incorporates the ongoing efforts of the Lamoille County Sheriff's Department, and adds one multi-family residential property along Church Street and two single family residential properties along Johnson Street Extension. The boundary amendment was developed by the town in coordination with CP+R Staff. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of the application for renewal of the village center designation and boundary amendment for Hyde Park village center.

Karen Wescom, from the Village of Hyde Park and Seth Jensen and Meghan Rodier from Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC) addressed the Board. They described various challenges and opportunities including the connection to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and early success of their tax stabilization program.

Diane Snelling made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation and the boundary amendment for the Village of Hyde Park. Michele Boomhower seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Tom Kennedy, Katie Buckley, Michele Boomhower, and Lucy Leriche. The motion carried.

North Bennington Village Center

The complete application for renewal of village center designation for North Bennington 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 North Bennington village center.

Diane Snelling made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for North Bennington village center and Michael Desrochers seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Tom Kennedy, Katie Buckley, Michele Boomhower, and Lucy Leriche. The motion carried.

5. Downtown Designation Renewal Application – 2 – Gary Holloway

Town of Waterbury

Gary presented the complete application for renewal of downtown designation for Waterbury. The application is complete, all requirements are met, and no boundary changes are proposed. Given that Revitalizing Waterbury is taking on the responsibilities of the soon to be dissolved Tourism Council, staff recommends the organization focus on developing a new five-year strategic plan and plan training for new board members on the responsibilities and benefits of downtown designation. Additionally, Gary recommends the town continue their work, with support from VTrans and the Downtown Program, to prepare a main street construction mitigation plan. Gary welcomed Steve Lotspeich, Waterbury Community Planner

and Karen Nevin, Executive Director of Revitalizing Waterbury. They briefly highlighted the post tropical storm Irene recovery projects, the new municipal complex, the growth of their annual arts festival, partnerships, and efforts to engage employees at the new state office complex and bring them into the downtown.

Michael McDonough expressed interest in understanding how the new organization would mitigate concerns about the possible conflict of interest between their varying missions, one focused entirely on the downtown and the other on the entire Waterbury community. Karen responded at length discussing the various staff and their directives, and the similarity between the missions of the two organizations. Michael McDonough continued that he would be interested in learning more about how this relationship is working at the next renewal.

Diane Snelling made a motion to approve renewal of downtown designation for Waterbury and Michele Boomhower seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Tom Kennedy, Katie Buckley, Michele Boomhower, and Lucy Leriche. The motion carried.

Town of Morristown

By statute, the Downtown Board is required to review downtown designations every five years. The downtown designation for Morristown was last renewed in November 2011 and the renewal application, demonstrating that Morristown continued to meet all the requirements of designation, was due on the first Monday of this month, November 7, 2016. No application was received.

A statutory requirement of the designation renewal is confirmation of the planning process by the regional planning commission (RPC). To be confirmed, an adopted town plan must be approved by a RPC and the municipality must maintain efforts to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning purposes (pay its RPC dues) ([24 V.S.A. §4350](#)).

In late August, the Selectboard and Trustees of Morristown/Morrisville voted to end their membership in LCPC. LCPC formally notified the town that their planning process is not confirmed. With no RPC affiliation, the town planning process cannot be confirmed and the town is unable to meet the requirements for downtown designation. Staff emailed local officials, following the November 7, 2016 application deadline, asking if they intended to renew their designation. The [town replied](#) that they do not plan to renew the designation at this time. They also said they do not plan to join their regional planning commission (RPC).

Gary Holloway explained that when a renewal application is not received by the deadline, the designation program benefits are suspended and communities are granted a 90-day extension before the Board votes to de-designate. To regain downtown designation, a de-designated town would need to submit a new application. In response to a question from Chip Sawyer, Gary noted that a new application is much like a renewal application. The most significant difference is that with new applications the proposed boundary is open to discussion and change whereas the Board's policy is to accept boundaries for renewal applications when no amendments are proposed.

Tricia Follert, the Morristown Community Development Coordinator, addressed the Board. She began by stressing the value of the downtown designation to the community,

specifically the importance of funding opportunities, technical assistance, and the network of downtown directors. If de-designated, the local downtown organization will continue its downtown revitalization efforts. However, she affirmed that the town has no intention of rejoining LCPC and is pursuing the option of joining another RPC.

Michele Boomhower asked staff to clarify the process for municipalities to move from one RPC to another. Chris Cochran stated that while state law allows towns to switch from one RPC to another, statute requires that the change “constitute a logical geographic and a coherent socioeconomic planning area” ([24 V.S.A. §4341](#)). As Morristown is the geographic and economic center of Lamoille County, and borders no other RPC, it is unclear how the town could meet this requirement. Tom Kennedy added that in other examples of municipalities joining another RPC, that the town abutted another RPC and that geography was considered.

Board members thanked Tricia for coming to the Board meeting to discuss Morristown’s renewal. Michael McDonough raised for discussion the question of whether this case was an anomaly or demonstrated a greater concern and need to reevaluate the role of the RPC-municipality relationship in the designation process. Chris Cochran shared that this issue is extremely rare, noting that the last municipality who joined another region occurred in the 1990s. Michael McDonough stressed that he was not suggesting a severing of ties between the RPC and the designation program. He commented that the Board was struggling to address an issue that impacts designation but is not within the Board’s purview.

Seth Jensen, from the Lamoille County Planning Commission, was given an opportunity to address the Board. He described the importance of Morristown as the economic and geographic center of Lamoille County. He noted that the downtown designation has greatly benefited and strengthened Morristown and thereby the region as a whole. The town and RPC have worked productively on many projects in the past, including recent examples of brownfields assessment, development of new housing units and a parking survey which lead to bylaw amendments. LCPC is committed to continuing to work with the town and village and stated that the offer to engage in mediation remains open. Board discussion continued.

Tricia Follert noted that the town would prefer to be granted the full 90-day suspension period before the Board votes to de-designate. Chris Cochran identified the actions, outlined in statute, that the Board can take ([24 V.S.A. §2793](#)). Diane Snelling made a motion to suspend the designation benefits for the Town of Morristown for 90 days and to review again at the February Board meeting. Tom Kennedy seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Tom Kennedy, Katie Buckley, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried.

Board members again thanked Tricia for her participation and candor and expressed hope that a resolution would be found.

6. Old Business/New Business

- **December Board Meeting:** Board members agreed that the December meeting was cancelled due to the difficulty of ensuring a quorum and as no timely issues needed to be addressed at that time.

7. Adjourn

Diane Snelling made a motion to adjourn and Chip Sawyer seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Tom Kennedy, Katie Buckley, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried and the Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 2:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Annina Seiler