

**Approved Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
9/26/2016**

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

Members Present (11):

- Lucy Leriche (*chair*), Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- 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
- Scott Murphy, Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Michael McDonough, Gubernatorial Appointee from Bennington
- Liz Gamache, Gubernatorial Appointee from St. Albans
- Rod Francis for Michael Munson, Vermont Planners Association (by phone) (departed after Old Business/New Business)
- Diane Snelling, Natural Resources Board (arrived after the approval of Minutes)
- 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 (5): Chris Cochran, Annina Seiler, Richard Amore, Gary Holloway and Caitlin Corkins.

Guests (8): Rosemary Goings, Ludlow Director of Planning and Zoning; Jason Rasmussen, Southern Windsor County RPC; Alan Isaacson, Ludlow Planning Commissioner; Lori Hirshfield, Hartford Planning and Development Director; Mary Helen Hawthorne, Bellows Falls Downtown Development Alliance; Lamont Barnett, Selectboard Chair & Downtown Development Alliance Vice President; Seth Jensen, Lamoille County Regional Planning Commission; Al Voegelé, Northwest Regional Planning Commission.

Lucy Leriche brought the meeting to order at 1:02 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 July 25, 2016

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve the draft July 25, 2016 minutes and Katie Buckley seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Katie Buckley, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Michael Desrochers, Tasha Wallis, Rod Francis and Lucy Leriche. Abstained: Liz Gamache. 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 Amore

Renewal Applications (4)

Ludlow Village Center

The complete application for renewal of village center designation for Ludlow village center was presented to the Board. The town requested a boundary amendment to include properties at the western edge of Main Street, south along Andover Street and a block along Pleasant Street. The boundary amendment along Main Street includes seven additional parcels, consisting primarily of commercial uses. The boundary amendment along Andover Street includes 11 parcels, consisting primarily of single and multi-family residences, with one Bed and Breakfast. The boundary amendment along Pleasant Street would add approximately 17 parcels, including three lodging establishments, two commercial businesses, one law office and several single family and multi-family residential uses.

The town invited staff to tour the boundary area and discuss the boundary amendments and the importance of the western gateway along Main Street, Andover Street, and the Pleasant Street corridor. The boundary amendments were developed by the town in coordination with staff. Staff feels the boundary amendments align with the statutory definition of a village center and recommends approval of the boundary amendment and application for renewal village center designation.

Diane Snelling made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation, and the boundary amendment, for Ludlow village center and Michael Desrochers seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Katie Buckley, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Michael Desrochers, Tasha Wallis, Rod Francis and Lucy Leriche. The motion carried.

Woodstock Village Center

The complete application for renewal of village center designation for Woodstock 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 Woodstock village center.

Diane Snelling made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for Woodstock village center and Tasha Wallis seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Katie Buckley, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Michael Desrochers, Tasha Wallis, Rod Francis and Lucy Leriche. The motion carried.

Barton Village Center

Barton's Town Plan does not currently meet statutory requirements and therefore an application for renewal of village center designation for Barton was not submitted. The town is working to update their plan and intends to reapply for designation in the fall and submit new designation applications for Barton and Orleans Village. Staff recommends that the Board proceed with de-designation.

Diane Snelling made a motion to de-designate Barton village center and Liz Gamache seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Katie Buckley, Laura

Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Michael Desrochers, Tasha Wallis, Rod Francis and Lucy Leriche. The motion carried.

Hinesburg Village Center

The Town of Hinesburg is in the process of updating their Town Plan, which does not currently meet statutory requirements. An application for renewal of village center designation for Hinesburg village center was not submitted. The town intends to reapply for designation in the winter.

Diane Snelling made a motion to de-designate Hinesburg village center and Michele Boomhower seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Katie Buckley, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Michael Desrochers, Tasha Wallis, Rod Francis and Lucy Leriche. The motion carried.

Hinesburg Neighborhood Development Area

Because the neighborhood development area designation is an add-on to the underlying village center designation, the de-designation of the village center means that the town no longer meets the requirements to retain the neighborhood development area designation. The Town of Hinesburg may reapply for neighborhood development area designation later this winter. The developer who submitted the original neighborhood development area designation has obtained their jurisdictional opinion from the District Commission and secured some of the benefits of the NDA designation. Staff recommends that the Board proceed with de-designation of Hinesburg neighborhood development area.

Michele Boomhower made a motion to de-designation Hinesburg neighborhood development area. Laura Trieschmann seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Katie Buckley, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Michael Desrochers, Tasha Wallis, Rod Francis and Lucy Leriche. The motion carried.

5. Downtown Designation Renewal Application – 2 – Gary Holloway

Town of Rockingham, Bellows Falls Downtown

Gary Holloway introduced Mary Helen Hawthorne, the Executive Director of the Bellows Falls Downtown Development Alliance and Lamont Barnett, Selectboard Chair and Vice President of the Downtown Development Alliance. Staff presented the review for the renewal of Downtown Designation. The application is complete, all requirements are met and no boundary changes are proposed. Gary offered recommendations to expand the hours of the Executive Director position and the capacity of the downtown organization by securing additional funding from the town and village and pursuing internship opportunities. Gary noted the important role of the revolving loan fund in supporting the revitalization of vacant downtown properties and the success of the program in promoting participation in the downtown and village center tax credit program. Staff recommends approval of the application for renewal of downtown designation.

Mary Helen provided the Board with an overview of the downtown organization and highlighted the progress the community has made in addressing prior staff recommendations. Along with the successes, including new way-finding signage, strong partnership with the local chamber, and a Vermont Life magazine article, Mary Helen

elaborated on some of the continuing challenges, including the closing of the Vilas Bridge, lack of local transportation alternatives, and funding and capacity limits. The Board thanked the guests for their presentation and recognized the significance of their low vacancy rate and the visible efforts of the organization in the downtown.

Diane Snelling made a motion to approve renewal of downtown designation for the Town of Rockingham and Liz Gamache seconded. a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Katie Buckley, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Michael Desrochers, Tasha Wallis, Rod Francis and Lucy Leriche. The motion carried.

Town of Hartford, White River Junction Downtown

Gary Holloway introduced Lori Hirshfield, Hartford's Director of Planning and Zoning. Staff presented the review for the renewal of Downtown Designation. The application is complete, all requirements are met and no boundary changes are proposed. Staff recommends the organization continue to pursue funding to hire staff, currently Lori serves in a dual capacity working for the town and the downtown organization, and a focus on increased funding and capacity to meet the goals of the strategic plan. Staff recommends approval of the application for renewal of downtown designation.

Lori provided the Board with an overview of the downtown organization and highlighted several successful downtown redevelopment projects and the significant number of housing units added in the last few years. She noted that the substantial investment the town has made in infrastructure, facilitated in part by the TIF district, has allowed the community to advance a vision for a more vibrant White River Junction. Board members thanked Lori for her presentation and marveled at the significant transformation that has occurred in the downtown. Members commented that they look forward to the 2017 Downtown and Historic Preservation Conference, which will show case the towns transformation and hard work.

Diane Snelling made a motion to approve renewal of downtown designation for the Town of Hartford and Michele Boomhower seconded. a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Diane Snelling, Jen Mojo, Katie Buckley, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Michael Desrochers, Tasha Wallis, Rod Francis and Lucy Leriche. The motion carried.

6. Tax Credit Applications

At the July meeting, Board members scored and awarded the downtown and village center tax credits. Time was reserved at this meeting to share suggestions and discuss ideas to make the process work better for everyone. Members suggested increasing the time given to complete scoring, which is limited to 45 days by statute, and having staff provide a review and recommendation for each application. Some felt that the staff review would mean additional work for staff and board members, might be too technical, and could unduly influence scoring. Board members agreed that a more involved training or workshop, prior to next year's round of applications, would be helpful.

7. Old Business/New Business

Chris Cochran shared concerns about Morristown's ability to maintain its downtown designation, which is due for renewal in November. In late August, the Selectboard and

Trustees of Morristown/Morrisville voted to end their membership in their Regional Planning Commission (RPC), the Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC).

Town officials are aware that this decision means their town plan cannot be confirmed and that it may result in the loss of its downtown designation and associated benefits like the tax credits and access to the transportation fund. They also understand this decision makes them ineligible for DHCD grants (MPG, VCDP) and that it limits their funding opportunities through other state agencies.

At this time, it's unknown if local elected officials will vote to reverse course. If they do not address this matter before the November renewal deadline, the application will be deemed incomplete.

Chris explained that the Board may review compliance with the designation requirements at any time. If the Board finds the downtown district no longer meets the standards for designation, the board may require corrective action, offer technical assistance, limit benefits, or remove the designation. He did not recommend the Board take any action at this point.

Seth Jensen, from the Lamoille County Planning Commission emphasized the importance of Morristown as Lamoille County's economic and geographic center. LCPC has made significant investments in Morristown, is eager to continue their work with the community and to find a resolution.

8. Adjourn

Diane Snelling made a motion to adjourn and the motion passed 10-0. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 3:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Annina Seiler