

Approved Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 4/27/2020

Meeting held via conference call in compliance with the Executive Order 01-20

Members Present (13):

- Josh Hanford (*Chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Michele Boomhower, designated by the Secretary of Transportation
- Billy Coster, designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources
- Michael Desrochers, designated by the Commissioner 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.
- David Allaire, designated by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Michael McDonough, appointed by the governor, representing local government
- Bruce Cheeseman, appointed by the Governor, representing local government
- Chip Sawyer, designated by the Vermont Planners Association
- Greg Boulbol, designated by the 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, Richard Amore, Gary Holloway, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (3): Sandy Gregg, Town of South Hero; Clare Rock, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission; and Karen Nevin, Revitalizing Waterbury.

Josh Hanford brought the meeting to order at 1:02 pm via GoTo Meeting virtual conference all.

Additions or Deletions to Board Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the board agenda.

1. Public Comment Period

Josh Hanford opened the meeting to public comment: there were no comments.

2. Consent Agenda Items:

There were no questions on the following agenda items:

- March 23, 2020 Meeting Minutes
- South Hero Village Center Boundary Amendment
Richard Amore and board members congratulated South Hero for their hard work and the successful amendment request.

3. Downtown Transportation Fund Grant

Michael McDonough recused himself from scoring Bennington's DTF application and David Allaire recused himself from scoring Rutland's DTF application, both explained this was to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest.

Board members reviewed and individually scored all Downtown Transportation Fund grant applications prior to the meeting. Gary Holloway presented the tallied and ranked scores of the 9 eligible applications requesting a total of \$540,734 for an available \$379,798 in funding. Based on tallied and averaged board scores full funding could be made available to applications from Bennington, St. Johnsbury, Brandon, Waterbury, Rutland, and Bellows Falls. The remaining \$9,570 could be offered to the next highest scoring application from Middlebury.

Gary Holloway explained that all applications were submitted prior to the COVID pandemic, and the department will need to communicate with each awarded town to determine if match funds are still available for these projects, additionally, some towns have furloughed employees and might be unable to initiate projects as scheduled. Michele Boomhower noted that the Agency of Transportation's revenue has declined due a reduction in fuel and vehicle purchases since the pandemic, this could impact FY21 funding for this program. Mayor Allaire commented that municipalities put a considerable amount of time into preparing the applications and have set money aside in anticipation of receiving this award. He believes the board should proceed forward with the belief that the projects will proceed as planned, and if a community has a challenge with the project – they will make that known. Many communities are looking forward to reopening and moving forward, and receiving the grant could be the boost that the community needs.

Board members also reviewed and individually scored the Downtown Transportation Fund Clean Water Fund grant application prior to the meeting. Gary Holloway presented the tallied of the one eligible application requesting a total of \$12,000 for an available \$100,000 in funding. Based on the board score full funding will be made available to the application from Brandon.

Board members inquired about the projects including wayfinding signage, and if those projects needed approval from the Travel Recreation Council on design elements of the proposed signage. Staff will work with Agency General Counsel to determine if conditions to the grant awards need to be included, to satisfy this requirement.

Dave Allaire made a motion to accept the ranking and to fully fund the Downtown Transportation Fund grants for Bennington, St. Johnsbury, Brandon, Waterbury, Rutland, and Bellows Falls, and to offer remaining funds to Middlebury. Bruce Cheeseman seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Greg Boulbol, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Tasha Wallis, Tom Torti, Trish Sears, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

4. Downtown Transportation Fund Grant – Amendment Requests

The Governor's Stay Home, Stay Safe Order requires non-essential construction to cease during the duration of the Executive Order. Due to the order, staff does not expect the projects in Bristol, Montpelier, Waterbury, and Wilmington, will have ample opportunity to complete their projects before October 23, 2020, as required by the grant agreement. To ensure these projects may continue once allowed, staff recommends the board grant a 12-month extension on these grants.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve the amendment request by staff for the projects in Bristol, Montpelier, Waterbury, and Wilmington for an additional 12-months. Bruce Cheeseman

seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Greg Boulbol, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Tasha Wallis, Tom Torti, Trish Sears, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

5. New Business

Governor's Recovery Action Teams

Josh Hanford apprised board members of the Governor's Economic Mitigation and Recovery Task Force Action Teams. Three distinct groups, Business Financial and Technical Support, Local and Community Solutions, and Stay Home, Stay Safe & Economic Transition, have been created and will be led by an Executive Team, who will assist with the gradual reopening of the State. These groups consist of a broad range of private individuals with knowledge in specific sectors and are supported by a state liaison and state staff. Board members were interested in assisting these groups however they can, and offered to be a clearinghouse for ideas, as well as a networking source to get information out to businesses and municipalities.

Legislative Updates

Chris Cochran informed board that the Agency's legislative package that included important Act 250 reforms for downtowns and villages, programmatic changes and a significant funding increase to the downtown tax credits, and the creation of a new crowdgranting for placemaking were all on track to pass before the pandemic hit. The legislature subsequently put these and other items on hold and now plans to pass COVID-related legislation and a short-term budget before adjourning for the summer. They will reconvene late summer or fall and should have time to return to these stalled items.

May Meeting Canceled

Due to an anticipated light agenda, the May board meeting will be canceled.

6. Adjourn

Trish Sears made a motion to adjourn and Tom Torti seconded. The motion passed unanimously. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Greg Boulbol, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Tasha Wallis, Tom Torti, Trish Sears, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 2:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie