

Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 2/26/2018

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

Members Present (12):

- Katie Buckley (*chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Jacqui LeBlanc (*vice-chair*), alternate designated by the Secretary of Transportation
- Peter Walke, designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources
- Robert Sponable, alternate 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 (via phone)
- 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
- Donna Casey, 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 (6): Chris Cochran, Richard Amore, Gary Holloway, Faith Ingulsrud, Caitlin Corkins, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (7): Mayor Paul Monette, City of Newport; Laura Dolgin, City Manager of Newport; Karen Geraghty, NVDA; Representative Gary Viens, Orleans – 2; Claudio Fort, Board of Directors Newport Downtown Renaissance; Paul Conner, Planning & Zoning, City of South Burlington; Jackie Cassino, VTrans.

Katie Buckley 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 January 22, 2018

Robert Sponable made a motion to approve the January 22, 2018 minutes and Liz Gamache seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Donna Casey, Gabrielle Ciuffreda, Jacqui LeBlanc, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Bob Sponable, Michael McDonough, Tasha Wallis, Trish Sears, and Katie Buckley. Peter Walke abstained.

3. Public Comment Period

Katie Buckley opened the meeting to public comment: there were no comments.

4. Village Center Designation – 4 – Richard Amore

Renewal Applications (4)

Cavendish Village Center

Richard presented the complete renewal application for village center designation for Cavendish village center. The designated boundary was unchanged, and the map was updated to meet program requirements. The application was complete and met the program's requirements.

Liz Gamache made a motion to approve renewal of the village center designation for Cavendish village center and Tasha Wallis seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Donna Casey, Gabrielle Cuiffreda, Jacqui LeBlanc, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Bob Sponable, Michael McDonough, Peter Walke, Tasha Wallis, Trish Sears, and Katie Buckley.

Proctorsville Village Center

Richard presented the complete renewal application for village center designation for Proctorsville village center. The designated boundary was unchanged, and the map was updated to meet program requirements. The application was complete and met the program's requirements.

Board members inquired about a portion of the designated boundary that is listed as mostly residential, as current boundary practices normally do not include so many residential buildings. Richard advised that as this is a renewal application, the boundaries are accepted as they currently exist. Richard will follow up with the town to confirm uses but he believes some of these parcels are home-based businesses.

Liz Gamache made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for Proctorsville village center and Donna Casey seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Donna Casey, Gabrielle Cuiffreda, Jacqui LeBlanc, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Bob Sponable, Michael McDonough, Peter Walke, Tasha Wallis, Trish Sears, and Katie Buckley.

Tunbridge Village Center

Richard presented the complete renewal application for village center designation for Tunbridge village center. The designated boundary was unchanged, and the map was updated to meet program requirements. The application was complete and met the program's requirements.

Peter Walke made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for Tunbridge village center and Laura Trieschmann seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Donna Casey, Gabrielle Cuiffreda, Jacqui LeBlanc, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Peter Walke, Tasha Wallis, Trish Sears, and Katie Buckley. Bob Sponable abstained.

North Tunbridge Village Center

Richard presented the complete renewal application for village center designation for North Tunbridge village center. The designated boundary was unchanged, and the map was updated to meet program requirements. The application was complete and met the program's requirements.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for North Tunbridge village center and Chip Sawyer seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Donna Casey, Gabrielle Cuiffreda, Jacqui LeBlanc, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michael McDonough, Peter Walke, Tasha Wallis, Trish Sears, and Katie Buckley. Bob Sponable abstained.

De-Designation (1)

Pittsford Village Center

Pittsford's municipal plan does not currently meet statutory requirements and therefore a complete application for renewal of village center designation for Pittsford village center was

not submitted. The town is working to update their municipal plan and intends to reapply for designation later this year. Staff recommends that the Board proceed with de-designation.

Board members inquired about what the implications of de-designation mean for the village and if the village center boundary will be re-examined during the new application process. Richard explained that the town would not receive priority consideration for state grants, property owners would no longer be eligible for downtown and village center tax credits, and would not be eligible for other program benefits, but that de-designation would not impact any existing grants or previously awarded tax credits. Richard also confirmed that the village center boundary will be reviewed and updated during a new village center designation application.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to de-designate village center designation for Pittsford village center and Liz Gamache seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Donna Casey, Gabrielle Cuiffreda, Jacqui LeBlanc, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Bob Sponable, Michael McDonough, Peter Walke, Tasha Wallis, Trish Sears, and Katie Buckley.

5. Downtown Renewal Designation – Gary Holloway

City of Newport

Trish Sears recused herself from the deliberations and vote on the City of Newport's downtown renewal designation. Gary presented the renewal application for Newport's downtown designation and recommended renewal of the designation with the following conditions:

- Collect and submit Newport's 2017 Downtown Reinvestment Statistics by March 5, 2018
- Develop and submit a 5-year strategic plan and an updated annual budget for Newport City Renaissance Corporation by July 2, 2018
- Submit an approved Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement between the City and Newport City Renaissance Corporation that outlines the reporting structure of the new Executive Director and Economic Development Director position and details how the funding and reporting will occur between the two organizations by July 2, 2018
- Report progress on the strategic plan and staff sharing agreement to the Downtown Board at its July 23, 2018 meeting.

Karen Geraghty, Interim Director of Newport City Renaissance Corporation and NVDA staff member, along with Laura Dolgin City Manager of Newport; recapped the last five years in Newport showcasing new development projects including Maplefields, the UPS Store, and various eateries; grant funded initiatives supporting a marketing and branding program attracting visitors from Quebec and expanding recreational trail connections from the expansive network of Quebec trails to the downtown; and, events like the Wednesday's on the Waterfront summer concert series. They also noted the challenges the downtown and the broader community faced due to the failure of several high profile EB-5 financed projects. They expressed appreciation for the tremendous amount of funding they have received from the State, Preservation Trust of Vermont and other grant programs to support their revitalization efforts. Recent efforts include a hotel feasibility study, market analysis, waterfront and downtown master plan and the VCRD Community Visit.

Board members inquired about the 501(c)(6) non-profit designation and the status of the organization's membership. Karen stated she was advised that 501(C)(6) could not have members. It was noted that (c)6 are commonly used by membership organizations such as chambers of commerce. The board encouraged Karen to get a second opinion of this matter. Gary pointed out that according to their bylaws, the membership votes for board members during their annual meeting in June, but since there is no membership the board votes for

new board members who serve a three-year term. Several board members have been serving for more than three years.

The downtown designation program requires a non-profit downtown organization separate from the municipality and typically has city staff or elected officials as ex-officio members. Gary expressed concern about the composition of the board which has 5 board members, one of which is the City Manager and another a City Council member. The City would then have 40% of the board members on the Newport City Renaissance Corporation board.

Karen was pleased to share that the town was able to fund a full time Executive Director position with funding from the city and the Walmart fund to support economic development inside and outside the downtown district. The employee will receive guidance from an Advisory Board panel that will be appointed by the Newport City Renaissance Corporation Board of Directors. Downtown Board members asked for additional information on the role, responsibilities, and oversight of the new Executive Director position. They expressed concerns about the transparency of the oversight and the potential for the goals of the non-profit board to conflict with City since it is a shared position. Karen indicated that the exact structure and oversight of the position continues to evolve. She said the hope is to eventually have the position expand into two full-time positions. Gary recommended Newport City Renaissance Corporation ask the City Council to approval a multiple year funding commitment to ensure staffing and organizational stability. Board members were encouraged by the positive presentation and potential of the master plan and the VCRD Community Visit to spark new opportunities for downtown Newport.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve renewal of the downtown designation for Newport with the conditions outlined above, with additional requirements to provide the board by July 2, 2018, an answer to the 501(c)(6) membership question, and also provide detailed information on the organizational structure of the downtown organization, including its current bylaws.

Tasha Wallis seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Donna Casey, Gabrielle Cuiffreda, Jacqui LeBlanc, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Bob Sponable, Michael McDonough, Peter Walke, Tasha Wallis, and Katie Buckley. Trish Sears did not vote as she was recused.

6. Neighborhood Development Area – Faith Ingulsrud

City of South Burlington – Amendment Application

Faith presented the complete application for an expanded Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) for South Burlington along with an overview and benefits of the designation program. The proposed expansion is within the eligible area, natural and historic resources have been addressed, the land development regulations comply with density and design guidelines, and there is an existing municipal sewer system in place. The existing streets and sidewalks do not provide direct access to the New Town Center (NTC) from the proposed NDA. The City has plans for direct pedestrian connections including; a recreation path between San Remo Drive and Dumont Park and planned pathway through Dumont Park to the NTC streets to the north.

Paul Conner, Director of Planning and Zoning for the City of South Burlington, gave an overview of recent improvements and growth within the New Town Center and the City's development plans for this year as well as the proposed expansion area.

Board members inquired as to why the expansion area wasn't included in the original designation. Paul Conner said that originally the property had had been in a trust that had no interest in pursuing NDA designation. South Burlington's NDA originally had the same boundary as the NTC, and when they were both expanded to include University Mall, the goal was to keep the NTC under the 175-acre size limit defined by statute, so they did not include any new residential areas in the boundary expansion.

Members also asked what if any improvements the newly announced Target store in University Mall may contribute to the streetscape of the area. Paul said Target is currently renovating the former Bon Ton retail space which could include a café area with glass walls and potential for outside seating.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve the boundary amendment request for the South Burlington Neighborhood Development Area and Laura Trieschmann seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Donna Casey, Gabrielle Cuiffreda, Jacqui LeBlanc, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Bob Sponable, Michael McDonough, Peter Walke, Tasha Wallis, Trish Sears, and Katie Buckley.

7. Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit Scoring – Caitlin Corkins

Scoring Criteria – Housekeeping – Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits

Caitlin led a discussion with board members regarding the recently adopted scoring changes to the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits. With the increase of the scoring range, the minimum score reflecting an application to be considered “good” also needs to be increased. Staff recommend increasing the minimum score to 26. Board members will have an opportunity to discuss and score applications that receive less than the minimum score if funding is available.

Peter Walke made a motion to adopt the downtown and village center tax incentive scoring change as discussed and Chip Sawyer seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Chip Sawyer, Donna Casey, Gabrielle Cuiffreda, Jacqui LeBlanc, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Bob Sponable, Michael McDonough, Peter Walke, Tasha Wallis, Trish Sears, and Katie Buckley.

Public Participation – Rules of Conduct – Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits

Based on Board feedback at the January meeting, a PowerPoint slide will be displayed at the beginning of meetings with large visitor attendance to ensure audience members are aware of the rules for participation during the meeting as follows:

- Attendance by members of the public is welcomed and encouraged.
- Audience members will be asked to introduce themselves to the Board during the “public comment” period on the agenda.
- At this time, audience members may also express their opinions or viewpoints on the agenda items.
- Audience members wishing to speak outside of the public comment period should raise their hand to be recognized by the Chair.
- Unless recognized by the Chair, audience members may not participate in the Board’s discussion or debate.

Board members approved of the addition of this slide at the meetings.

7. Announcements

Chris Cochran provided board members with legislative updates including; H. 784 increasing the designation programs renewal cycle from five to eight years with a four-year check-in, this bill has already crossed over to the senate; and H. 766 which has been combined with several bills to now include the \$625,000 in Homeowner Tax Credits, the \$250,000 increase

in the Downtown Tax Credits, and the \$125,000 to expand VHFA's Down Payment Assistance program, has passed House Commerce and next heads to Ways and Means.

Chris reiterated that "Downtown Day" at the Statehouse is scheduled for March 13, 2018 and he encouraged board members to participate in this education and advocacy day.

8. Adjourn

Liz Gamache made a motion to adjourn and Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 3:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie