

Draft Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 11/26/2018

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

Members Present (13):

- Katie Buckley (*chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Jackie Cassino, 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 (arrived at 1:52pm)
- Patricia M. Sears, appointed by the Governor, representing the Vermont Natural Resources Council and the Preservation Trust of Vermont
- Gabrielle Ciuffreda, designated by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (via phone)
- 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 (via phone)
- Tom Torti, appointed by the Governor, representing the Vermont Association of Chamber Executives (via phone at 1:30pm)

Attending Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members (5): Chris Cochran, Richard Amore, Gary Holloway, Caitlin Corkins, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (2): Eric Scott, Village of Manchester; Glenn Herrin, Town of Danville.

Katie Buckley brought the meeting to order at 1:01 pm in the Calvin Coolidge Room, 6th floor of the National Life Building, Montpelier.

Additions or Deletions to Board Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the board agenda.

1. Approval of Minutes from October 22, 2018

Donna Casey made a motion to approve the October 22, 2018 minutes, no edits noted, and Patricia Sears seconded. The motion carried 9-0, Jackie Cassino and Robert Sponable abstained.

2. Public Comment Period

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

3. Village Center Designation New – 1 – Richard Amore

Village of Manchester – Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for the village center designation. The proposed boundary runs primarily along US Route 7A including the post office, village school, congregational church, courthouse, village offices, the music hall, St. Johns Chapel, Equinox Hotel and Shops, commercial and lodging establishments, and several multifamily and single-

family residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Eric Scott, Zoning Administrator, shared his belief that the village center program is a perfect fit for the Village of Manchester. There are many historic lodging establishments within the proposed boundary that could benefit from the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits program.

Board members inquired about extending the proposed boundary to include several historic residential properties and Burr and Burton Academy. Richard indicated that statute and board precedent dictates that the village center designation boundary must be anchored by civic or commercial buildings and he noted that eligibility for village rehab tax credits is limited to income producing properties. In other words, including these residential properties within the state designated village center does not offer homeowners economic incentives to improve their buildings.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve village center designation for the Village of Manchester and Donna Casey seconded. The motion carried 10-1.

4. Village Center Designation Boundary Amendment – 1 – Richard Amore

Danville Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for the village center boundary amendment for Danville. The town is requesting a boundary amendment to include the Danville School, an extension along Peacham Road to include the historic train station, health center, and fire station; and an extension along Brainerd Street to include the American Society of Dowsers. The Town worked with staff to define the recommended boundary; however, the northern portion of their current designated boundary includes residential parcels (north of the historical society). Staff recommends removing the six residential parcels at the northern portion of the designated boundary along Hill Street. Including these residential properties conflicts with the statutory definition of a village center as well as board precedent because they are not anchored by civic or commercial uses.

Glenn Herrin, Planning Commission Chair, shared that the purpose of the boundary amendment was to include the historic train station. While reviewing the boundary, the Planning Commission decided to also include the school and American Society of Dowsers.

Peter Walke made a motion to approve the village center boundary amendment with staff recommendation for Danville, to include the following of parcel lines along the east side of Hill Street, and Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion carried 11-0, Tom Torti abstained.

5. Tax Credit Criteria and Application Update – 1 – Caitlin Corkins

In July, the Downtown Board began a discussion on ways to improve the scoring process for the Downtown and Village Center tax credit and Sales Tax Reallocation programs. Past changes to the scoring and the criteria have not addressed concerns to everyone's satisfaction and changes to the application are needed as well. Caitlin provided board members with a proposed scoring criteria framework and led a discussion to gather feedback on what information would be most useful to ask of applicants for board members to evaluate and score program applications.

Board members appreciated the prepared questions and provided additional feedback including: advising against open-ended questions to ensure concrete answers as to limit inferences about projects; questions that could be scored by staff, such as those related to historic preservation; the value of including demographic and objective information in the application; potentially setting aside portions of the funding for different scale projects such as villages, downtowns; or eligible types of work like ADA or code compliance projects; development of guidance for the board to apply the criteria, and development of an online training to assist applicants in preparing a competitive application.

Based on the feedback, Caitlin will prepare a proposed new scoring criteria and application for the board to review at their January meeting.

6. Downtown Transportation Fund Application Review – 1 – Gary Holloway

Addition of Clean Water Initiative Funding

Based on the feedback from the October meeting, Gary presented board members the proposed changes to program criteria and application materials, including; Appendix E, which outlines the clean water initiative general criteria; and Appendix F, which outlines the clean water reporting requirements. Gary also responded to prior board questions relating to the treatment of stormwater outside of the downtown. If the project demonstrates a clear connection to the downtown, the project would be eligible.

Board members inquired if a town could apply for two separate projects, one of which incorporates clean water, or if they would only be eligible to apply for one project which would need to include a clean water aspect. Gary and Peter Walke advised of the later, a town can apply for one project that has a clean water component to receive the funding. Additional discussion focused on scoring, specifically the bonus point and how that bonus point may impact funding decisions. Board members commented that they would like to reserve the right to review and discuss projects with close scores prior to award decisions.

9. Old Business / New Business / Announcements

Act 250 Commission

Chris explained to better support Vermont's traditional development pattern of compact centers surrounded by rural working lands, the Administration is recommending changes to Act 250 to remove jurisdiction from state designated downtowns, new town centers, growth centers, and neighborhood development areas (not village centers) provided the municipality meets the current requirements for designation, plus additional environmental protections. These additional environmental protections, which would be incorporated into an "enhanced designation," include municipal flood hazard planning and river corridor protections for the entire municipality, design review standards (including historic preservation), wildlife habitat protections, water/wastewater capacity and policies, and coordinated capital investments. We are also recommended expanding tax credits eligibility help owners floodproof buildings within the designated center. The concept has received varying degrees of support from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, Vermont Natural Resources Council, the Preservation Trust of Vermont, Vermont Chamber, Vermont Planners Association, Downtown Developer Ernie Pomerleau, and other stakeholders.

Draft Tax Credit Legislation

In addition to a request to increase the amount of tax credits and expanding eligibility to include floodproofing work, the agency is also proposing amendments to the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit program including; increasing the cap for the elevator credit to reflect true market costs (from \$50K to \$75K), allowing buildings 30 years or older to qualify (currently only buildings built before 1983 qualify), eliminating the outdated and little used technology credit, and clarifying that religious properties are eligible for tax credits (in

response to a recent Supreme Court ruling). Most of the changes are “housekeeping” in nature, except for the increased funding and the expanded eligibility for floodproofing. The Governor’s Office will announce its policy and budget recommendations in January.

December Board Meeting

Board members unanimously agreed to cancel the December board meeting.

10. Adjourn

Peter Walke made a motion to adjourn and Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie