

**Approved Minutes  
Vermont Downtown Board  
4/25/2016**

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

**Members Present:**

- Noelle MacKay (*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
- Peg Elmer Hough, Smart Growth Appointee
- Scott Murphy, Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Michael McDonough, Gubernatorial Appointee from Bennington
- Ron Redmond, Gubernatorial Appointee Representing Downtown Organizations
- Michael Munson, Vermont Planners Association
- Diane Snelling, Natural Resources Board (arrived during the Stowe downtown designation application review)
- 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:** Richard Amore, Gary Holloway, Faith Ingulsrud, John Adams, Chris Cochran and Annina Seiler.

**Guests:** Tom Jackman, Director of Planning, Town of Stowe; Brian Hamor, Stowe Vibrancy Board Member and Planning Commissioner; Representative Heidi Scheuermann, Stowe Vibrancy; Paul Conner, Director of Planning and Zoning, City of South Burlington; Michael Coppinger, Executive Director, Downtown Rutland Partnership; Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning and Zoning, City of St. Albans; Kevin Casey, Community Development Specialist, City of Montpelier; Mike Miller, Director of Planning and Community Development, City of Montpelier; Ashley Witzemberger, Executive Director, Montpelier Alive; Corey Line, Project Management Director, City of Montpelier; Fred Kenney, Vermont Department of Economic Development.

Chair Noelle MacKay brought the meeting to order at 1:04 pm in the Calvin Coolidge Room, 6<sup>th</sup> 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 March 28, 2016**

Laura Trieschmann made a motion to approve the draft March 28, 2016 minutes with two spelling corrections as offered by Peg Elmer Hough. Tasha Wallis seconded and the motion carried 8-0. Michael Munson abstained.

### **3. Public Comment Period**

Noelle MacKay opened the meeting to public comment: there were no comments.

### **4. Village Center Designation – Richard Amore**

#### **Renewal and Boundary Amendment (1)**

##### **Stowe Village Center**

The complete application for renewal of village center designation for Stowe village center was presented to the Board. The town is requesting an amendment to the designated village boundary to exclude the upper village which is being proposed as a designated downtown. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of the boundary amendment and the application for renewal of the village center designation for Stowe village center. Tom Jackman, Director of Planning and Brian Hamor, Stowe Vibrancy Board member discussed revitalization efforts, the new public safety building, and planned sidewalk improvements in the village center.

Peg Elmer Hough made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for Stowe village center with the amended boundary. Michael Munson seconded and the motion carried 8-0. Tasha Wallis abstained.

### **5. Downtown Designation – 1 – Gary Holloway**

##### **Stowe**

Gary Holloway presented the complete application for downtown designation from the Town of Stowe. The application is complete and all requirements have been met. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of downtown designation. Staff worked closely with the community to create a boundary that meets the statutory definition, removing a portion of neighborhood in the northeast corner, the elementary school, ice arena, and recreational center which had all been part of the original village center designation. Gary continued by highlighting various revitalization efforts in the downtown and offering a brief history of the designation process. Tom Jackman, Brian Hamor, and Heidi Scheuermann discussed revitalization efforts, future plans and, at the request of Board members, provided a detailed explanation of the boundary. It was noted that the town and downtown organization are working in close partnership. A strong indicator of future success was the fact that the town has funded the executive director position. In other communities, this strong partnership with the municipality improves coordination and allows the downtown group to spend less time fundraising for salaries and more time addressing community priorities.

Michael Munson made a motion to approve downtown designation for the Town of Stowe. Laura Trieschmann seconded and the motion carried 9-0. Tasha Wallis abstained.

### **6. Village Center Designation – Richard Amore**

#### **Renewal Applications (2)**

##### **Belmont Village Center**

The complete application for renewal of village center designation for Belmont village center in the Town of Mount Holly 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 Belmont village center.

Scott Murphy made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for Belmont village center and Tasha Wallis seconded. The motion carried 10-0.

### **Weston Village Center**

Richard presented the complete application for renewal of village center designation for Weston village center. 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 Weston.

Peg Elmer Hough made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for Weston village center and Michael Desrochers seconded. The motion carried 10-0.

### **De-Designations (1)**

#### **Saxtons River Village Center**

The Town of Rockingham's Town Plan does not currently meet statutory requirements and therefore an application for renewal of village center designation for Saxtons River was not submitted. The town is working to update their plan and intends to reapply for designation in the fall of 2016. Staff recommends that the Board proceed with de-designation.

Michael Munson made a motion to de-designate Saxtons River village center, urging the community to consider reapplying in the future. Michele Boomhower seconded and the motion carried 10-0.

### **7. South Burlington New Town Center and Neighborhood Development Area Designation Boundary Amendments**

The City of South Burlington submitted a boundary amendment request for its neighborhood development area designation (awarded May 2014) and the new town center designation (renewed July 2015). Staff recommends approval of the boundary amendment request for both new town center and neighborhood development area designations and an update of the renewal timeframe to require renewal 5 years from the amendment date. Faith Ingulsrud presented the staff review of the new town center designation and John Adams presented the review of the neighborhood development area requirements.

Paul Conner, Planning and Development Director discussed the vision for City Center and addressed Board questions regarding the boundary amendments. He noted that if the boundary amendment is approved the city would seek to expand the existing tax increment financing (TIF) district as well. Board discussed the exclusion of properties on the south end of Dorset Street, the future of the Marcotte Central School, the prioritization of a town library, and the possibilities for the University Mall property.

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve the new town center and neighborhood development area boundary amendments and update the renewal timeframe. Peg Elmer Hough seconded and the motion carried 10-0.

### **8. Downtown Transportation Fund Grants – 8 – Gary Holloway**

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 eight eligible applications requesting a total of \$476,260 for an available \$351,185 in funding. A lengthy discussion ensued and Board members expressed some confusion regarding the grant request and budget for the Morristown application. The total project cost and funds in hand suggest that the town did not require \$18,860 as requested. The suggestion was made that the application should be excluded from consideration due to budget inconsistencies. Discussion ensued and members suggested fully funding the applications from Montpelier, Poultney, Rutland, St. Albans and Vergennes and offering the remaining funds to Morristown. The Board requested that staff consult with the town to clarify and correct budget inconsistencies. Concerns over the status of Morristown's bylaws that meet the statutory planning commitment [V.S.A 24 Section 2793 (b)(1)] required for downtown designation were also noted. In fairness to other applicants with bylaws that met the legal requirements, the Board conditioned the award upon the applicant's submission of evidence that their local bylaws comply with state law.

Michele Boomhower made a motion to fully fund the Downtown Transportation Fund grants for Montpelier, Poultney, Rutland, St. Albans, and Vergennes. Michael Munson seconded and the motion carried 10-0.

Michael Munson made a motion that staff consult with the Town of Morristown to clarify the budget discrepancy in the application and award \$10,115 in Downtown Transportation Funds. Peg Elmer Hough made a friendly amendment that the award be conditioned on the submission of adopted bylaws that meet the planning commitment requirements for downtown designation. Michael Munson accepted the amendment to the motion and Laura Trieschmann seconded. The motion carried 8-0. Tasha Wallis and Michael Desrochers abstained.

The Board briefly discussed the application and review process. Board members raised concerns that the same municipalities were routinely funded. Noelle suggested that staff provide scoring analysis for the last 2-3 years so that the Board could explore this issue further. Members also noted that the comments from VTrans could have been more targeted and consistent. Staff agreed that developing technical review guidance would improve the quality of VTrans' input in future rounds. Lastly, the Board suggested that the scoring criteria could include stormwater as an example of community impact. Staff thanked the Board for their feedback and will set aside time at the next meeting to review the data and analysis of past scoring rounds and discuss further refinements to the process.

### **9. Electric Vehicle Charging Station Grants – 1 – Gary Holloway**

The Agency of Natural Resources has partnered with the Division of Community Planning & Revitalization and the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation to promote and install electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in Vermont's designated downtowns and village centers. This is the fourth round of grant applications with \$28,075 available in funding. This is not a competitive round as only one application from the Town of Johnson requesting \$7,653 was submitted. There are currently no existing EV charging stations in Johnson and the proposed location is in close proximity to major roads. Staff noted that the Village of

Johnson had previously applied and been granted funding but the village had chosen not to accept the funds as the project did not align with their 2015 priorities.

Laura Trieschmann made a motion to fund the application from the Town of Johnson for an Electric Vehicle Charging Station Grant. Peg Elmer Hough seconded and the motion carried 9-0. Tasha Wallis abstained.

#### **10. Old Business/New Business**

- Noelle thanked Gary Holloway for his work organizing the first Downtown Day. The event brought together representatives from 17 of the 24 downtowns including program directors, mayors, business owners and developers to showcase how the program has helped revitalize their communities. Participants testified in House Commerce and Speaker Smith spent 45 minutes with the group to share his insights and express appreciation for their work. The group was also invited to the House floor for a special recognition.
- Gary announced the Downtown and Historic Preservation Conference in Waterbury on June 10<sup>th</sup>. The conference will include tours of the Waterbury State Complex and downtown revitalization projects. Gary offered to share the official announcement and session information with Board members.
- Chris Cochran reminded the Board that the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit applications would be due in July and that practice scoring would be scheduled for the June meeting.

#### **11. Adjourn**

Tasha Wallis made a motion to adjourn and Michael Munson seconded. The motion carried 10-0 and the Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 3:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Annina Seiler