

**Approved Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
1/25/2016**

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 (by phone)
- Scott Murphy, Vermont League of Cities and Towns (by phone)
- Michael McDonough, Gubernatorial Appointee from Bennington
- Ron Redmond, Gubernatorial Appointee Representing Downtown Organizations
- Michael Munson, Vermont Planners Association
- Jon Groveman, Natural Resources Board
- Tasha Wallis, Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
- Tom Torti, Vermont Association of Chamber Executives (by phone)

Attending Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members: Richard Amore, Gary Holloway, John Adams, Chris Cochran, Annina Seiler and Faith Ingulsrud.

Guests: Cynthia Stuart, Concord Planning and Zoning Board; Judy Kurtz, Concord Planning and Zoning Board; Irene Nagle, Northeastern Vermont Development Association; Robin Barone, Town of Newbury; Don Waterman, Village of Wells River; Richard Roderick, Wells River Action Program; Karen Duguay, Better Middlebury Partnership; Jennifer Murray, Middlebury Director of Planning and Zoning/Zoning Administrator; Joe Kasprzak, St. Johnsbury Assistant Town Manager; Tara Holt, St. Johnsbury Chamber of Commerce; Robin Pierce, Essex Junction Planning and Development Director; George Tyler, Village of Essex Junction Trustee; Robin Jeffers, S.D. Ireland; Sarah Hadd, Town of Colchester.

Vice chair Michele Boomhower brought the meeting to order at 1:03 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 November 23, 2015

Tom Torti made a motion to approve the draft November 23, 2015 minutes and Michael Munson seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, and Scott Murphy. Michele Boomhower abstained. The motion carried.

3. Public Comment Period

Michele Boomhower opened the meeting to public comment: there were no comments.

4. Village Center Designation – 9 – Richard Amore

New Applications (3)

Concord Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for Village Center Designation from the Town of Concord. Cynthia Stuart, Irene Nagle, and Judy Kurtz were invited to address the Board and spoke about revitalization efforts in the community, restoration of the town hall, a new Veteran's monument and park, and a focus on energy improvements for properties in the village.

Michael Munson made a motion to approve Village Center designation for Concord Village Center and Tasha Wallis seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried.

Newbury Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for Village Center Designation for Newbury Village Center. Robin Barone addressed the Board and noted the importance of the community health programs offered in the historic Atkinson Retreat House and their connection to the village. Staff described additional revitalization efforts including restoration of the Old Village Church, a new Café in the Newbury Village Store, and an upgraded village water system.

Michael Munson made a motion to approve Village Center designation for Newbury Village Center and Tom Torti seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried.

Wells River Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for Village Center Designation for Wells River Village Center in the Town of Newbury. Wells River was previously designated in 2007 and de-designated in 2012 as the Town Plan had not been approved by the regional planning commission. The proposed boundary is similar to the previously granted boundary with several additions, including the church parsonage and five multifamily buildings along Grove Street. The town would also like to include the Wells River Chevrolet auto dealership within the designated center while staff feels the dealership does not meet the statutory definition and should be excluded. Don Waterman and Richard Roderick addressed the Board and described the importance of the dealership and the neighboring hardware store to the village noting their community involvement, financial support of the community non-profit, and 75-year history. Board discussion ensued and members acknowledged the importance of the business to the community but felt that staff's initial assessment, the fact that the river serves as a natural entrance to the town, the visual characteristics, and auto-oriented use of the parcel necessitated its exclusion from the designated village center.

Michael Munson made a motion to approve the Village Center designation for the village of Wells River with the staff recommended boundary and Michael McDonough seconded. A roll call vote was taken: Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. Nays: Tasha Wallis, Michael Descrochers, and Tom Torti. The motion carried. Tasha requested that the minutes reflect that her vote against the motion was an objection to the boundary amendment excluding the dealership and not to the application for Village Center Designation. The Board discussed the issue further and determined that for the sake of clarity it would be best to vote to accept the staff boundary amendment and the village center designation application separately.

Michael Munson made a motion to accept the boundary as recommend by staff. Michael McDonough seconded and a roll call vote was taken: Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. Nays: Tasha Wallis, Michael Descrochers, and Tom Torti. The motion carried. It was noted that as a Village Trustee Don Waterman had the authority to accept the amended boundary.

Michael Munson made a motion to accept the application for Village Center Designation for the Village of Wells River. Michael McDonough seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. Nays: Tom Torti. The motion carried.

Renewal Applications (3)

Algiers Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for renewal of Village Center designation for Algiers Village Center in the Town of Guilford. 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 Algiers.

Tom Torti made a motion to approve renewal of Village Center designation for Algiers Village Center and Tasha Wallis seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried.

Jamaica Village Center

The complete application for renewal of Village Center designation for Jamaica 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 Jamaica.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve renewal of Village Center designation for Jamaica Village Center and Michael Munson seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried.

Waterville Village Center

The complete application for renewal of Village Center designation for Waterville 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 Waterville.

Michael Munson made a motion to approve renewal of Village Center designation for Waterville Village Center and Laura Trieschmann seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. Tasha Wallis abstained. The motion carried.

De-Designations (3)

Pawlet Village Center

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

Laura Trieschmann made a motion to de-designate Pawlet Village Center and Michael McDonough seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried.

West Pawlet Village Center

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

Laura Trieschmann made a motion to de-designate West Pawlet Village Center and Michael Munson seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried.

East Dover Village Center

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

Michael Munson made a motion to de-designate East Dover Village Center and Jennifer Mojo seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried.

5. Downtown Designation Renewal Application – 1 – Gary Holloway

Town of Middlebury

Gary Holloway presented the complete application for Downtown Designation renewal from the Town of Middlebury. The application is complete and all requirements are met. Gary noted that he would like to have the opportunity to work with the community further to strengthen their strategic plan by identifying actions, setting timelines, and assigning responsibilities. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of the application for renewal of Downtown designation. Gary welcomed Karen Duguay, Better Middlebury Partnership and Jennifer Murray, Director of Planning and Zoning. The guests provided the Board with a presentation on community successes, challenges, and future plans. Karen described the unique structure of the downtown organization, the growing success of chili fest and mid summer fest, and the challenges associated with upcoming construction projects, complaints about parking, and community engagement. Michele congratulated the town on their hard work and many successes and noted that the upcoming construction might be an opportunity to promote tax credits to downtown businesses.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve Downtown Designation for the Town of Middlebury. Michael Munson seconded and offered an amendment to the motion recommending that the town continue to work with staff to strengthen the strategic plan. Tasha accepted the amendment to the motion and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried.

6. Downtown Transportation Fund (DTF) Grant Amendment Request – 1 – Gary Holloway

Town of St. Johnsbury

Gary introduced guests Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager for St. Johnsbury and Tara Holt, from the St. Johnsbury Chamber. The town is requesting an extension to the completion date of a Downtown Transportation Fund grant awarded in 2012. The work is not complete, due to unforeseen challenges, including administrative changes, staff shortages, and community concern about coordination with other construction projects. The completion date has been extended once before from August 27, 2014 to December 31, 2015. The town is now requesting that the Board extend the completion date to November 15, 2016 to allow completion of the grant project. Joe and Tara addressed questions from the Board regarding reasons for the delay, any changes in scope, and potential impacts of the delay on the budget.

Tom Torti made a motion to extend the grant project (DTF#2012-05) completion date to November 15, 2016. Michael Munson seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried.

7. Neighborhood Development Area Designation – Village of Essex Junction

John presented the complete application for Neighborhood Development Area designation from the Village of Essex Junction. The proposed boundary corresponds with the existing Village Center boundary and does not include any of the neighborhood planning area that

extends a ¼ mile beyond the Village Center. The Village of Essex Junction was previously awarded Vermont Neighborhood's Designation which expires this month. Staff found the application complete and all requirements have been met. Staff recommends awarding designation. Robin Pierce, Planning Director for the Village of Essex Junction and George Tyler, Village Trustee, responded to questions from the Board and generally described planning and revitalization efforts in the village.

Michael Munson noted that he is a resident of the village and would recuse himself should the community or Board consider it a conflict. The community and Board members did not raise concerns. Tom Torti made a motion to remove the Vermont Neighborhoods designation from the Village of Essex Junction. Michael Desrochers seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried.

Michael Munson noted that he was troubled by the program benefit which limits certain project appeals. He continued by noting that Robin Pierce had mentioned a large parcel of underdeveloped or undeveloped land and this is a concern as there is no maximum density.

Tom Torti made a motion to approve the Neighborhood Development Area designation for the Village of Essex Junction. Michael McDonough seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. Nays: Michael Munson. The motion carried.

8. New Town Center Guidance – Faith Ingulsrud

Town of Colchester

At the November 2015 Board meeting, the Town of Colchester submitted a one-year progress report as required by the renewal approval from December 1, 2014, which included the executed April 2015 lease agreement for a new public information center and information about staffing, hours of operation, and the activities and uses in the building. In response to the one-year progress report the Board expressed ongoing concern regarding the town's ability to meet the requirement for public and civic buildings ([24 V.S.A § 2793b](#)). As requested by the Board, staff provided a letter to Colchester regarding the Board's interpretation of the types of buildings in the New Town Center that would meet the requirement along with draft guidance on the topic for New Town Centers in general.

Michael Munson and Peg Elmer Hough began the discussion by disagreeing with the draft guidance, in particular the concept that a New Town Center can serve a particular neighborhood vs. be a primary center for the municipality as a whole. They interpret statute as requiring the significant municipal public buildings, reflecting municipal investment, be located in the New Town Center and that those buildings should have a prominent physical presence including being open to the public, used by the public, and "not something that can be blown away in high wind." Members asked that the general guidance be put aside at this time and agreed it should not be rushed given its importance and the availability of time before the 2019 renewal of Colchester's designation.

The Board discussed, at length, the draft letter to Colchester. Michele summarized Board comments noting discontent with the current draft guidance, a need for staff to work with the community and present the Board with a range of options to which they may react. Michael McDonough noted that continuing discussion in the context of the Board meeting would be unfair to the community and that the range of options which would satisfy the requirement should first be discussed between the department staff and community. Sarah Hadd, from the Town of Colchester and Robin Jeffers, from S.D. Ireland addressed the Board. Robin noted a concern with the Board issuing language to Colchester without having established general guidance and that one might contradict the other.

Following a lengthy debate, the Board asked that staff continued to work with the Town of Colchester to identify a range of options to include in a letter which lays out the expectations for the 2019 New Town Center designation renewal. The draft letter will be reviewed by the Board at a subsequent meeting before being issued to the community.

9. Old Business/New Business

- Announcements: there were no announcements.

10. Adjourn

Tasha Wallis made a motion to adjourn and Michael Desrochers seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jen Mojo, Jon Groveman, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michael Munson, Tasha Wallis, Peg Elmer Hough, Tom Torti, Scott Murphy, and Michele Boomhower. The motion carried and the Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 4:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Annina Seiler