

Approved Minutes Vermont Downtown Board 07/24/2017

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

Members Present (11):

- Katie Buckley (*chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- Michele Boomhower (*vice-chair*), designated by the Secretary of Transportation
- Jen Mojo, designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources
- Robert Sponable for 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 (by 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
- Rod Francis for Chip Sawyer, designated by the Vermont Planners Association (arrived after approval of the minutes)
- Diane Snelling, 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, Annina Seiler, Richard Amore, Faith Ingulsrud, Caitlin Corkins, and Gary Holloway.

Guests (6): Kate McCarthy, Vermont Natural Resources Council; Al Voegele, Northwest Regional Planning Commission; Nick Donahue, 112 Main Street, Stowe; Peggy Day Gibson, 1569 Hinman Settler Road, Brownington; Rebecca Hagen, 3940 Guilford Center Road, Guilford; John Hagen, 3940 Guilford Center Road, Guilford.

Katie Buckley brought the meeting to order at 1:04 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 June 26, 2017

Gabrielle Ciuffreda made a motion to approve the June 26, 2017 minutes and Michele Boomhower seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Gabrielle Ciuffreda, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michele Boomhower, Michael McDonough, Robert Sponable, Tasha Wallis, Tom Torti, Patricia Sears, and Katie Buckley.

3. Public Comment Period

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

4. Village Center Designation Renewal – 1 – Richard Amore

North Hero Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for renewal of village center designation for North Hero village center. The designated boundary was not altered and the map was updated to meet program requirements. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of the application for renewal of village center designation for North Hero village center.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for North Hero village center and Tom Torti seconded. Ayes: Gabrielle Ciuffreda, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michele Boomhower, Michael McDonough, Robert Sponable, Rod Francis, Tasha Wallis, Tom Torti, Patricia Sears, and Katie Buckley.

5. Growth Center and Neighborhood Development Area Designation Overview and Application Guidelines – Faith Ingulsrud

Faith began with a brief overview of the growth center designation and welcomed feedback from members on the new application guidelines and application forms before they are finalized. The updated guidelines lay out the steps and requirements for attaining designation and they are designed to help municipalities determine whether they are ready to initiate the application process. This introduction to growth center designation is also intended to orient Board members in preparation for the 5-year reviews that will begin with Williston this fall followed by Bennington next year.

Growth center designation is one of the ways to meet locational requirements to create a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district. Act 69 allows six new TIF districts and with this change, staff anticipates municipalities may consider applying for growth center designation. Without the possibility of applying for a TIF, the work required for growth center designation is not on par with the program's benefits. This is one of the reasons we have not seen any new designations in the last few years.

Faith also presented updated application guidelines and a new application form for the neighborhood development area designation. The guidelines incorporate recent legislative changes and clarify requirements. The new application form is designed to provide the Board with one form that includes the designation requirements, applicant instructions and responses, and staff findings for making and documenting decisions. The neighborhood development area designation offers an attractive suite of benefits for housing developers and it also meets the locational requires for TIF. Most of the municipalities with an interest in the program have not yet met all the eligibility requirements, but staff expects to see new applications in the coming months.

6. Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit Awards – Caitlin Corkins

Caitlin Corkins presented the Board with the tallied and ranked scores for the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit and Sales Tax Reallocation applications. Board members reviewed applications and submitted scores in advance of the meeting. Applications are ranked from highest to lowest based on the average score. Per Board policy, projects receiving average scores below the minimum (12 points) require further review and discussion. Following a brief discussion, members agreed that they felt comfortable considering funds to 6 applications receiving average scores lower than 12, to be funded or named as alternates.

Available funds allow full funding for the top 20 applications with roughly \$38,000 in funding remaining. The next two applications are tied and the Board discussed how the remaining funds might be distributed. Tom Torti made a motion to prorate the award of the remaining funds based on the requested tax credit amounts (40% for the application from Stowe and 60% for the application from Bellows Falls). Liz Gamache seconded. Tasha Wallis offered an amendment to the motion that any recaptured funds that become available be divided in the same manner, proportional to the request, until both projects have been fully funded. Tom Torti accepted the amendment to the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Gabrielle

Ciuffreda, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michele Boomhower, Michael McDonough, Robert Sponable, Rod Francis, Tasha Wallis, Tom Torti, Patricia Sears, and Katie Buckley.

Lastly, the Board discussed naming alternates to be funded if recaptured funds become available. The next four applications in line are all tied. Tom Torti made a motion to ratify the ranked scores and award full funding to the top 20 applications; award partial funding to two applications as discussed in the previous motion; and to rank the four tied alternates at a later date if recaptured funds become available. Michael McDonough seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Gabrielle Ciuffreda, Laura Trieschmann, Liz Gamache, Michele Boomhower, Michael McDonough, Robert Sponable, Rod Francis, Tasha Wallis, Tom Torti, Patricia Sears, and Katie Buckley.

Board members commented on the strength and improved quality of the applications and thanked staff for their work. Staff reminded members that the scoring and review process would be discussed at the next meeting and awards will be publicly announced by the Governor at a ceremony in the coming months.

7. Old Business/New Business

- **Spring Board Meeting:** With upcoming downtown renewals in Bennington, Brattleboro and Wilmington, staff presented the idea of having a Board meeting in one of these communities. Board members recalled that meetings outside of Montpelier had occurred in the past and expressed interest in having a meeting in Bennington or Brattleboro in the spring.
- **August Board Meeting:** Staff recommends canceling the August Board meeting due to the limited agenda and difficulty in securing a quorum. Tasha Wallis made a motion to cancel the August meeting and Michele Boomhower seconded. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

8. Adjourn

Tom Torti made a motion to adjourn and Tasha Wallis seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 2:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Annina Seiler