

Vermont Downtown Board 11/17/2017

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

Members Present (10):

- Katie Buckley (*chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development (left meeting at 3:00 p.m.)
- Michele Boomhower (*vice-chair*), designated by the Secretary of Transportation (chaired meeting after 3:00 p.m.)
- Jen Mojo, 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
- Gabrielle Ciuffreda, designated by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (via phone until 3:35 p.m.)
- 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 (5): Chris Cochran, Richard Amore, Faith Ingulsrud, Gary Holloway, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (5): Jane Davies, Town of Rupert Planning Commissioner; John LaVecchia Town of Rupert Zoning Administrator; Heidi Britch-Valenta Town of Highgate Town Administrator (via phone); Matt Boulanger Town of Williston Senior Planner; Ken Belliveau Town of Williston Planning Director

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 September 25, 2017

Patricia Sears made a motion to approve the September 25, 2017 minutes and Laura Trieschmann seconded. Motion carried 9-0, Robert Sponable abstained.

3. Public Comment Period

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

4. Village Center Designation – 6 – Richard Amore

New Applications (3)

Rupert Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for Rupert village center. The proposed boundary runs primarily along Route 153 (Main Street) including the post office, library, art studio, two churches, historical society, general store, fire department

and community center, town-owned green space, cobbler shop museum, town garage, commercial businesses and multifamily and single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definitions and provide a map that meets the program's requirements.

Jane Davies, Town of Rupert Planning Commissioner and John LaVecchia, Zoning Administrator shared recent planning and revitalization efforts including; recent improvements to the community hall/fire station, a new committee working on creating a town green, and a successful international post card campaign to keep the post office open.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve village center designation for Rupert village center and Michele Boomhower seconded. The motion passed 10-0.

West Rupert Village Center Rupert Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for West Rupert village center. The proposed boundary runs along Route 153 and East Street including the town office, Sherman's General Store, post office, two churches, several commercial and home-based businesses and multifamily and single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definitions and provide a map that meets the program's requirements.

Jane Davies, Town of Rupert Planning Commissioner and John LaVecchia, Zoning Administrator discussed popularity of cycling in the community and the potential of the Delaware and Hudson rail trail to attract new visitors to the community.

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve village center designation for West Rupert village center and Tasha Wallis seconded. The motion passed 10-0.

Williston Village Center

Richard presented the complete application for village center designation for Williston village center. The proposed boundary runs east and west along US Route 2, including the town hall, Old Brick Church, the Williston Federated Church, Slate Barn, library, Stovepipe Corners Schoolhouse, the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, several commercial businesses and multifamily and single-family residences. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definitions and provide a map that meets the program's requirements.

Ken Belliveau, Town of Williston Planning Direction and Matt Boulanger, Senior Planner, shared that a village master plan is in progress, discussed future village programming and cultural events, and highlighted local pride and engagement in the village.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve village center designation for Williston village center and Robert Sponable seconded. The motion passed 10-0.

Renewal Applications (4)

Highgate Center Village Center

Richard presented the complete renewal application for village center designation for Highgate village center. The town is requesting a boundary amendment to include one additional parcel, the White Building. The amendment request includes adding the triangular portion of the school property at the northwest corner adjacent to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. The town and CP+R staff worked together to create the proposed boundary to meet statutory definitions and provide a map that meets the program's requirements.

Heidi Britch-Valenta, joining the meeting via conference call. She noted that omission of the White Building was a mistake linked to modifications when the original boundary was reduced in size.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve renewal and boundary amendment of the village center designation for Highgate Center and Patricia Sears seconded. The motion passed 10-0.

Hartland Three Corners Village Center

Richard presented the complete renewal application for village center designation for Hartland Three Corners village center. The designated boundary was unchanged and the map was updated to meet program requirements. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of the application for renewal of village center designation for Hartland Three Corners village center.

Robert Sponable made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for Hartland Three Corners village center and Jen Mojo seconded. The motion passed 10-0.

Hartland Four Corners Village Center

Richard presented the complete renewal application for village center designation for Hartland Four Corners village center. The designated boundary was not unchanged, and the map was updated to meet program requirements. Staff recommends proceeding with approval of the application for renewal of village center designation for Hartland Four Corners village center.

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for Hartland Four Corners village center and Robert Sponable seconded. The motion passed 10-0.

North Hartland Village Center

Richard presented the complete renewal application for village center designation for North Hartland village center. The designated boundary was not changed, 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 Hartland village center.

Chip Sawyer made a motion to approve renewal of village center designation for North Hartland village center and Patricia Sears seconded. The motion passed 10-0.

5. Growth Center Designation – 1 – Faith Ingulsrud

Five-Year Review (1)

Faith Ingulsrud advised Board members that the growth center designation remains in effect for 20 years after growth center approval and the Vermont Downtown Board reviews the designation every five years. Williston was the first in Vermont to receive growth center designation in 2007, with seven initial conditions. Four of those conditions were met at the five-year review in 2012 leaving three outstanding conditions as the focus of the 2017 review. She summarized the status of the town's compliance with these items. Because of the difficulty in coming to a resolution on these long-term issues, she recommended that the conditions on sewage treatment capacity and Route 2A corridor traffic be re-visited at the next 5-year review in 2022. The town agreed to incorporate archeological resources into the comprehensive plan so she recommended that this be reflected in the motion and resolved within a year.

Williston Planning Director, Ken Belliveau provided an overview of the town's growth over the past five and ten years, expanding on what was provided in the 5-year review report. He showed how growth in Williston has remained steady over the past 10 years. Housing is now replacing retail as the primary development sector in growth center. Due to the town's multi-layered land use planning strategies, 73% of new dwellings have been constructed in the growth center since 2007. He also discussed how non-residential development has shifted from retail in the growth center to industrial uses. The industrial districts were purposefully excluded from the growth center.

On the sewage treatment capacity, Ken showed that despite a steady increase in users, the average daily flows continue to decrease, possibly due to use of water-saving devices. This coupled with the increased treatment capacity that the town is purchasing next year, indicates that there is sufficient capacity for development in the growth center over the next five years.

In response to the condition on measures to ease the traffic congestion along Route 2A, Ken described the increase in transit service and the efforts the town is making to disperse local traffic through grid streets in the Tafts Corners area. These streets are built and funded by new development, with the town funding some of the connecting segments. Michelle Boomhower listed some of the transportation projects that VTrans is working towards in cooperation with the town, including a long-term plan to expand the I-89/Route 2A intersection.

Michael McDonough questioned whether it is necessary to continue to impose these conditions - especially the Route 2A corridor solutions, as the town has limited control over what happens with the highway.

On the archeological resources Ken had met with the State Historic Preservation Officer and staff and agreed to include language regarding archaeology into Williston's comprehensive plan. Laura Trieschmann expressed appreciation for the town's willingness to resolve the issue at this time.

Michael thanked the town for its hard work in implementing the growth center and serving as an example for other growing municipalities. Michelle who has family in the rural part of the town offered her observations over the years – that the town has effectively maintained the town's rural areas while directing new development to the growth center.

Tasha Wallis made a motion that the board determines that Williston's growth center continues to meet the standards for designation in effect at the time it was originally designated. The town shall provide updates addressing conditions #2 (sewage treatment capacity) and #6 (Route 2A corridor traffic) and shall amend the Comprehensive Plan to address archeological resources in keeping with condition #7 by submitting adopted language to DHCD by November 30, 2018. Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion passed 9-0.

6. Upcoming Downtown Renewals – Gary Holloway

Gary Holloway explained to board members the downtown renewal application process and guidelines, timeline for communication and submission of materials, and the presentation the community will prepare for the board.

Gary indicated that the board will review four downtown renewal applications in 2018, Newport at either the January or February meeting and Brattleboro, Bennington, and Wilmington at the March meeting.

Board members engaged in conversation surrounding the March 2018 meeting to be held in Bennington. Points of discussion focused on the time of meeting, venue, and the option of a

tour to those interested.

7. Downtown Transportation Fund – Gary Holloway Amendment Request – St. Albans (DTF# 2013-06)

The City of St. Albans was awarded \$100,000 in DTF grant funds in 2013 for a project to improve the safety of a major intersection in the downtown core. Due to challenges with the railroad right of way and cost increases, the city requested an amendment to the scope and extension of the completion date to October 31, 2016. The Board approved the amendment request at the November 2015 Board meeting. The city later requested a second extension of the completion date to October 31, 2017 due to delays in ROW acquisition. The additional time was needed to complete the right of way negotiations and certification. The Board approved the amendment request at the May 2016 Board meeting. The city is now requesting a third extension to September 30, 2018. Currently the project is over 80% complete; however, weather conditions in November could delay the project into the 2018 construction season. For this reason, the city has requested an extension to September 30, 2018 to ensure the project completion.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve the amendment to extend the completion date to September 30, 2018, Jen Mojo seconded. The motion passed 7-0. Chip Sawyer recused himself.

Application Updates

Gary Holloway spoke with board members and recommend using the DTF application to obligate \$20,885 that remains in Electric Vehicle Charging Station Grants. The department anticipates that ACCD's EV grant program will receive substantial new funding resulting from the VW emissions scandal in FY19. The goal with this offering is to close books on the existing program before the new one begins. Board members supported this recommendation.

8. Announcements

Michael McDonough informed board members that the Town of Bennington received approval to become a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District. They are the first community to benefit from this recent legislative change allowing six new TIF districts in Vermont.

Chris Cochran previewed proposals for the upcoming legislative session including an increase the State Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit and a new tax incentive to improve owner occupied housing.

He announced that "Downtown Day" at the Statehouse is scheduled for March 13, 2017 and asked board members to participate.

Chris also shared information about a new \$50,000 downtown grant opportunity offered by the National Life Group. A press conference with Governor Scott and Mehran Asaadi, National Life Group CEO is scheduled on December 12, 2017 to make a formal announcement.

9. Adjourn

Laura Trieschmann made a motion to adjourn and Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 4:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie