Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
City Hall Council Chamber, St. Albans

Members Present (11):

☒ Katie Buckley (*chair)*, designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development

☒ Dave Pelletier, alternate, designated by the Secretary of Transportation

☒ Peter Walke, designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources

☒ 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 (via phone from 1:10pm – 2:55pm)

☒ 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 (arrived at

☒ 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, Richard Amore, Gary Holloway, Faith Ingulsrud, Jacob Hemmerick, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (4): Dan Monks, Town of Bennington; Zirwat Chowdhury, Town of Bennington; Janet Hurley, Town of Manchester; Greg Boshart, Town of Manchester.

Katie Buckley brought the meeting to order at 1:00 pm in the City Hall Council Chamber in St. Albans, Vermont. She thanked St. Albans officials for the tour and for their work hosting the board meeting. She noted that St. Alban's revitalization success is a great story that has helped empower other local leaders do the same.

Additions or Deletions to Board Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the board agenda.

1. Approval of Minutes from September 24, 2018
Peter Walke made a motion to approve the September 24, 2018 minutes, no edits noted, and Tasha Wallis seconded. The motion carried 10-0.

2. Public Comment Period
Katie Buckley opened the meeting to public comment: there were no comments.

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

Pittsford Village Center
Richard presented the complete application for the village center boundary amendment for Pittsford. The town is requesting a boundary amendment to include two additional commercial parcels along US Route 7. The additional parcels are located within the village zoning district and are connected by sidewalks. The boundary amendments were developed

by the town in coordination with staff.

Board members inquired if the two parcels in question were included when the town held village center designation between November 2007 and February 2018. Richard indicated they were included in their prior designation, but when the town reapplied in June of 2018, the revised boundary left these two parcels off.

Liz Gamache made a motion to approve the village center boundary amendment for Pittsford and Peter Walke seconded. The motion carried 10-0.

4. Growth Center Designation Check-In – 1 – Jacob Hemmerick

Town of Bennington
The town prepared the required 5-year report on the status of development in the growth center. The focus of the 5-year review is to examine any changes that have occurred within the town that would affect the Growth Center designation or compliance with the program. Staff review indicates that Bennington is on track to meet the primary growth center goal of accommodating a majority of the projected development over a 20-year planning period within the growth center. Staff advised there are no conditions to review as Bennington has met all program criteria and recommended the board determine that Bennington's Growth Center continues to meet the standards for designation in effect at the time it was originally designated.

Dan Monks, Assistant Town Manager, and Zirwat Chowdhury, Community Development Director, shared with board members successes, such as: data indicating that (since 2013) 73% of subdivision activity, 63% of new dwellings, and 58% of commercial, industrial, or institutional development have been within the Growth Center boundary; the completion of a new Public Works facility and water systems upgrade; the addition of new public transportation stops; and the successful fundraising efforts for the Putnam Block Redevelopment Project. They also shared future planning goals, such as: future development with their newly created Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, the improvement and redevelopment of public parks; pathway and recreation trail planning and creation; and the completion of phase 1 of the Putnam Block project. Additionally, they shared challenges they've faced with the State's permitting process. Specifically, the length of time of project review and permitting fees.

Board members commented how the community pulled together in the wake of the PFOA water contamination. This has been a huge part of the solution. The board also recognized the hard work and effort the town has made to bring their vision to reality.

Peter Walke made a motion to approve the staff recommendation and Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion carried 11-0, with Michael McDonough recused.

5. Neighborhood Development Area Designation – 1 – Faith Ingulsrud

Town of Manchester
Faith provided a short overview of the Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) program and summarized the complete NDA application submitted by the Town of Manchester, concluding that the proposed NDA meets the requirements for designation. The staff findings leading to this conclusion have been incorporated into the application form and distributed in advance of the meeting. She found that Manchester's new Land Use and Development Regulations succeeds in meeting the NDA bylaw requirements for density, protection of natural resources and a walkable pattern of development. The proposed NDA boundary extends outside the quarter mile Neighborhood Planning Area radius around the village center, but staff recommended approval of the boundary extension and explained how it

meets the four criteria for board approval of an NDA outside of the neighborhood planning area. She added that the extension was roughly proportionate to the land areas that were necessarily excluded from the neighborhood planning area.

Janet Hurley, Planning Director, and Greg Boshart, Planning Commission Chair, shared the challenges Manchester faces from the lack of middle-income housing and that Manchester's businesses have difficulty attracting and keeping young professionals because of the lack of housing, reporting that many workers in Manchester have long commutes because of the housing shortage.

Since some of the positive findings for the NDA depended on certain town regulations, board members asked how changes in the bylaws would be monitored. Faith said that all proposed municipal plans and bylaws must be submitted to DHCD and staff is able to review the bylaws for compliance with the designation program requirements before adoption and if there ever is a problem. Statute also gives the board authority to review a designation at any time. Board members commended the town for their work to make housing possible in the village and encouraged the town to consider pursuing Downtown designation in the future.

Tasha Wallis made a motion to approve the neighborhood development area designation for Manchester and Chip Sawyer seconded. The motion carried 12-0.

6. Downtown Transportation Fund – 1 – Gary Holloway

Addition of Clean Water Initiative Funding

Gary presented board members the proposed changes to program criteria and application materials to include the new Clean Water Initiative pilot project for this year's round of the Downtown Transportation Fund (DTF). The program has received an additional $100,000 in clean water funding from the Agency of Natural Resources, Clean Water Initiative. The funding will allow Downtown Transportation Fund projects to implement stormwater management practices that helps control flooding, reduce erosion, and improve water quality.

Board members inquired if there will be a requirement tied to the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) Tactical Basin Plan. Peter said this was included in the general criteria for clean water projects identified in Appendix E of the DTF application. Gary advised that applicants are required to consult with ANR staff prior to submitting an application and ANR will provide a technical review and provide comments for the board to consider while scoring. Additional board questions involved the treatment of phosphorus in the stormwater runoff and if that treatment could occur outside of the downtown without disqualifying the project from consideration; as well as if the board had the statutory authority to award projects that contained a component outside of the downtown. Gary advised that projects would still be eligible provided the project demonstrated a clear connection to the downtown. The board deliberated over the minimum project award amount an applicant could request. Staff from DHCD and ANR will consult further on these questions and make a recommendation at the November meeting.

9. Old Business / New Business

Announcements

Chris Cochran announced that the administration will soon present its package of proposed modifications to Act 250 that aims to make communities more resilient and strengthen Vermont's traditional settlement pattern of compact centers surrounded by rural working lands. This package builds upon Executive Branch Report submitted to the Commission on Act 250 last fall. The proposal envisions an "enhanced" designation process for certain state designated centers to support development within centers and it offer opportunities for communities to designate important forest and agricultural lands.

10. Adjourn

Tasha Wallis made a motion to adjourn and Peter Walke seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 3:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie