

**Draft Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
9/26/2022
Via Teams Virtual Meeting**

Members Present (12):

- Josh Hanford (*Chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development, arrived at 1:10pm
- Michele Boomhower, designated by the Secretary of Transportation
- Billy Coster, designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources
- Michael Desrochers, designated by the Commissioner of Public Safety
- Laura Trieschmann, State Historic Preservation Officer
- Jaime Lee, appointed by the Governor, representing the Vermont Natural Resources Council and the Preservation Trust of Vermont.
- David Allaire, designated by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Michael McDonough, appointed by the governor, representing local government
- Bruce Cheeseman, appointed by the Governor, representing local government
- Chip Sawyer, designated by the Vermont Planners Association
- Sabina Haskell, designated by the Chair of the Natural Resources Board
- Devon Neary, alternate designated by the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
- Cathy Davis, 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, Gary Holloway, Jacob Hemmerick, and Jenni Lavoie.

Guests (10): Reva Seybolt, Debra Kingsbury, Jennifer Gray-Tower, Thomas Davis, Tom Badowski, Corey Parent, Karla Nuissl, and Meghan Asbury.

Michele Boomhower brought the meeting to order at 1:05pm via Teams Meeting virtual conference call.

Additions or Deletions to Board Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the board agenda.

1. Public Comment Period

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

2. Consent Agenda Items:

- August 1, 2022, Draft Meeting Minutes
- Plainfield Village Center Designation Renewal
- Bennington – Downtown Designation 4 Year Review
- Brattleboro – Downtown Designation 4 Year Review

Bruce Cheeseman made a motion to approve the consent agenda items, and Dave Allaire seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Devon Neary, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

3. Village Center Designation

Town of Northfield

The town is requesting a boundary amendment to add 7 additional properties that includes the senior center, senior living apartments, Grace Evangelical Church, and 7 commercial properties located in Freight Yard Way. The proposed boundary amendment runs along Depot Square and Wall Street, and includes the Senior Center, Green Mountain Apartments, Grace Evangelical Church, and 7 businesses, including TDS, Gillespie Fuels, NAPA Auto parts, self-storage, offices, Northfield Wood Products, and the Engine House. The town worked with staff to define the boundary amendment that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Tom Davis, Economic Development Director, shared that the proposed boundary amendment area has been the focus of a recent planning efforts, including the Brownfield Area Plan, the Better Connections plan, and more recently a scoping study to review pedestrian connections to the Water Street park across the Dog River. Once the study is complete, construction of the sidewalk will begin the following year.

Dave Allaire made a motion to approve Northfield's boundary amendment, and Michele Boomhower seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Devon Neary, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

Town of St. Albans

The town is requesting a boundary amendment to add 14 additional properties that include 13 residential properties on the lakefront and one larger parcel for the new St. Albans Town Hall. The proposed boundary amendment runs along Route 36 (Lake Road), Chubb Street, Cherry Street and Georgia Shore Road, and includes the historic town hall, new town hall, town park, post office, Methodist church, the Bay Store, the Bayside Pavilion restaurant, dock and marina, small businesses, multifamily and single-family residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary amendment that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Jennifer Gray from the town reported to board members that town staff isn't in the new town hall building just yet, they still need to secure potable water. The goal is for staff to be in the new building by the end of October. Additionally, the community is discussing the prior historic town hall building to determine the best reuse. Housing would be ideal at this location, however, there are significant water and wastewater constraints.

Board members commended the town and village on the work they've done with the redevelopment, as well as the significant public engagement process the town led.

Michele Boomhower made a motion to approve St. Albans boundary amendment, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Devon Neary, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

Town of Vershire

The proposed boundary runs along Route 113 and includes the town center including the community center, recreation fields, and emergency operations center, the town offices, a church and parsonage, former school, post office, commercial businesses, and single-family and multifamily residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Reva Seybolt, and Debra Kingsbury, shared that they've watched significant turnover of town residents in the past 10 – 15 years, with many new families coming to town. With the transition of new families, they are finding many more volunteers, which is helpful as the town operates

mostly by volunteer. They are looking forward to implementing new projects, and designation will only strengthen this momentum.

Michael Desrochers made a motion to approve village center designation for Vershire, and Billy Coster seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Devon Neary, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

4. Neighborhood Development Area Designation – Berlin

The neighborhood development area designation encourages municipalities and/or developers to plan for new and infill housing in the area within walking distance of its designated downtown, village center, new town center, or within its designated growth center and incentivizes needed housing, further supporting the commercial establishments in the designated centers. Areas eligible for designation must be within a neighborhood planning area defined as an area surrounding an existing designated area, extending a 1/4 mile from village centers and new town centers. Application materials submitted from the Town of Berlin are complete. Staff finds that the proposed Neighborhood Development Area around its New Town Center meets the requirements for designation and recommends local action to strengthen a pedestrian connection to the western section of the NDA.

Tom Badowski, Assistant Town Administrator, stated that the next step for Berlin is to improve its New Town Center with respect to housing. The Town will be meeting with developers on future housing needs, with all the momentum in the town right now – they want to really focus on housing. The town also has a current scoping study for Fisher Road to research a multi-use path to make Fisher Road more pedestrian friendly, and to connect to Paine Turnpike.

Board members inquired about the requirement of a pedestrian connection on Paine Turnpike. Program staff advised that Paine Turnpike does not meet the Complete Streets requirement currently, which is the reason for the recommended pedestrian connection requirement in the motion. In order to become a Complete Street, the town will need a future improvement plan, or capital plan for this area. Additional board comments inquired about the connection along Route 62 from the proposed NDA area to the school. Tom shared that the school has an existing trail system that will connect to the New Town Center. Lastly, the board mentioned bringing those connections closer to Route 62 and avoiding documented wetlands in the area.

Dave Allaire made a motion to approve Neighborhood Development Area designation for Berlin, Josh Hanford offered a friendly amendment to approve the Neighborhood Development Area designation for Berlin, with the staff recommended requirement, and Bruce Cheeseman seconded. Ayes: Billy Coster, Bruce Cheeseman, Devon Neary, Chip Sawyer, Dave Allaire, Jaime Lee, Laura Trieschmann, Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Michele Boomhower, Sabina Haskell, and Josh Hanford. The motion carried.

4. Old Business / New Business

Josh Hanford and Chris Cochran discussed future board meeting remaining virtual for efficiency and holding in-person meetings when there is substantive discussion planned. The department does intend to ask for a legislative change to fund per diem, and mileage for board members to better align this board with how other boards are managed.

5. Adjourn

Billy Coster made a motion to adjourn, and Michele Boomhower seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Lavoie