

CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Draft MINUTES
October 13, 2020

Commissioners:

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<input type="checkbox"/>	Jan Ohlsson, Alt.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Harrison Snapp, Alt.
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Montpelier	Marcella Dent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Woodbury	Michael Gray
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mike Miller, Alt.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Worcester	Bill Arrand

Staff: Bonnie Waninger, Nancy Chartrand, Clare Rock, Zachary Maia

Guests: Brandy Saxton, PlaceSense; Tom Badowski, Berlin Assistant Town Manager; Paul Simon, Landscape Architect

Call to Order

Chair L. Hill-Eubanks called the remote meeting to order at 6:31 pm. Hill-Eubanks conducted a roll call.
Quorum present.

Adjustments to the Agenda

None.

Public Comments

None.

Berlin New Town Center & Neighborhood Development Area

Hill-Eubanks directed the Board to the information in the packet and introduced staff and guests.

Clare Rock, using slides available in the Board packet, discussed the purpose and benefits of the state's

1 designations of both a New Town Center and Neighborhood Development Areas. Noted was that a
2 Town Center plan is at the heart of the Municipal Plan and that in order to achieve the vision within the
3 plan it relies on a variety of components; private and public agreements, land use regulations, adoption
4 of an official map, and adoption of a capital program plan and budget. It is a partnership of state
5 support, local support, regional support and investor support. An additional level of planning beyond
6 the Municipal Plan is required that creates a more specific pathway to achieve the designation, which is
7 a very time consuming strategic planning process.

8
9 Following Rock's presentation, Berlin was asked to provide their presentation. Brandy Saxton, using
10 slides available in the packet, provided detail regarding the Berlin Town Center Plan. She outlined
11 the boundary noting it is anchored by the Berlin Mall and the Central Vermont Medical Center. She
12 provided background related to the choice of location noting it is a regional service center with more
13 than 50 businesses in the general area and the hospital being the second largest employer in the region.
14 She also noted there has been a significant amount of investment in transportation infrastructure in the
15 area. Saxton advised that Berlin identified a Town Center as a priority in the late 90's with various
16 planning studies over the years, and they have worked diligently towards the implementation of that
17 vision. She stated the concept plan being presented is intended to be a first step of many steps to
18 develop the area from an auto oriented area to a more walkable area. Detail was provided on the
19 outline of the vision of the street concepts and pedestrian connections as seen in the slides. Noted was
20 that a Town Center for the 21st century must plan around personal vehicle transportation in a setting
21 like this, but can evolve over time as more walkable and mixed-use. She noted that most development
22 in the first phase will likely be residential, and that currently there is not a high demand for commercial
23 use, and that retail space will likely decline over time. Noted was a potential for more than 300 units of
24 housing to be added in the Town Center area.

25
26 Saxton introduced Paul Simon, Landscape Architect, who discussed in detail the concept of the site plans
27 that were included in the packet. He advised the plan is still evolving and detail was provided regarding
28 potential development: municipal building, housing units, senior housing, a day care facility, in addition
29 to other potential buildings for various uses. Saxton made note that the daycare facility proposed by
30 Downstreet Housing & EverNorth is dependent on the town obtaining the town center designation.
31 Simon noted they are trying to make a strong connection between the mall and the new town center
32 core incorporating new commercial and residential development tied into a community green and he
33 provided detail on the various proposed street concepts and pedestrian connections. He noted they
34 were focused on providing what new town centers need – mixed use and mixed income availability.

35
36 The floor was open to questions and Saxton advised that Waninger had sent over questions in advance,
37 with one related to level of support from property owners for the new town center. She advised that
38 Berlin has had a great working relationship with the property owners and that the school district, car
39 dealership, senior housing, mall and hospital have all been very supportive and engaged in the process.

40
41 Karla Nuissl of the Berlin Planning Commission noted it is important to think about South Burlington's
42 new town center, a successful example of a new town center at this point, which is much more spread
43 out and walkable, but doesn't necessarily look like a downtown yet and recognize it takes time to get
44 there. She noted they ran into lots of obstacles during the process and have put together a great plan
45 that is supported by those who would be relied upon to do the development.

1
2 Tom Badowski, Assistant Berlin Town Administrator, added that Berlin has put extensive resources from
3 a public utility perspective into the area with both municipal water system and sewer improvements in
4 anticipation of creating a town center.
5

6 Following Berlin's presentation, Rock followed up regarding the regional component of the proposed
7 town center and shared slides that outlined how the town center relates to the Regional Plan. The
8 proposed town center is located within the regionally identified town center future land use planning
9 area as depicted in the slides available in the packet. She used the site plan prepared by Berlin to
10 highlight and discuss how the proposal fits in with Regional Plan policies. She advised that at a regional
11 level we are looking at recognizing the benefits to the town, understanding how state designation
12 benefits would apply to new development, and also thinking about how this new development
13 complements existing use and what future impacts might be on regional transportation network.
14

15 The floor was opened to questions. There was question why the housing behind the hospital is not
16 included in the Town Center. Saxton advised Woodridge Nursing facility is not part of Town Center due
17 to the boundary being drawn along the power line.
18

19 There was a request for Karla or Tom to talk about proposed municipal use building and what the town
20 is thinking about doing with such a structure. Tom advised that the Berlin town administration currently
21 shares space with the Police Department and Town Highway Garage. He noted they have requested a
22 planning grant to look at potential needs. However, he envisions that the Police Department may go
23 into a new municipal facility first, with potential for town administration going into a facility the future.
24

25 It was questioned if the plan is approved, what restrictions are there on future development based on
26 the designation? Saxton advised a requirement of the Town Center designation process is to come up
27 with a conceptual Master Plan to demonstrate the area being proposed for designation could be
28 developed in a manner that meets the state's criteria. She noted they've worked closely with the mall
29 and hospital who are also engaged in their own master planning processes. She also noted that there
30 may be some regulatory implications with regard to the plan as the town needs to adopt an official map
31 to show a basic road network which will become a regulatory document so that when there is
32 development it needs to be in alignment with the official map or parties would need to come to a
33 mutually beneficial arrangement.
34

35 A question was raised as to why the hospital was included in the plan rather than the school and other
36 adjoining property? Saxton advised the hospital was included as a result of town's conversations with
37 the state and since the hospital is a major anchor of the area, it was felt walkability to the hospital side
38 of Fisher Road was important. She noted the hospital is very interested in seeing housing come to this
39 area to help attract and retain staff. They did not go towards school and other lands on Paine Turnpike
40 due to natural resources constraints which would have impacted necessary connectivity.
41

42 Hill-Eubanks thanked Berlin for their information and advised if other Commissioners had comments or
43 questions to send to Waninger to pass along.
44

45 **Legislative Update**

1 Waninger advised that the Act 250 bill was vetoed by Governor, which was much reduced from original
2 form. He carried forward a piece of the bill related to trails by executive order.

3 4 **Regional Plan Amendment**

5 Hill-Eubanks directed the Board to the information in the packet. She advised this was the second of
6 two public hearings to consider public comments on the proposed amendments to the 2016 Central
7 Vermont Regional Plan, 2020 Draft Amendment.

8
9 *R. Wernecke made a motion to open the public hearing; seconded by D. La Haye. Motion carried.*

10
11 Opened to comments from public and/or the Board. No comments raised.

12
13 *R. Wernecke made a motion to close the public hearing; seconded by R. Turner. Motion carried.*

14
15 *R. Wernecke made a motion to approve the amendments; seconded by J. Potter. Waninger asked for*
16 *clarification if the motion was to adopt; which Wernecke clarified. The motion was called for all in favor*
17 *to adopt the amendments to the Regional Plan. Motion carried.*

18 19 **Meeting Minutes – September 8, 2020**

20 Hill-Eubanks directed the Board to the information in the packet, and opened to questions, comments
21 or corrections.

22
23 *R. Wernecke moved to approve the minutes of September 8; R. Krauth seconded. Motion carried.*

24 25 **Reports**

26 Hill-Eubanks directed the Board to the information in the packet and Waninger provided an overview of
27 activity in the region. She advised there is a proposal to modify public transit in the Montpelier area
28 from fixed route service to micro- transit, which is an on-demand service. She noted the final public
29 hearing is tomorrow at 4:00 pm should any members wish to participate. She advised that Northfield
30 has a new Economic Development Director, who recently participated in a training hosted by CVRPC
31 staff and there is also a new Economic Development Director at Barre Area Development Corporation
32 who CVRPC will be meeting with soon. Kudos was provided to Ashley Andrews who has been, in
33 addition to other work, completing field work with three planning technicians. This field work has
34 consisted of bridge and culvert inventories, road erosion inventories, Wi-Fi assessments, bus stop
35 inventories, and an ash tree inventory. She advised the Board that Ashley is also our contact for
36 Transportation should communities need any assistance and that she has been doing a wonderful job.

37
38 A question was raised on micro-transit regarding what would happen if someone from out of town came
39 into town on a bus thinking they could take a connecting bus to the hospital, how would they know they
40 needed to use the micro-transit instead. Waninger advised the bus shelters will still be available and
41 have notices with information on the number to call or application to download in order to use on-
42 demand service; and/or they may keep the hospital as a fixed route.

43
44 There was also question as to where to access information on the WiFi Hotspots. Waninger advised that

1 map is available on the Public Service Department (PSD) website and that our Planning Technician has
2 been testing those spots in each town to provide information on how effective the access is; which will
3 be added to the map on the PSD website.

4
5 There was an inquiry as to if there was more to the legislative update. Waninger noted S-235, which
6 started as a housing bill, passed in a much more restricted form. It allows towns to regulate short-term
7 rentals, and also includes pieces about mobile home park infrastructure.

8
9 She also noted that from a budget perspective, the appropriations bill for RPC's was level funded, which
10 we consider a win due to the Legislature not cutting the budget and seeing the value of what RPCs do
11 and the assistance they can provide municipalities during COVID, such as our involvement with the Local
12 Governmental Expense Reimbursement program.

13
14 **Adjournment**

15 *D. La Haye moved to adjourn at 8:07 pm; R. Wernecke seconded.*

16
17 Respectfully submitted,

18
19 Nancy Chartrand, Office Manager