

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

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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 meeting to order at 6:31 pm, and conducted a roll call. Quorum was present.

Adjustments to the Agenda

None.

Public Comments

None.

Berlin New Town Center & Neighborhood Development Area

Clare Rock discussed the purpose and benefits of both New Town Center and Neighborhood Development Areas designations. A Town Center plan is at the heart of the Municipal Plan. To achieve the vision, it relies on a variety of components; private and public agreements, land use regulations, adoption of an official map, and adoption of a capital program plan and budget. It is a partnership of

1 state, local, regional and investor support. Planning beyond the Municipal Plan is required to create a
2 specific pathway to achieve the designation, which is a time consuming strategic planning process.

3
4 Brandy Saxton provided detail regarding the Berlin Town Center Plan. The boundary is anchored by the
5 Berlin Mall and the Central Vermont Medical Center. She provided background related to the choice of
6 location noting it is a regional service center with more than 50 businesses in the area and the hospital
7 being the second largest employer in the region. There has been a significant amount of investment in
8 transportation infrastructure in the area. Saxton advised that Berlin identified a Town Center as a
9 priority in the late 90's with various planning studies over the years. The Town has worked diligently
10 towards the implementation of that vision. The concept plan is intended to be a first step of many steps
11 to develop the area from an auto-oriented area to a more walkable area. Saxton discussed the street
12 concepts and pedestrian connections. She noted that a Town Center for the 21st century must plan
13 around personal vehicle transportation in a setting like this, but it can evolve over time as more
14 walkable and mixed-use. She noted that most development in the first phase will likely be residential,
15 currently there is not a high demand for commercial use, and retail space will likely decline over time.
16 She noted a potential for more than 300 units of housing to be added in the Town Center area.

17
18 Saxton introduced Paul Simon, Landscape Architect, who discussed the site plans included in the
19 meeting packet. He advised the plan is still evolving and detail was provided regarding potential
20 development: municipal building, housing units, senior housing, a day care facility, and other potential
21 buildings for various uses. Saxton noted that the daycare facility proposed by Downstreet Housing and
22 EverNorth is dependent on obtaining the Town Center designation. Simon noted they are trying to
23 make a strong connection between the mall and the new town center core, incorporating new
24 commercial and residential development tied into a community green. He provided detail on the
25 various proposed street concepts and pedestrian connections. He noted they were focused on
26 providing what new town centers need – mixed use and mixed income availability.

27
28 The floor was open to questions, and Saxton advised that Waninger had sent over questions in advance,
29 with one related to level of support from property owners. She advised that Berlin has had a great
30 working relationship with the property owners and that the school district, car dealership, senior
31 housing, mall and hospital have all been very supportive and engaged in the process.

32
33 Karla Nuissl, Berlin Planning Commission Chair, noted it is important to recognize it takes time to
34 achieve. South Burlington's new town center, a successful example, is more spread out and walkable,
35 but doesn't necessarily look like a downtown yet. She noted they encountered lots of obstacles and
36 have put together a great plan supported by those who would be relied upon to do the development.

37
38 Tom Badowski, Berlin Assistant Town Administrator, said Berlin has put extensive public utility resources
39 into the area with both municipal water system and sewer improvements to create a town center.

40
41 Following Berlin's presentation, Rock discussed the regional component of the proposed town center.
42 She shared slides that outlined how the town center relates to the Regional Plan. The proposed town
43 center is located within the regionally identified Town Center Future Land Use Planning Area. She used
44 the site plan prepared by Berlin to highlight and discuss how the proposal relates to Regional Plan
45 policies. At a regional level, CVRPC is recognizing the benefits to the town, understanding how state

1 designation benefits would apply to new development, and considering how this new development
2 complements existing use and what future impacts might be on regional transportation network.

3
4 The floor was opened to questions. There was question why the housing behind the hospital is not
5 included in the Town Center. Saxton advised Woodridge Nursing facility is not part of Town Center due
6 to the boundary being drawn along the power line.

7
8 There was a request to discuss the proposed municipal use building and what the Town is thinking about
9 doing with such a structure. Tom advised that the Berlin Town Administration currently shares space
10 with the Police Department and Town Highway Garage. He noted they have requested a planning grant
11 to look at potential needs. However, he envisions that the Police Department may go into a new
12 municipal facility first, with potential for Town Administration going into a facility the future.

13
14 It was questioned whether there would be restrictions on future development if the designation plan is
15 approved. Saxton advised a requirement of the Town Center designation process is to come up with a
16 conceptual Master Plan to demonstrate the area being proposed for designation could be developed in
17 a manner that meets the state's criteria. She noted they've worked closely with the mall and hospital
18 who also are engaged in their own master planning processes. There may be some regulatory
19 implications with regard to the plan as the Town needs to adopt an official map to show a basic road
20 network which will become a regulatory document so that when there is development it needs to be in
21 alignment with the official map or parties would need to come to a mutually beneficial arrangement.

22
23 A question was raised as to why the hospital was included in the plan rather than the school and other
24 adjoining property. Saxton advised the hospital was included as a result of Town's conversations with
25 the state. Since the hospital is a major anchor of the area, it was felt walkability to the hospital side of
26 Fisher Road was important. She noted the hospital is very interested in seeing housing come to this area
27 to help it attract and retain staff. They did not go towards school and other lands on Paine Turnpike due
28 to natural resources constraints, which would have impacted necessary connectivity.

29
30 Hill-Eubanks thanked Berlin and advised Commissioners to send additional comments to Waninger.

31 32 **Legislative Update**

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

35 36 **Regional Plan Amendment**

37 Hill-Eubanks advised this was the second of two public hearings to consider public comments on the
38 proposed amendments to the 2016 Central Vermont Regional Plan, 2020 Draft Amendment.

39
40 *R. Wernecke moved to open the public hearing; D. La Haye seconded. Motion carried.*

41
42 Opened to comments from public and/or the Board. No comments received.

43
44 *R. Wernecke moved to close the public hearing; R. Turner seconded. Motion carried.*

1 *R. Wernecke moved to approve the amendments; seconded by J. Potter. Waninger asked for clarification*
2 *if the motion was to adopt; which Wernecke confirmed. Motion carried.*

4 **Meeting Minutes – September 8, 2020**

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

7 **Reports**

8 Waninger advised there is a proposal to modify public transit in the Montpelier area from fixed route
9 service to micro-transit, which is an on-demand service. She noted the final public hearing is tomorrow
10 at 4:00 pm should any members wish to participate. She advised that Northfield has a new Economic
11 Development Director, who recently participated in a training hosted by CVRPC staff. There is also a
12 new Economic Development Director at Barre Area Development Corporation who CVRPC will be
13 meeting with soon. Kudos was provided to Ashley Andrews who has been, in addition to other work,
14 completing field work with three planning technicians. This field work has consisted of bridge and
15 culvert inventories, road erosion inventories, Wi-Fi assessments, bus stop inventories, and an ash tree
16 inventory. She advised the Board that Ashley is also our contact for transportation should communities
17 need any assistance, and that she has been doing a wonderful job.

18
19 A question was raised on micro-transit regarding what would happen if someone from out of town came
20 into town on a bus thinking they could take a connecting bus to the hospital, how would they know they
21 needed to use the micro-transit instead. Waninger advised the bus shelters will still be available and
22 have notices with information on the number to call or application to download in order to use on-
23 demand service; and/or they may keep the hospital as a fixed route.

24
25 There was also question as to where to access information on the WiFi Hotspots. Waninger advised that
26 map is available on the Public Service Department (PSD) website and that our Planning Technician has
27 been testing those spots in each town to provide information on how effective the access is; which will
28 be added to the map on the PSD website.

29
30 There was an inquiry as to if there was more to the legislative update. Waninger noted S-235, which
31 started as a housing bill, passed in a much more restricted form. It allows towns to regulate short-term
32 rentals, and also includes pieces about mobile home park infrastructure.

33
34 She also noted that from a budget perspective, the appropriations bill for RPC's was level funded, which
35 we consider a positive in the tight fiscal environment. The Legislature saw the value of what RPCs do
36 and the assistance they can provide municipalities during COVID, such as our involvement with the Local
37 Governmental Expense Reimbursement program.

39 **Adjournment**

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

41
42 Respectfully submitted,

43
44 Nancy Chartrand, Office Manager