

**Fair Haven Planning Commission**  
Town of Fair Haven - February 5, 2025 - Regular Meeting

**Commissioners Present:** Robert Richards - Chair, Linda Sienkiewicz, Jason Coupal - Vicechair, Cindy Pritchard

**Commissioners Absent:** Patrick Frazier

**Others Present:** Phil Adams - Zoning Administrator, Jennifer Jackson - Minute-taker, Logan Solomon - RRPC Representative

**Agenda**

**1. Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm by Chairman Richards.

**2. Review of Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

**Approval of Minutes: Regular meeting - December 18, 2024**

**(Regular Meeting - January 1, 2025 cancelled)**

**Regular Meeting - January 15, 2025 - no quorum**

Mr. Coupal motioned to accept the minutes of December 18<sup>th</sup> as written. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Pritchard. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Chairman Richards made note of the canceled January meetings.

**3. New Business:**

**Meeting with Logan Solomon of the Rutland Regional Planning Commission for continued work on the proposed subdivision regulations, and the area to encompass a proposed Village Center Designation, required for Fair Haven to qualify for a Downtown Designation.**

DownTown Designation Application Packet

([https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD\\_Web\\_Docs/CD/CPR/State-Designation-Programs/CPR-DT-Application-Guidelines.pdf](https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/CD/CPR/State-Designation-Programs/CPR-DT-Application-Guidelines.pdf))

Chairman Richards passed the signed Appendix A and B to Mr. Solomon for the Downtown Designation Application Packet. (Drinking water system compliance – Appendix A, page 13. Wastewater system compliance – Appendix B, page 14-15.) He then suggested to Mr. Solomon that they go over the application packet step by step. Chairman Richards reported that Fair Haven's EDC (Economic Development Committee) has changed their name and added a purpose to help obtain the Downtown Designation. They are now called the Economic Development Committee and DOWntown Partnership. They are working on their bylaws which should be completed soon.

Chairman Richards asked if the March timeline is too tight to maintain. Mr. Solomon explained that there are many parts to complete but the goal is still a good one. Chairman Richards asked if the planning Commission could apply with the process being "in process"? Mr. Solomon stated it's a conversation with the State. So yes, because there is a pre application meeting.

Mr. Solomon started reviewing the Downtown Designation application checklist with the PC.

1. The Cover Letter: is just a matter of writing it. Chairman Richards stated he will work on the cover letter with Town Manager Gunter.
2. Authorization and Notification: Minutes from the selectboard meeting saying the town is interested are needed. An email needs to be sent to Devon Neary, the director of RRPC, and Lyle Jepson, executive director of CEDRR as notice of intent. And a public notice needs to be posted in the paper of record of the towns intent to apply. Mr. Solomon will supply the state statute requiring the public notice.
3. Confirmed Planning Process - This is Mr. Solomon's responsibility.
4. Mrs. Sienkiewicz reported that she, after researching the options available to meet the 4th requirement of the downtown designation application;
  - "4. The municipality must meet at least one of the following to demonstrate its planning commitment:
    - Adoption of a design control district, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4414(1)(E);
    - Adoption of a local historic district, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4414(1)(F) (please note that this is not the same as a National Register district);
    - Adoption of regulations that adequately regulate the physical form and scale of development that the State Board determines substantially meet the historic preservation requirements in subdivision 24 V.S.A. §4414(1)(E) and (F);
    - Creation of a development review board authorized to undertake local Act 250 reviews, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4420."

Mrs. Sienkiewicz stated that her opinion was the creation of a local historic district option would fit best with the Town's goals and Objectives. Mr. Solomon agreed. He would help work on language to help the adoption. Mrs. Pritchard stated she had a booklet all about the local historic architecture which is an excerpt from the following book Historic Architecture Of Rutland County found at

<https://archive.org/details/HistoricArchitectureOfRutlandCounty/HistoricArchitectureOfRutlandCounty/page/246/mode/2up> . Mr. Solomon agreed that it will be a very helpful resource.

5. Community Reinvestment Agreement; Needs to show community buy-in. Mrs. Pritchard stated she would go around and talk to business owners. Mr. Solomon reminded that they need to show buy-in from multiple entities.
6. Capital Budget and Program; Chairman Richards stated the town has a capital budget

Mr. Coupal excused himself from the meeting at 7:22 pm.

7. Downtown Organization - explained more on page 8 of the application packet. A 5 year strategic plan is needed. Mr. Solomon sent Poultney's plan; which was more simple than Mr. Solomon thought it would be. It stated a Goal/Objective, then gave 1 or 2 strategies to obtain the goal/objective. Mrs. Pritchard asked if the town plan goals could be reused to ensure their accomplishment.
8. Water and wastewater Compliance and reserve Commitment; The appendices were given to Mr. Solomon at the beginning of the meeting. He was concerned of the "reserve Commitment" which had to have a "formal action" - which needs to take place. Chairman Richards stated he didn't know what would be an adequate reserve. Not

much structure can be added in the designated area. Solomon stated he will check with the state as to what that meant to them. He did respond with the fact that he knows Fair Haven has a lot of capacity.

#### 9. Funding Resources

- a. Evidence of the municipality's financial commitment demonstrated by a commitment by the municipality to implement at least one of the following:
  - i. A special assessment district created to provide funding to the downtown district.
  - ii. Authority to enter into a tax stabilization agreement for the purposes of economic development in a downtown district.
  - iii. Other multiple-year financial commitments among the parties subject to the approval of the Downtown Board.
- b. Proposed downtown organization budget with funding sources (see sample budget on page 10).
- c. Plans to pursue long term, sustainable funding strategies (e.g. business improvement district, local option tax, etc.).

Although Fair Haven has a stabilization policy in place Mr. Solomon isn't certain if the policy needs to be specific to the area or not. He will ask the State and will let the PC know. His question is if the policy can cover the whole town or if it must be specific to the downtown area.

Mr. Solomon explained that the Downtown Organization needs to have a budget, which also needs to be submitted. Chairman Richards stated that the EDC has a budget.

Mr. Solomon also stated that the Pc would need to show, "Plans to pursue long term, sustainable funding strategies (e.g. business improvement district, local option tax, etc.)." Chairman Richards stated that the town has a "revolving fund" used to help people start or preserve businesses. It can be found on the town website. Usually the application is passed through the EDC. Mr. Solomon stated this sounds like what they are looking for, but the pre meeting will help answer some of the questions. He will investigate what information on a business improvement district.

10. Downtown Designation Boundary Map; Mr. Solomon stated that the maps he emailed the PC earlier in the week do not meet the requirement, as they need to have buildings with lots. He will take care of the creation of the map. He then passed out maps with his proposed boundaries for the downtown area. A red line outlined the current village center; he then included areas northwest along Washington St up towards Our Lady of Seven Dolors Catholic Church, North along N. Main Street to Fair Haven Dental, and including Liberty Auto Sales and abutting businesses. The other side of the map included a map comparing the designation boundaries; village center, downtown, Neighborhood Designation Areas (NDA); indicating that an NDA with a downtown area is much larger than an NDA for a village center.

Mr. Solomon suggested showing the state the intended boundaries especially towards Liberty and Cottage Streets as those were on the edge of the boundary and the states advice would be helpful.

Mr. Solomon explained that the Downtown Designation is about rehabilitation of the area, whereas the Neighborhood development is about new development in the areas.

The second map page, Mr. Solomon explained that the neighborhood area could potentially be expanded up to Route 4 but expanding past route four would be difficult. The pre meeting with the State will be very important for clarifying some of these questions. Mr.

Solomon explained that although the Planning Commission will interface with the State Staff, they aren't the decision makers in the application process, a board of citizens make the final decisions.

Chairman Richards lamented that interstates ruin towns, but it would be nice to try and work around Route 4. Mr. Solomon explained that the green boundary on the map is the "safe" boundary. Mrs. Pritchard stated she thinks Route 4 area development would be detrimental to the Downtown Businesses. Mr. Solomon explained that other mapping layers include slope and can help with modification of the NDA.

Chairman Richards asked about the timeline again. Mr. Solomon suggested amending the zoning for the historic district and other work can happen during the notification timeline. The last opportunity to apply is October 2025. Mrs. Pritchard suggested a special meeting to work on language for new zoning laws. Mr. Solomon suggested the quickest way to make meetings more efficient is for the example language to be sent out. The PC members look over the sample language with their own notating/commenting. At their meeting they go through the document and talk about each other's questions and comments. He stated as well that the Zoning District Map for the 11th bullet point of the application would need to be submitted. Which finishes up the application bullet points.

At 8:00pm Chairman Richards explained that the Starting Points for Subdivision that was emailed out was hard for him to read due to the commenting. If there is a better way to share the document it would be helpful. Mr. Solomon will look into a way to better show the comment marking. Mr. Solomon asked what is the next most helpful step in the process? Chairman Richards stated he didn't want to go over the Subdivision until the comments are more understandable and suggested that the PC hold off until the next meeting in February. Mr. Solomon stated the Historical District should come before the subdivision regs.

Chairman Richards suggested a special meeting February 17th just for historical district work so it can be passed to the selectboard for their approval. Mr. Solomon stated that the PC should still am for the March pre-approval meeting but that April would work as well. Mr. Adams asked about the procedure for approving the amendments. Mr. Solomon stated he will double check the actual processes and get back to the PC. Mrs. Pritchard still thinks a special meeting is a good idea. Mr. Solomon stated the historical district addition shouldn't be too many pages to add and agreed a special meeting is a good idea if it can be scheduled. The PC agreed to a Monday February 17th Working Session/Special Meeting at 7:00pm.

Mr. Solomon stated he had a good to do list. Chairman Richards asked the PC to read the email with historical district document before the next meeting. Mr. Solomon asked what level of historical development regulations the PC is looking for; indepth or open The PC agreed that more open regulations would be best for the town. Mr. Adams asked the PC to please email Mr. Solomon if there are any questions. Mr. Solomon left at 8:22pm.

#### **4. Other Business:**

- a. **Review of Mail:** On January 16th a letter from SRH Law was received concerning Case No. 24-2945PET: Petition of VT Real Estate Holdings 2 LLC for

a certificate of public good, pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 248, authorizing the installation and operation of a 20 MW solar electric generation facility in Fair Haven, Vermont.

No discussion - just a notice.

b. **Public Comment:** None

**5. Adjournment:**

Mrs. Sienkiewicz made a **motion to adjourn at 8:25 pm**. Mrs. Pritchard seconded the adjournment motion. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jennifer Jackson, Minute-taker

\*\*\* Special Planning Commission Meeting to be held MONDAY February 17, 2025 at 7:00PM  
The Next Regular Commission Meeting will be held on February 19, 2025\*\*\*