

Fair Haven Planning Commission
Town of Fair Haven - March 18, 2026 - Regular Meeting

Commissioners Present:, Linda Sienkiewicz - clerk, Ann Finley - Vice Chair, Sam Lucci

Commissioners Absent: Robert Richards - Chair

Others Present: Phil Adams - Zoning Administrator, Jennifer Jackson - recording secretary, Doug Ainger, Shawn Hadwon, Donnie Ducharme

Agenda

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Vice-Chair Finley.

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

a. **Approval of Minutes: Regular meeting - March 4, 2026**

Mrs. Sienkiewicz **motioned to accept the minutes of March 4th with corrections.** The motion was seconded by Mr. Lucci. Discussion included the following changes:

- Removing the apostrophe from "Hutchins" in the first paragraph of New Business
- On page 1 line 5 changing *Hutchin* to *Hutchins*
- On Page 2 line 5 changing *could* to *couldn't*

All were in favor and the motion passed.

3. **New Business:**

a. **Annual Commission organizational meeting to elect a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Clerk.**

b. **Informational meeting for the continuing Commission work towards obtaining a State of Vermont Downtown Designation for Fair Haven - Step 3 application requirements.**

[Community Investment Program Downtown Designation: Step Three Center Application: https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/CD/CPR/State-Designation-Programs/CPR-DT-Downtown-Designation-Step-Three-Guidelines-FINAL.pdf](https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/CD/CPR/State-Designation-Programs/CPR-DT-Downtown-Designation-Step-Three-Guidelines-FINAL.pdf) .

Organizational Meeting:

Mr. Lucci **motioned to nominate Robert Richards as the Planning Commission Chair.** The motion was seconded by Mrs. Sienkiewicz. All were in favor and the nomination passed.

Mrs. Finley **motioned to nominate Sam Lucci as Planning Commission clerk.** Mrs. Sienkiewicz seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Lucci **motioned to nominate Ann Finley as the Planning Commission Vice-Chair.** Mrs. Sienkiewicz seconded the motion. All were in favor and the nomination passed.

Informational Meeting:

Mrs. Finley explained the Downtown Designation Plan and that the current situation was that there is a need for a Downtown Partnership. This partnership needs to be separate from the Town, but will need to work in tandem with the town. There will be opportunities for grants

when the Downtown Designation is achieved and one of the largest grants is a Vibrancy Fund worth \$25,000 each year. This money can be used to hire a person to work for the partnership and help apply for grants for projects.

Mr. Ducharme asked what entails a partnership. Mrs. Finley explained who can be involved in the partnership; how it is formed, the creation of its own board, creating a reinvestment agreement with the Town. She explained that the Partnership would be able to apply for grants and would have power in deciding what is done with the grant money. Mr. Ducharme asked what happens if you have all this money, but the town won't let you do what you want with it? Mr. Lucci explained that the process would not get that far without the input and cooperation with the town.

Mr. Ducharme asked for clarification on the \$25,000 Vibrancey Fund grant. Mrs. Finley reexplained what the fund is. Mr. Lucci stated the vibrancy fund is money that is eligible once the DownTown Designation is given from the State. He explained that at the back of the application booklet the grants available to Downtown Designated Towns are listed. To be *eligible* for the Designation the town needs a Downtown Organization that is independent from the Town. Currently the EDC is subordinate to the SelectBoard. A Downtown Partnership would have some autonomy. Mr. Hadwen stated the Partnership would be independent until they need permission for a project from the town. Mr. Lucci stated the Partnership isn't beholden to the Town. Mr. Hadwen stated he believes independence is weak. Mr. Lucci stated that the Partnership would still need to follow the Town's Laws and Zoning Regulations.

Mr. Aigner asked where the application was found. Mr. Lucci explained how to find the application. [Community Investment Program Downtown Designation: Step Three Center Application: https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/CD/CPR/State-Designation-Programs/CPR-DT-Downto wn-Designation-Step-Three-Guidelines-FINAL.pdf](https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/CD/CPR/State-Designation-Programs/CPR-DT-Downto wn-Designation-Step-Three-Guidelines-FINAL.pdf).

Mr. Ducharme asked what happens if someone is hired with the \$25,000 and they leave? Mrs. Finley stated the money stays with the Partnership, and can still be used by them. She stated there is a financial investment to starting a Non-Profit Partnership. The money is needed. She then went on to explain some of the other incentives for receiving a Downtown Designation. There are sales tax incentives; a new business can come in and receive a break on some of their construction cost sales tax. The town would be able to apply for Main Street America Project (<https://mainstreet.org/>) inclusion. There are grants the Partnership could apply for that support transportation improvement. There are many grants that the town would only be eligible for through the Downtown Designation which wont be reached without the creation of a Partnership. Mr. Lucci explained that the list of grant availability can be found in the application starting on page 7.

Mr. Lucci explained the Partnership would be the type of organization like "Downtown Rutland Partnership" which puts on many community building programs for the town of Rutland. Mrs. Finley explained that Poultney has a partnership as well.

Mrs. Finley explained how other towns have used some of their grant money. Mr. Ducharme asked if the grants cover the full cost of the projects. Mrs. Finley stated most often it is money to start a project.

Mrs. Sienkiewicz asked how much time would partnership people need to set aside for their service. Mrs. Finley explained that the initial start up is time consuming, but once the

Partnership is set up she assumes it could meet monthly or bimonthly. Mr. Hadwen stated starting a nonprofit is a massive time commitment. He has started an organization from the ground up before and has an understanding of the process. Finding the people to do the work is hard. Mrs. Finley stated there are different stages and the work doesn't all need to be completed at once. There is no time crunch, no early deadline to meet. She went on to list other grants the Partnership and the Downtown designation would be eligible to receive. She stated most of the Grants are 50/50 matching grants. Mrs. Sienkiewicz stated the main goal is creation of the Partnership, then we can look at the rest. Mrs. Finley stated she is determined to get this going. Mr. Hadwen stated he is a good drone, tell him what to do and he will do it. He stated you know you have my commitment. Mrs. Sienkiewicz asked who all signed up already. Mrs. Finley read off her list, she spoke about her presentation at the American Legion. Mr. Hadwen asked if there were enough people to run the Partnership with the time commitment for free? Mrs. Finley explained yes, but she still wants to see who else is interested. Mr. Ducharme asked why there are so many hoops to jump through. Mr. Hadwen explained it's the government we're working with. Mr. Ducharme stated he thought it still seemed like it would cost people money. Mr. Lucci explained that one of the prerequisites to achieving the Downtown designation is to secure the Town's investment in the downtown. Mrs. Finley stated the Town, in the ReInvestment Agreement, commit to funding the partnership each year. Mr. Haden asked if it would be a votable line item each year. Mrs. Finley stated that through the application the town must commit to funding each year.

Mrs. Finley re-stated her determination to see this through. Mr. Hadwen stated he is a realist, he doesn't like the red-tape. Mrs. Finley stated this isn't all the PC has been working on, but the application has been a tough one and has changed along the way in the year and a half they've been working on it. Mr. Lucci explained the RRPC liaison support. Mrs. Finley explained the State support of Gary Holloway in the process. Mr. Ducharme asked if the grants were state funded or federally funded. Mr. Lucci stated most seemed to be state funded grants.

Mr. Hadwen asked if the PC needed people to commit now? He feels it is a great idea and wishes he could help more. Mrs. Finley states she believes there are enough people committed to start the group. Mr. Lucci stated that the Planning Commission isn't starting the Organization. They are just informing the community of the need for an Independent Non-Profit Group. The discussion ended around 8:16pm

4. Other Business

a. Public Comment: None

b. Review of Mail: None

c. Other: Mr. Lucci asked the PC to give a summary of roles and responsibilities as there is an open seat on the Planning Commission and two hopeful candidates in the audience today. The PC Reviewed their tasks completed within the last few years; Neighborhood Designation, Land Use Map, Town Plan. Mr. Lucci asked ZA Adams to speak to the recurring tasks the PC hears. ZA Adams reviewed the zoning process and application referral to the PC, the guidelines for the PC work within the Zoning Department stating meetings are 2 times a month unless a special meeting is called. Mr. Lucci stated the PC benefits greatly from ZA

Adams expertise and experience. He also stated that most of the work they complete is done within the allotted meeting times.

5. Adjournment:

Mr. Lucci **motioned to adjourn at 8:43 pm.** Mrs. Sienkiewicz seconded the motion. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Jackson, Minute-taker

The Next Commission Meeting will be held on April 1, 2026 at 7:30 pm