

Downstreet Committee Meeting

June 7, 2017

Attendance: Betsy Hopkins, Kris Davidson, Gabe McPhail, Elin Elisofon, Hooper Brooks, Holly Sault, Town Representative John Bubier

Committee Goals: Preservation, Economic Development/Infrastructure Improvements

Overview: The Downstreet Committee (DST) is one of three Vinalhaven town committees established to identify and address issues facing the town and island as a whole. The other two committees are: Sea Level Rise (SLR) and Broadband. Each committee functions independently. Because of the connections among the groups, a joint committee, Main Street Master Plan, will be facilitated by John Bubier, Assistant Town Planner and Andy Dorr, Town Manager. The joint committee meetings will be open to all members of each group and a representative or “chair” will act as a liaison between the groups.

Meeting Focus: At the Joint Committee meeting held on May 24th, upcoming projects requiring action on the part of each committee that will be carried out within the next 3 months were laid out to each groups. DART (Design And Resiliency Teams), a 5 member team from Northhampton, MA will be on VH in July to assist in the development of a strategic vision to promote community resiliency. Issues being discussed but not limited to are: sustainability, economic development, climate change, planning, architecture, finance, etc. Because these issues are vital components of the DST committee, DST has the opportunity to guide the DART study and vision for VH. Thus, the focus for this meeting was as follows: to choose a chair for the DST committee and to establish 3 priorities to be presented to DART as they begin their work on VH.

Chair – Holly Sault was invited and agreed to serve as chair for the DST committee and to be the liaison to the Joint Committee. (This coincides with her work with the Chamber)

Priorities – The Vinalhaven Downstreet Revitalization Committee Priority Page (See Attached) that was part of the committee’s work since 2015 will be used as the working document to establish the DART priorities.

Priorities:

1. Physical Improvements/Infrastructure

- **Sidewalks**
 - **Safety – ADA**
 - **Appealing**
 - **Lighting**

- Green space near water, seating, tables
 - Parking Lot
 - Pond
 - Near Greets Eats
- Landscape high visibility areas
 - Parking lot by bait plant
 - Signage

The physical improvements would be part of the Complete Streets program that is recognized and required by the Maine DOT as a criteria for financial assistance from the State. **Complete Streets is a transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.** The VH Chamber and the DST are supporting the implementation of the complete streets program for future planning on VH.

2. Economic Development – working with the Chamber of Commerce

- Sponsor workshops for businesses
- Provide support/incentives for new businesses
 - Target desirable new businesses
- Encourage/target new businesses Campaign
 - Art friendly opportunities
 - Agriculture
 - Aquaculture
- Encourage Buy Island (education, marketing, events)
- Housing – possible scenario could be the support of and facilitation of a remodel housing model to offer winter housing for elderly who cannot remain in owned houses in winter which would then be used as seasonal housing to support businesses on island
- Work Force – Work to increase work force base through increased communication of needs, work with agencies (state and private) on main land and participation in job fairs
- Flood Insurance – as the preservation of main street brick and mortar buildings is evaluated, the high cost of flood insurance for building owners is pivotal to the ability to operate
- Tax Incentives – explore incentives that might be available to increase likelihood of new businesses and the sustainability of existing businesses

3. Preservation and Collaborative Space

- Historic preservation of significant buildings (net factory, Robert Indiana, Downstreet market)
- Repurpose significant buildings (net factory)
- Support cooperative ventures

- Community space for arts, culinary, printmaking, glass, pottery, woodworking
- Studio space, shared equipment (possible use of net factory which would also promote economic development)
- Provide community Center space for community events (Net Factory)

Current discussion of boundaries for the Downtown area have the beginning at the Ferry Terminal to the old net factory parking lot. The DST would recommend that the Downtown boundary continue up the hill past the net factory to the War Memorial/Library (Webster Park).

Tourism – In the priority page attached, Tourism is listed as a concern and opportunity for the DST to address. At the current time further discussion is needed to gain better understanding and communication of what exactly the definition of tourism on VH looks like. It is understood that this topic is extremely important and relevant to today's issues on the island. Without the necessary communication of this subject, the island is open to being defined by the tourist vs the island defining what scope and type of destination tourist we would be able to safely welcome due to the following constraints: infrastructure (lack of sidewalks), safety, impact of increased automobile traffic, etc. At the current time, tourism will not be listed as a priority to DART but will be reflected in our overall statement to DART in that we are addressing the topic and request the right to add this as a bullet in our economic development going forward.