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Vermont Mayors Coalition Announce 2020 Legislative Session Goals
Mayors call on Legislature to take action on Act 250 reform and Tax Increment Financing legislation, and call for a 2% local option tax for commercial cannabis

Montpelier, VT – The Vermont Mayors Coalition (VMC) today introduced the new members of the Vermont Mayor’s Coalition and announced its 2020 legislative session goals and its commitment to collaborate on and advocate for these areas of common interest for their cities. At a news conference in the State House, the Coalition released its legislative policy summary for the 2020 legislative session.

The VMC was created in 2013 by Vermont’s eight mayors. Six mayors must concur on any recommendation for the Vermont Mayors Coalition to take a position. The eight mayors of the VMC are:

- Lucas Herring, Barre;
- Miro Weinberger, Burlington.
- Anne Watson, Montpelier;
- Paul Monette, Newport;
- Dave Allaire, Rutland
- Tim Smith, St. Albans;
- Jeff Fritz, Vergennes; and
- Kristine Lott, Winooski.

The mayors offered the following statements about the issues of common interest they are collaborating on and advocating for during the 2020 legislative session:

Kristine Lott, Winooski: Should a commercial cannabis market come to fruition, we are seeking a local options tax to support community level work needed in our public safety and other services to keep our community safe. We know that children who feel valued by their communities are less likely to participate in negative health behaviors. Children (and adults) feel more connected to their communities through opportunities in Recreation programs, Library interactions, meeting up with neighbors in public parks and at community festivals and events. Connected communities are built by municipalities and the State needs to recognize this and invest in it. A local options tax on

recreational cannabis will help cities like Winooski create opportunities for positive youth development at the local community level.

Winooski's downtown revitalization is a huge TIF success story. With \$30 million of public investment, we've seen triple that in private investment, and transformed our downtown continuing Winooski's legacy in providing opportunities to our residents and visitors. This tool should be available to towns across Vermont to spur redevelopment needs at all scales, from a downtown district like ours, to a single project that could have a big impact on a small town.

David Allaire, Rutland: It is indeed an honor to present the legislative initiatives for the 2020 session as part of the Mayor's Coalition. Act 250 exemption for Designated Downtowns is huge for Rutland City as we continue our revitalization efforts. Rutland City Hall has recently undergone a weatherization project in partnership with Efficiency Vermont that will save Rutland City Taxpayers thousands in heating costs in the coming years. Going back to my days in Ways and Means, I have been a big supporter of the TIF legislation and encourage broadening the opportunities for communities and making the process simpler. I thank the Mayor's for coming together to support these important initiatives."

Miro Weinberger, Burlington: The elimination of the wasteful and redundant review of projects in Vermont's downtowns is one of the most significant actions the State can take to create jobs, build homes, and reduce carbon emissions. The Mayor's Coalition urges action on this critical legislation this session.

Anne Watson, Montpelier: The proposed changes to Act 250 make the process more logical and less duplicative for cities that already have a development review process. This will help keep our downtowns alive and thriving.

Similarly, the TIF legislation is a wonderful way to make the benefits of tax increment financing accessible to smaller communities. These project-specific TIF opportunities will also be much simpler to manage.

Cities are on the frontlines of all manner of drug offenses. With the inevitable increase of cannabis use that will come along with legalization, cities must have the resources to deal with the increased demand on our services.

Vermont has some of the oldest housing stock in the country and any efforts the state can make toward weatherization helps keep money in the pockets of Vermonters, and often those who need it the most. We must continue to decrease our carbon emissions, to both lead the way as model for other states, and to be responsible for our contribution toward climate change. So we must continue to support clean energy initiatives.

Lucas Herring, Barre City: The Vermont Mayor's Coalition is working to attract people to live, businesses to start and grow, and community involvement throughout our Downtowns. We support changes with Act 250 that will support the necessary investment in Vermont's Downtowns and remove duplicative processes. We can improve our State's aging housing stock while increase the quality of life for those living in buildings that take advantage of energy efficiency and weatherization programs. Barre City has seen success with the TIF Program, which we hope to take further advantage of for continued revitalization while support other municipalities looking to use this program.

Vermont Mayors Coalition
Legislative Session Goals
2020 Legislative Session

The Vermont Mayors Coalition (VMC) is advocating for State action to support municipalities in the following areas:

Act 250

In municipalities that have their own development review processes for projects, Act 250 permitting adds an additional, and often duplicative process for any types of development. These duplicative processes come at a significant cost for a project, and ultimately increase the cost of housing around the state. The mayors are supportive of process by which designated areas, especially downtowns, could be exempted from Act 250, both for future projects and retroactively.

Even if a full Act 250 reform is not slated for the 2020 session, the need to exempt designated downtowns from this burdensome and duplicative process is urgent. The State is facing an acute housing crisis and the costly and unpredictable Act 250 process is holding back much needed housing development in our cities and towns.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Legislation

Mayors are supportive of S.191 in its current draft, which clarifies TIF to include allow municipalities to effectively invest in infrastructure that generates increment for the district, and in the long term for the community and the education fund. The mayors are also supportive of the Governor's proposal to bring TIF to smaller communities. TIF districts are an important tool for local government for spurring investment, and the mayors are supportive of affording these opportunities to all municipalities.

Commercial Cannabis

Should the legislature pass commercial cannabis legalization, it is essential that the legislation include the ability for municipalities to collect a 2 percent local option tax on all sales. Public safety and regulation efforts will largely fall to municipalities and police departments, and cities and towns will need this additional revenue to keep their communities safe.

Weatherization and Energy Savings

The mayors are supportive of efforts to continue investments in energy efficiency and clean energy efforts, including supporting initiatives and funding for energy-saving weatherization for Vermonters with low-incomes.

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