

**VPA 2014 Awards  
Nomination for Professional Planner  
Sarah Hadd**

**Name of person or board:** Sarah Hadd, Director of Planning and Zoning, Town of Colchester.

**Contact Information for the Nomination:** Mark Kane, [mkane@segroup.com](mailto:mkane@segroup.com), Polly McMurtry, [pmcmurtry@madriver.com](mailto:pmcmurtry@madriver.com), and others...

**Contact Information for the Award (if the nominator would also be the recipient of the award if granted, please provide one additional contact person):**

**Check one box only:**

- Serves as a volunteer on a committee, board or commission or as citizen activist  
Names of board(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Citizen activist or neighborhood leader \_\_\_\_\_
- Serves as a volunteer board for a municipality, region or state  
Name of board \_\_\_\_\_
- Serves as a professional planner on behalf of Vermont, on the local, regional or state level or in the private sector (for example, consultant).

**Please provide brief (up to one page) summary of the individual or board's qualifications:**

Colchester's Planning and Zoning Department provides a variety of services that include: 1) responding to health and quality of life concerns through Requests for Action; 2) reviewing and inspecting construction for compliance with local, state and national building codes; 3) administering the State Wastewater Program and associated inspections; 4) facilitating the development review process and guiding applicants in the permit process; 5) fulfilling requests for information on properties, 6) certifying properties through Letters of Compliance for resale and refinance, 7) administering a revolving loan fund for septic replacement, 8) developing and implementing land use plans and studies, 9) enforcing Town regulations through, and 10) administering the Town's Designated Growth Center. As the Director of this department, Sarah has a multitude of responsibilities. This is no small feat. Colchester, with a population of about 17,000, is the 4th largest municipality in Vermont.

In addition to being involved in local planning for 20 years, Sarah has reached out her involvement in Chittenden County planning, as well as state-wide planning. She has been active in the Vermont Planners Association for many years, on the Executive Board for more than 10, and president for about four years. She has also been instrumental in guiding state-

wide policy on such issues as the development of growth center, shoreland and VTrans Fair Share legislation, ag soils mitigation and changes to Act 250, participating in working groups and providing testimony to the legislature.

Sarah is extremely knowledgeable and level headed, and works tirelessly and efficiently at both the local and state levels, providing strong leadership when needed. But she is also a firm believer in democratic principles and public participation, and draws the right people into whatever process she is involved in.

**Please describe how the nominee meets each of the criteria below (up to 3 pages for questions 1- 6 together):**

**1. About how many years has this individual or board committed to planning, as part of a group, program, initiative and/or cause? Give details:**

Sarah has worked for the Town of Colchester for 13 years. Prior to that, she worked for the City of South Burlington, the Town of Williston, and, as an undergrad, the planning office in Ithaca, New York. Her experience spans about 20 years...but don't remind her! ☺

She has also been active in the Vermont Planning Association for a number of years, most recently as President.

**2. To what extent has the nominee's time and dedication increased the understanding of planning principles and the planning process as well as the goals of the organization of which he/she is a part? How has this advocacy role been pursued?**

Sarah started work with the Town of Colchester as Town Planner under Brenda Green in 2001. When Brenda had health issues that twice kept her out of the office for a year, Sarah stepped in and ran the office. After serving as Town Planner for 5-6 years, Sarah was promoted in 2009. Since then, she has reexamined local regulations and rules, worked with PC to reorganize local planning efforts, drafted a new Town Plan, and guided the Town through a long-range vision effort. She has also reviewed most ordinances pertaining to land use, building codes, fire and zoning regulations.

The Planning Commission has embraced Sarah's leadership and guidance in the move toward consistency in the Town's plans, including removing spot zoning. She led a significant community study of the Malletts Bay Lakeshore area which produced a conceptual development plan in 2008 and which remains the guiding policy document for the area. Her leadership and role facilitating communication between the Planning Commission and Selectboard has led to better understanding of zoning and long-range goals, previously absent in the Selectboard's collective vision. Sarah led the way for zoning to be more business friendly and accommodating to local needs. This was accomplished through the Selectboard's approval of Sarah's zoning for changes to industrial/mixed use areas.

Over the last several years Sarah worked closely with the Planning Commission Chair to develop the community's long-range vision for Colchester called the Heritage Project.

Through guidance and professional assistance to the Planning Commission Chair, several successful community-wide conferences were held to gain public input to help shape that vision. Her most recent study has been the Colchester Integrated Water Resources Management Plan (IWRMP), a four-year study of all wastewater and stormwater infrastructure. This plan has been submitted for a VPA Award nomination.

**3. Within what sphere of influence has this effectiveness been realized (local, regional, statewide, national)?**

Locally, Sarah has been instrumental in creating the Heritage Plan, updating the Town Plan, coordinating Economic Planning for inclusion in the Town Plan, and working with consultants to develop the IWRMP. Sarah also mentors her staff and encourages them to pursue professional development, take on new responsibilities, and set goals. She works closely with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission on several regional planning efforts, and has made several presentations in New England with the Town of Colchester's wastewater official.

As the current President of the Vermont Planners Association, Sarah works tirelessly to ensure the needs of the organization are met and that good planning principles are reflected in State planning efforts and legislation. She has spent endless hours over the last few years making sure that VPA keeps a strong presence in the state and at the legislature, helping the legislative liaison with testimony at the state house.

**4. To what extent has this person or board exhibited outstanding leadership in his, her or their endeavors? To what extent is this person or board respected and emulated by peers? List example(s)**

In addition to being a great leader on projects, Sarah is also very respected in the community and within the planning and zoning department. Devoted to public outreach, she has organized many community meetings and invited folks to provide feedback to the Planning Commission. She is also well respected among her peers across the state: local, regional and state planners.

In planning and zoning endeavors, there are multiple, sometimes conflicting opinions. This is especially true when it comes to enforcement proceedings. Open communication, finding accommodations, and exhibiting patience in such circumstances are just some examples of Sarah's many talents.

Sarah has been known to have an almost photogenic memory, the envy of many of her colleagues.

**5. To what extent has the nominee been effective in formulating and implementing his/her plans and furthered the cause of planning?**

In large Town initiatives, the Technical Review Committee will receive input from all departments on a proposal. Sarah helps to coordinate this review, and to resolve minor internal conflicts among departments to arrive at a common solution. She has been described as a great communicator. All of this is in addition to the aforementioned projects Sarah has, and continues, to implement for the Town.

Sarah is soft-spoken, and she listens intently to others. But she can also be assertive when it comes to something she strongly believes in, and she can make her points in an articulate, calm and composed way that enlightens and often persuades her audience.

**6. Other – for example list involvement in public outreach and citizen engagement, or if this person or board has any publication related to planning.**

Sarah is a strong believer in public participation, and the planning processes she directs in Colchester can attest to that. From the Heritage Plan, to the Town Plan, with all other efforts in between, such as the Strategic Plan and the Economic Development Initiative, citizen engagement has been a strong component. Her work on getting Colchester designated as a Growth Center by the State is a good case in point. This was a controversial effort at first, but by meeting with the various players and making the process transparent to the public, she and the planning commission gathered the support they needed both within the town and at the state level.

**7. Letters of Support**

From: Dawn Francis [current town manager][<mailto:DFrancis@colchestervt.gov>]  
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2014 9:02 AM  
To: Mark Kane  
Subject: RE: Sarah Hadd nomination for VPA Professional Planner of the Year.

Mark:

Attached please find a recommendation letter prepared last year by the previous Town Manager, Al Voegele. As a former recipient of this award (1992), I concur with Albin's recommendations and observations and can state unequivocally that Sarah is the consummate professional and worthy of this award.

I have come to rely on Sarah's counsel, expert advice and assessment of the pros and cons of issues affecting the land use and growth of Colchester. Sarah is also highly regarded at the statewide level in her capacity of VPA President and spends time advocating for well-reasoned and thoughtful legislation in support of the state's land use laws based upon her experiences in Colchester. As a more recent example, we are in receipt of a letter from the Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner David Mears, whose staff evaluated our shoreland bylaws and determined they meet the state's "functionally equivalent protections" expected by the new shoreland regulations being considered by the Legislature.

I have no hesitation recommending Sarah Hadd for this award.



# Town of Colchester

Town Manager's Office

P.O. Box 55, 781 Blakely Road  
Colchester, Vermont 05446



**Select Board**

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Herb Downing  
Kathrine Niquette  
Tom Mulcahy

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Sherry LaBarge  
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June Campbell  
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3 April 2013

Ms. Polly McMurtry  
Vermont Planners Association  
2807 North Fayston Road  
Moretown, VT 05660

Dear Ms. McMurtry:

On behalf of the Town of Colchester I am honored to endorse and support the nomination of Ms. Sarah Hadd as Planner of the Year. Sarah was appointed Colchester Town Planner in 2001 and became the Director of the Planning & Zoning Department in 2009. Her tenure at the Town of Colchester has been remarkable as noted by her accomplishments.

Over the years Sarah has progressively moved this municipal government to have consistent policies in accordance with changing laws and policy initiatives. She has also challenged historic thinking to help the community and its leadership to address neglected issues and unresolved disagreements in land use planning, building codes, fire prevention and life safety regulations. Working with professionals in these fields along with the Town's Attorneys, Sarah has updated the Town Plan twice and revised the all Town Ordinances and Zoning Regulations that are administered by the Planning & Zoning Department to reflect an expanded understanding of the means to assure the Town's future wellbeing and economic development.

Three recent projects exemplify her accomplishments as a Professional Planner. The first is her work and leadership in 2008 working with community members to develop the *West Lakeshore Drive Conceptual Plan* to address the Town's recreational "jewel" that is now hamstrung by its evolutionary growth without forethought. This document outlines the redevelopment potential of this area's unique geography. Following on earlier planning initiatives in 2009, Sarah single handedly secured for the Town its growth center designation for the Severance Corner area and in 2013 received approval from the Selectboard to allow for "form based" zoning in this growth center to foster greater commercial business interest. Finally, Sarah was the staff support to the Town's Planning Commission chair who together set the stage for a community effort to create a vision and strategic plan for the Town now known as the *Heritage Project*. This project sets the priorities for the Town's next ten years.

In taking the leadership role in her Department, Sarah created an environment of collegiality and a new sense of dynamic team equilibrium that fosters career growth and innovation. To this end, Sarah has supported each member of her department to further their education and skills development. Inter departmentally, Sarah has worked with the Department of Public Works and the Assessor's Office along with the IT Department to bring integrated software that is shared and used by the three departments to reduce input redundancy and improve governmental transparency.

In summary, Sarah is an exceptional planner devoted to her profession to which she beneficially employs her gifted intellect, educational training, experience and an exceptional memory to the service of Colchester and Vermont. I am honored to recommend to you, Sarah Hadd for this prestigious award.

Cordially,

Albin D. Voegele  
Town Manager

March 14, 2014

Dear VPA Professional Planner of the Year Award Committee:

Sarah Hadd took a chance on me: fresh out of graduate school and living in Wisconsin, I was hired as an Administrative Assistant for the Town of Colchester's Planning and Zoning Department. While by no means my dream job, that position got me to Vermont, where I wanted to be, and into a professional planning position. During my year working under and with Sarah in Colchester, she was an excellent mentor, giving me opportunities to use my education and skills, building my knowledge of Vermont's planning statutes, offering insights into the Vermont planning world, and going the extra step to demonstrate real-world planning principles to a wide-eyed me.

That said, I strongly support the nomination of Sarah Hadd as the VPA Professional Planner of the Year! Sarah goes above and beyond in her role as the Director of Planning and Zoning in Colchester. Indeed, her sphere of influence has broadened during her time at the helm of the Vermont Planners' Association. Sarah is fully capable of thinking beyond the urban life of Colchester and of expanding the role of planning into the furthest and most rural reaches of Vermont.

As the President of VPA, Sarah continues to be a role model for me, personally and professionally. She deftly maneuvers between planner, zoning enforcer, VPA President, mother, testifier, and active community member. She conveys the importance of planning to the rest of the State when that often feels like an uphill battle. Leading VPA can be a thankless job, yet she steps up to it. She has worked with other Colchester officials to advance opportunities that may otherwise have been lost, fostering creative economic opportunities. Through her leadership, the Colchester Zoning Ordinances continue to be innovative. I find myself referring back to them, and to specific scenarios, when I am stuck on a project while working with communities in my own region. "What Would Colchester Do?", I think.

In the wake of the spring 2011 floods, while about to give birth any day, Sarah was in the boat surveying damage with property owners and state representatives, needing the chance to see the damage firsthand. Her tenacity to ensuring rebuilding of the Lake Champlain shoreline in Colchester was done in the most context-sensitive way within the boundaries of the town's regulations and state's interests is unmatched. Sarah is always up for a challenge, be it overseeing one of two municipally delegated wastewater permitting authorities, implementing the Colchester Heritage Project, learning GIS to upkeep the Colchester interactive web map, taking the office paperless, or being one to test out what it means to be a Designated Growth Center. Sarah is respected by her peers for many reasons but especially for her ability to think quickly, be steadfast in her decision making, and breadth of planning knowledge and applicability.

I support the nomination for Professional Planner of the Year, for furthering local and state planning goals and for taking chances!

Taylor Foster  
Regional Planner, Lamoille County Planning Commission

**Front Porch Community Planning & Design** 3249 Duxbury Road,  
Waterbury, VT 05676 (802) 434-4118 ▪ frontporch@gmavt.net

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March 19, 2014

VPA Awards Committee  
c/o Polly McMurtry, Chair

Re: Nomination of Sarah Hadd as 2014 VPA Professional Planner

Dear Committee Members ~

I am very pleased to support the nomination of Sarah Hadd, VPA President, for our 2014 Professional Planner Award. Personally, I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this honor than Sarah. I've had the fortune to work with her in both a professional capacity, on housing projects for the Town of Colchester, and in a volunteer capacity as a member of VPA's Executive Committee. Sarah has consistently served both her community and our organization with the utmost professionalism. She is knowledgeable, interested, engaged, fair-minded and level headed – a real asset to our profession and Vermont planning.

In her fifteen plus years as a professional planner, Sarah has risen through our ranks based on a solid record of work, now serving as Colchester's Director of Planning and Zoning. In that capacity she recently shepherded the town's growth center and TIF District applications through a rigorous state designation process –only one of six communities to accomplish this to date. Sarah has clearly earned the respect of her town boards, staff and colleagues.

Sarah is also one of VPA's most effective presidents – since taking office she's shown remarkable leadership, including the ability to corral and cajole busy professional planners into volunteering time on behalf of our profession and organization. This has been especially helpful for our presence at the State House this year. Sarah has helped track legislation, testified on behalf of VPA and, most importantly, spurred other members of our Legislative Committee into action. As a result we've had a much broader hand in crafting and responding to legislation that will directly affect our work, and our communities, far into the future. As VPA's Legislative Liaison, I have to say that her leadership and support in this area has been especially noted and very much appreciated.

There are several planners working in Vermont who are deserving of recognition but, as noted, none more than Sarah. Please give her your full consideration for VPA's 2014 Professional Planner Award.

Best regards,  
Sharon Murray, AICP  
VPA Legislative Liaison

Dear VPA Awards Committee,

It is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine someone more deserving than Sarah Hadd for the Vermont Planner of the Year award.

As one of the longest standing Vermont Planners Association presidents, Sarah has gracefully represented the planning profession throughout the state and spent hundreds of thankless hours working to make the Association the well regarded organization it is today. Through drafting letters of support for worthy causes, writing position papers on proposed laws, testifying before the legislature or speaking at conferences around the state – Sarah has become well known as a leader who is dependable, thoughtful and pragmatic.

Our staff had the opportunity to witness Sarah's competence and calm demeanor throughout the course of a series of difficult meetings in 2008-9, when the Town of Colchester applied for state Growth Center Designation – a program we administer. Due to the illness of the town planning director at that time, Sarah had to step up and take the lead in guiding the town's application through an often contentious process. This was especially challenging because the policies of the town leadership at that time did not always align with the state designation requirements.

Sarah always demonstrated a clear understanding of the planning principles that the designation requirements are intended to promote but at the same time was able to advocate effectively for Colchester's hard-won efforts to evolve from a sprawling suburban community towards one with multiple vibrant centers. As we prepare for the 5-year review of Colchester's designated growth center this year, she has impressed us with her clear vision for continued improvements in the community and the energy and knowledge she brings to implementing that vision.

We thank you for this opportunity to recognize Sarah Hadd and her contributions to land use planning in Vermont.

John E. Adams AICP | Planning Coordinator  
Faith Ingulsrud | Planning Coordinator  
Agency of Commerce and Community Development  
Department of Housing and Community Development  
One National Life Drive North Building, 6th Floor  
Montpelier, VT 05620-0501  
Phone: (802) 828-0162  
Fax: (802) 828-3258





March 21, 2014

Polly McMurtry  
VPA Awards Nomination Committee  
*Sent via email*

RE: Sarah Hadd Nomination for VPA Professional Planner of the Year

Dear Polly:

Please accept this letter in support of Sarah Hadd's nomination for VPA's Professional Planner of the Year award. Sarah Hadd's work for the Town of Colchester has been exemplary and I commend her for her efforts.

Sarah has been working for the Town of Colchester for 13 years and within this time has been instrumental in making various improvements. Some of these improvements include: establishing a Form Based Code, bringing efficiencies and technological improvements to the office (and thereby improving record keeping), and being a leader in water quality and flood plain protection. The great variety in this list speaks to the many hats that only great planners can manage at once. In addition, to the variety of local issues that she manages, she has dedicated her time on DHCD's Growth Center Committee this past year, and as President of VPA!

I recommend Sarah as one of our best, especially in light of her steady, positive influence in Colchester, Chittenden County and the State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles L. Baker".

Charles Baker  
Executive Director

# + BIRCHLINE PLANNING LLC

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March 21, 2014

VPA Nominating Committee  
via email [mkane@segroup.com](mailto:mkane@segroup.com)

RE: Support for Sarah Hadd as VPA Professional Planner of the Year

Dear Polly and Mark,

I am delighted to add support for Sarah Hadd's nomination as VPA's Professional Planner of the Year. Besides being one of the wittiest, most insightful people we all have the pleasure to work with, Sarah is a genuine leader who has consistently advanced the practice of planning in Vermont. We can all learn from Sarah's steady example of how to function as a planner in the wild west that is our state. She is deeply knowledgeable without being arrogant, particularly on design and preservation issues. She has a strong sense of responsibility to the public, tempered by a marvelous sense of humor and perspective and the good sense to know exactly when to use it to defuse the inevitable tensions we all go through.

Planners are supposed to take the "long view" and be future-oriented but in the weeds of the workday, that gets mighty difficult. Sarah has managed to soldier through; I'd like to make her a "Keep Calm and Plan On" t-shirt. Looking at the breadth of her experience and responsibility in Colchester is kind of terrifying. There is just not much that she hasn't weathered – new buildings, bond votes, political turmoil, changes of leadership – and she has continued to work towards long-term planning goals, support VPA, and buck up her fellow planners.

Sarah is one of our guiding lights in Vermont planning. She'll come up with some wisecrack about being a glowstick or a lava lamp as a guiding light but regardless, it's a fact. She is richly deserving of the VPA Professional Planner of the Year award.

Sincerely,



Juli Beth Hinds, AICP  
Principal