

**FINAL – Draft Posted April 22, 2025, along with Meeting video
VHFA Board of Commissioners Meeting**

Vermont Housing Finance Agency
Board Room
164 St. Paul St., Burlington VT
April 21, 2025

VHFA Board Members Present:

Commissioners: Katie Buckley (Chair), Marie Milord-Ajanma, Chris Gomez, Gus Seelig, Michael Pieciak (attended in person) and Lindsay Kurrle, Jeanne Morrissey and Fred Baser (attended electronically).

Staff Present:

Maura Collins, Chris Flannery, Deborah Flannery, George Demas, Leslie Black-Plumeau, Nate Lantieri, Megan Roush, Josh Slade, Olivia LaVecchia, Catherine Lange, Kim Roy, Chad Simmons, Alejandro Flores-Howland

Guests:

Peter Paggi (WWHT), Bill Kelsey and Andrew Winter (TPHT), Cindy Reid (Cathedral Square), Carrie Johnson (Town of Highgate), Kathy Buyer, Ben Sturtz, Jess Neubelt and Matt Moore (Evernorth), Miranda Lescaze and Javier Garcia (CHT), Angie Harbin (Downstreet), Diane Nelligan and Peter Reed (RACDC), Liz Nickerson

BOARD MEETING

Ms. Buckley called the Board meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Staff confirmed that a Notice of this meeting was provided to the requesting parties and was posted on the Agency website and with State Department of Libraries, and that the Agenda for this meeting was provided to the requesting parties and posted on the Agency website, all within the statutory time requirements.

Staff confirmed that Minutes to all prior meetings had been posted on the Agency website not less than 5 days after the meetings as required.

Ms. Buckley asked if anyone had any changes to the Agenda, and Ms. Collins noted that the item listed as “Potential loan request” for Benn High was not going to come before the Board at this meeting and that she hoped to use the time to update the Board on the Agency’s Strategic Planning process.

Ms. Buckley confirmed that the Commissioners attending by electronic means could hear the conduct of the meeting and be heard throughout the meeting by the other attendees. Ms. Buckley noted that Commissioners would have to vote by roll call since there were Commissioners participating by electronic means.

Ms. Buckley noted that the meeting was being held in a hybrid fashion, that a recording of the meeting was being made and would be posted for public access.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Buckley opened the meeting to public comments, and there were none.

BOARD MINUTES

Mr. Gomez moved that the Board approve the minutes of the March 20, 2025, Board meeting. Mr. Pieciak seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by roll call vote, except that Ms. Morrissey, Mr. Seelig, Ms. Milord-Ajanma, Mr. Pieciak abstained. Mr. Baser had not yet joined the meeting.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

9% Tax Credit Investment and Housing Data

Ms. Black-Plumeau and Mr. Lantieri, reviewed their presentation regarding the state of the Vermont housing market, and how the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program is used to address housing needs. Ms. Black-Plumeau noted issues related to general lack of housing, low quality of available housing, need for services and loss of housing due to natural disasters and that at least 28,000 new units would be needed by 2030 to bring the housing supply in line with the needs. Mr. Lantieri stated that the 9% tax credits addressed some of the needs by targeting lowest income households and subsidizing housing throughout the State. They referred the Commissioners to the <https://www.housingdata.org/> website for more information.

Mr. Baser joined the meeting.

9% Tax Credit Requests

Each of the applicants then provided a short presentation regarding their projects.

Chalet Phase 1, Brattleboro

Ms. Neubelt reviewed the project scope to use an existing property containing a single poor-quality motel building and develop it over time to over 70 affordable units. Phase 1 would consist of 30 apartments with supportive services. Mr. Paggi discussed the project land use approvals and funding approvals. Ms. Lange reviewed the tax credit application details and noted that construction was slated to begin in Spring 2026 with completion in 2027. There was a general discussion of the issues related to planning costs a year in advance and also the capabilities of Groundworks, the intended service provider.

Faywood Road, Grand Isle

Ms. Neubelt reviewed the history of the project, noting that the existing buildings have many structural and design issues requiring significant reinvestment. Ms. Reid reviewed the project timeline. Mr. Slade reviewed the tax credit application details, noting that even with decommissioning the existing barn building, the project would develop net additional units through construction of new buildings. He noted that the project included funding through the federal Green Resilient Retrofit Program, and there was general discussion about the status of that funding source.

Hedding Church Forest Phase 2, Randolph

Ms. Nelligan and Mr. Reed reviewed the project scope to build 21 new affordable units next to the existing Phase 1 project and the project timeline. Ms. LaVecchia reviewed the tax credit application details, funding status and permit status. There was a general discussion regarding application of the mixed income housing criteria to this project and Faywood Road.

Highgate Village Housing, Highgate

Ms. Johnson reviewed the Town's work in developing its town plan for the project and in working on water/wastewater infrastructure the project will require. She noted that the project has strong support from the Town. Ms. Reid reviewed the status of the project permits, environmental review and funding. Ms. Roush reviewed the tax credit application details, services to be provided and project timing.

Riggs Meadow, Hinesburg

Mr. Moore discussed the project’s history, location and cost effectiveness. Mr. Garcia reviewed the project’s role as part of the Windy Ridge master plan to bring hundreds of housing units to Hinesburg. Mr. Garcia also reviewed the status of the project permit approvals. Ms. LaVecchia reviewed the tax credit application details and noted that the project looked to begin construction in the fall of 2025. There was a general discussion of site layout issues and funding risks to the project’s proposed geothermal systems.

Stevens Branch, City of Barre

Ms. Harbin noted that the project is intended to help replace units lost in the flooding of the last few years and that the project is designed for flood resiliency. Mr. Slade reviewed the tax credit application details, funding status and project timeline and noted that a condition of approval would be a requirement for the City to have approved the needed TIF financing for required infrastructure work. There was a general discussion of flood mitigation design elements such as raising the foundation, having the living units above the first floor, elevator design, etc.

Sykes Mountain 2, Hartford (White River Junction)

Mr. Winter reviewed the project history and master plan for the site and the status of local review and permits. Mr. Moore compared the project cost effectiveness with other applications. Mr. Winter then discussed the status of financing approvals. Ms. LaVecchia reviewed the tax credit application details and noted that the project was working with the local VA to obtain VASH vouchers.

Staff Recommendations

Ms. Roush, Mr. Slade, Ms. LaVecchia and Ms. Lange then summarized the Staff review of the projects and Staff recommendations and conditions. Mr. Slade noted that the Chalet Phase 1 project would require a waiver from the limit on housing with supportive services because that project would have close to 50% of supportive housing, rather than 30%. Staff made the following recommendations for the allocation of the credits:

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Stephens Branch | \$1,036,500 |
| Chalet Phase 1 | \$1,035,000 |
| Highgate Village Housing. | \$ 456,828 |
| Riggs Meadow | \$1,036,500 |
| 5% Enhancement Pool | \$ 187,701 |

In addition, in the event Stephens Branch is not able to obtain needed TIF District approval this summer, Staff recommended that Staff be allowed to revoke that award with the credits instead going automatically to Sykes Mountain 2.

There was a general discussion of the Staff recommendations, including the reasoning for the recommendation of the Stephens Branch project ahead of the Sykes Mountain 2 project. Mr. Baser particularly noted that given its lower per unit costs, the Sykes Mountain 2 project should be given preference despite the project’s current lack of funding commitments.

After further discussion Mr. Seelig moved that the Board accept the Staff’s recommendations and waiver. Ms. Milord-Ajanma seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by roll call vote, except that Mr. Baser voted No.

Cambrian Building H Rental, Burlington

Ms. Lescaze described the project and the master site plan noting that all funding other than the requested VHFA permanent loan was in place and that the project planned to close its construction financing in June. Ms. Neubelt noted the infrastructure work that would be performed by the master developer concurrently with the construction of the project. Ms. LaVecchia reviewed the existing approved financing and the proposed VHFA tax exempt permanent loan. After a general discussion, Mr. Pieciak moved that the Board approve the proposed resolution regarding the project. Mr. Seelig seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Ms. Collins then noted that the Benn High proposals would need to come to a special meeting of the Board that would probably occur in the next couple weeks. She then reviewed the status of the development of the Agency's Strategic Plan for the fiscal years ending 2026-2028. Ms. Collins discussed the development and results of the prior Strategic Plan and reviewed the process for developing the new plan, including soliciting feedback from partners and VHFA management and key staff regarding the Agency's work and role in the State and reviewing the results. This process has resulted in focusing the plan on issues related to organizational efficiency and capacity; program design and execution; equity, accessibility, and impacts; communication and stakeholder engagement; and sector role and leadership. There was a general discussion of the issues raised, including staffing problems that all companies and governmental organizations are facing, the Agency's role in dealing with development costs and project operating and maintenance costs, and the need to preserve existing affordable housing. Ms. Collins invited the Commissioners to provide feedback on any of these issues and stated that she hoped a plan would be ready for Board review and approval at the June meeting.

Mr. Baser left the meeting.

STAFF REPORT

After a short break for lunch, Ms. Collins reviewed the Staff Report and provided a summary of the status of various pieces of legislation both at the federal and state level. Ms. Collins noted that with the end of COVID era special funding the amount of "soft" sources available to support projects will decrease significantly, reducing the number of projects that will be able to use the noncompetitive 4% bond credit financing model. Ms. Collins also reviewed the status of infrastructure financing proposals and property tax reforms. Finally she noted that the Agency would be working on a Solar For All program to finance solar energy sources for affordable housing. Mr. Flannery then provided a summary of how recent uncertainty and volatility in the bond and equity markets is affecting interest rates and the ability of the Agency to issue bonds at rates that provide a benefit to our borrowers.

OPEN DISCUSSION

The Commissioners then entered into a general discussion that covered a number of topics including: How the QAP process can be used to measure how resources are leveraged by projects; making sure that TIF funding or proposed CHIP funding can be used to promote affordable housing; how the costs of case management and supportive services have become housing costs rather than separately funded service costs and how that affects project budgets.

Ms. Buckley confirmed with Staff that Minutes of the meeting had been kept and would be posted to the Agency's website within five days along with the recording of the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion made by Mr. Gomez, seconded by Mr. Pieciak and unanimously approved by roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned at 1:27 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of the Minutes of the Vermont Housing Finance Agency Board of Commissioners meeting held on April 21, 2025. The Minutes were approved at a lawful meeting of the Commissioners held on May 21, 2025.



Maura Collins
Executive Director and Secretary
Vermont Housing Finance Agency