

**Vermont Housing & Conservation Board  
Organization Grants Committee  
MINUTES  
11/10/2025  
Hybrid**

**Board Members:** Neil Mickenberg, Maura Collins (VHFA), Emily Wadhams

**VHCB Staff:** Gus Seelig, Elizabeth Egan, Christopher Baning, Pollaidh Major, Bonnie Woodford, Jenny Hyslop, Emily Phillips, Trey Martin, Karen Freeman, Elise Greaves, Janice Pello, Rebecca Williams, Ron Rupp, Bill Dell'Isola, Jenny Kuhlin, Kate Buonanno

**Others Present:** No public present

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Chair Neil Mickenberg called the meeting to order at 9:10 AM.

**Public Comment**

No public comment

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**Overview of Network Health & Capacity**

Jenny Hyslop gave an overview of the housing team's process of assessing how our housing partners are doing.

Neil asked about the resident services manager program and which organizations have a resident services manager on staff now. Jenny responded that each of our partner organizations have a resident services manager on staff.

Neil asked what the plans or aspirations for year 4 when the funding runs out. Jenny responded that there are funds dedicated to work on a plan for funding in the future.

Karen Freeman gave an overview of the conservation team's assessment of how the conservation partners are doing.

Trey Martin discussed that they are thinking about how to support some other organizations that we don't currently give organizational grants to.

Gus Seelig shared that they may be thinking about increasing this funding next year.

Neil asked if it makes sense on both housing and conservation to focus on building strength in their portfolios versus funding new projects.

Emily Wadhams shared there is immense pressure to create new units of housing. Gus responded that we won't be able to ignore the need for new units and will also need to make a case for supporting the stewardship of current housing units. Gus stated that it is important to fund the

strength of the organization. Jenny added that the new construction is helping organizations to fundraise.

### **Conservation Organization Review**

Karen gave an overview of the funding this year compared with last year's funding. Highlighting that a few organizations have an increase of funding this year compared with last year.

Emily W asked about funding – Trey responded that they did want to utilize the funds available and

Gus shared that a lot of the recommendations come from the Act 59 work and what the goals are.

Karen discussed the partners that are really focused on stewardship groups (first three on the list) and there is a good return on investment with what they bring to the community.

Trey shared that Lake Champlain Land Trust (LCLT) has not brought as many projects in the past few years.

Elizabeth Egan shared that The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is selling off several parcels and one will be conveyed to LCLT.

Emily W asked if LCLT does work in New York. Karen said they do. Trey highlighted a condition to have them draw down the remaining funds from the previous year's fund. Neil shared that this problem since he has been on the committee. Gus shared that there is a loyalty from the members and they do focus on community engagement and access to properties. Emily W asked if there is an opportunity they are missing working with landowners to get their land into conservation.

Trey gave a brief overview on TNC. Neil asked about TNC pulling back on new acquisition of land. Trey responded they have been doing quite a bit of policy work and are working on transferring some lands to other conservation organizations as well as supporting some of the smaller organizations. Neil asked if VHCB is okay with the new direction. Gus shared that the organization has shifted to be more in line with the national policies of TNC. Trey shared they are working a lot on connectivity of conserved lands.

Karen gave an overview of Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT)

Emily W asked about the appraiser issue. Trey responded that we don't currently have new appraisers online.

Gus highlighted that there is a shortage of staff like appraisers, surveyors, engineers, architects etc. Emily asked if neighboring states are having the same issues, Trey shared they are starting to look into that.

Trey gave an overview of Vermont Land Trust (VLT). Neil asked about the issue a few years ago with them utilizing all of the federal funds. Trey responded that last year they did better, and this year they are bringing more farm projects this spring.

Karen gave an overview of Vermont River Conservancy (VRC) highlighting that they are in good shape right now, they have dual leadership that is working well.

### **Housing Organization Review**

Jenny & Karen shared some highlights about Vermont Community Loan Fund (VCLF).

Jenny H gave an overview of the housing organizations, highlighting what is going well and some of the challenges they are having.

Gus shared that though Addison Housing Works (AHW) production of new units was lower lately they have done work on mobile home communities, Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) has stood up a successful farmworker housing program and highlighted that Cornerstone has navigated a merger with Neighborworks of Western Vermont.

Emily W asked about the lack of access to vouchers, and if any projects have been affected by folks losing their vouchers. Jenny responded that has not happened yet and that there is an order of when vouchers are pulled back, first is folks who are looking for a unit, and next is folks who are over income.

Emily W asked elevated vacancy rates, not just the time it takes to turn over units. Jenny responded that it is directly tied to the turnover times and coordinated entry challenges. There are a few organizations that have indicated long approval time for coordinated entry causes long vacancy.

Maura Collins asked about the extra funding for HR support and if there is a plan to get them stable. Jenny shared that they are working with the partners to find the funding to support that long term.

Maura asked since Evernorth (EN) was added during COVID, what would it look like for us to pull them from the organizational grant. Gus shared that as long as we see EN supporting development with partners we would plan to continue to support them.

Maura shared she is happy to see the support of Habitat chapters and thinks it will be valuable. The support of the Rutland chapter doing a unified design sounds interesting but would that be more like an innovation fund. Jenny responded it would be for a staff member. Gus stated that it may be good to look at funding the chapters in multiple ways.

Maura shared that she would like having a model that could capture the quantitative data and reflect those in a way to see the health of the organizations compared to others. And also would like to look at other states.

Gus responded that the EN portfolio in Vermont is different than some of the other states.

Jenny shared that they have been producing a sort of dashboard for each organization that shows where they are compared with other organizations.

Maura shared can we be discussing what we would like to see from partners.

Jenny responded that we traditionally have had targets for the data.

Neil shared that it sounds like most of the housing organizations are pretty stable. Jenny shared that there are some real challenges but the organizations know what they are and have plans in place to manage those.

Neil asked for clarification that VT is slated to lose 1000 vouchers, but the project-based vouchers are planned to stay in place right now. Jenny responded that is correct, the current project-based vouchers that have existed are safe for now, but new projects with assumptions of project-based vouchers may not be getting those.

### **Discussion of recommendations**

Emily Wadhams made a motion to approve the recommendation/resolution. Maura Collins seconded the motion. All voted in favor of the motion.

### **Roll Call**

Neil Mickenberg - Yes

Maura Collins – Yes

Emily Wadhams – Yes

The meeting adjourned at 11:09 AM.