DRAFT

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board
MINUTES
August 25, 2026
Zoom

Board Members: Emily Wadhams, Billy Coster (designee for ANR), Maura Collins (VHFA), Jen Hollar (All Board Members called/zoomed in)

VHCB Staff: Gus Seelig, Bonnie Woodford, Francis Sharpstene

Others Present: no others present.

Chair Emily Wadhams called the meeting to order at 11:02 AM.

Public Comment
No public present.

Minutes
Maura Collins made the motion to approve the Minutes from the 2/24/2026 and 6/8/2026 committee meetings. Jen Hollar seconded the motion. All voted in favor of the motion.

Roll Call
Maura Collins – Yes
Emily Wadhams – Yes
Jen Hollar – Yes

Board Portal Update

Bonnie gave an update on the board portal options and research.

Billy joined at 11:08

Board Orientation Update
Gus shared that he did some tours with new Board members this summer, and we are working on building out a VHCB Finance orientation.

Emily said it would be good to get meetings with other staff to help with orientation.
Would be helpful to have a checklist for board orientation, this team has discussed creating a buddy/mentor system so that new members have a board member they can rely on.

There was a discussion about having shorter policy packet to share with new members to help them get started.

Maura shared she would like to dig into/refresh the housing policies as a full Board, if there are changes and updates that need to be made.

Gus stated we have started an evaluation of the shared equity program so there will probably be updates there. We are also planning to add the scoring of projects to the retreat or December meeting.

Maura shared it would be nice to just put some dates on when policies can be updated, or maybe the Board sets a schedule of how often policies are reviewed.

Maura suggested that for the shared equity evaluation it would be good to have a third party involved. Gus responded that the folks doing the evaluation are national consultants.
Jen asked if it will integrate any recent needs assessments. Gus responded we will need to get back to them with more information.
Maura shared that this presents an opportunity for the Board to think about other homeownership options.

Billy shared that the housing program does not have a parallel committee similar to the Conservation Issues Committee, which meets to discuss policy level issues and brings that to the full Board, and that may be something that we consider on the housing side as we move into more policy assessment. Gus responded that we are going to start with the shared equity program evaluation and it is an opportunity to think about that.
Maura flagged that she is concerned the evaluation will not answer the questions she has as a Board member.

Board Recruitment

Maura asked about where the gaps are in board member skills and experience. Gus responded that we will work on a skills/experience matrix.

There was a discussion about potential future Board members and next steps.

Board Self-Assessment Results and Prioritization

Desire for more focus on high level strategy –
Maura shared that we hear a lot about what the Board is doing and what the outputs are, without a comparison it is hard to know what those outputs mean. How do we know we are stretching our dollars as far as possible when we don't have targets in place.

Emily asked how she suggests this committee follows up on this. Maura responded that it seems that the Board feels very positive about the Board projects and memos, and maybe we can rethink how the Board meetings are structured.

Gus responded that thinking about goals and the shortage of resources will cause us to think more strategically about what we prioritize.
Maura clarified that she is thinking more about setting targets especially when we think about smaller resources.
Gus responded that we can report out where we are and what we have accomplished since the beginning of the strategic plan.

Billy shared that perhaps the Board could have some more insight into the pipeline and help staff work on this. Gus shared that sometimes a pipeline includes things that may not be moving forward. Billy's perspective is that he would not like to fund a project that is fine but not great and not be able to fund a really great project down the road because there is not funding available. Jen flagged that sometimes there are confidential real estate deals that need to be dealt with delicately.

Maura shared that maybe the Board thinks about focusing on high need areas.

Maura shared that if we say what our priorities are it can help when folks are bringing projects forward.
Jen shared that maybe having program presentations or updates and having the shared equity evaluation will be helpful for the Board.

Emily clarified that we are going to create more time at Board meetings for policy discussions. We can have staff share the pipeline with the Board.

Billy shared that he feels this committee's responsibility is to make space for larger discussions with the full Board and the full board will need to be involved in prioritizing what they want to work on.
Gus shared that having a general allocation of time at Board meetings for policy and program review will be helpful.

Emily shared that it is important to have the Board discuss how the meetings are run.
Billy asked about the general allocation of resources and if that discussion is coming before the Board discusses programs and policies. Gus shared that we can have a discussion about allocating funds possibly at the retreat.

Organizational Guidance and Succession Readiness
Billy shared that having clarity of roles and responsibilities of Board, Executive Director and Staff and ensuring they are clear and appropriate would be helpful.
Gus responded that there is a succession plan in place but updating the Executive Director job description still needs to be done and that could help start that process.

Next Steps

How often should this committee meet?
Emily suggested 3 meetings per year.

Gus shared that the next three months are very busy, and we could shoot for a late November early December meeting to discuss Board candidates and any other items that have come out of the Board Retreat.

Other Business
Maura shared that the two items from her would be if staff is going to be spending time on, or hiring people to look at the outputs of programs she would like to step back to look at how do we know this was the best option to meet the need.

Maura reported she is feeling that we need to examine how we know a program or system is the right one, and how we are bringing the public into this process.

Billy shared that it is important to have a process for Board members to raise questions or issues.

The meeting adjourned at 12:41 PM.

Minutes submitted by Bonnie Woodford