

Merrimac Affordable Housing Board of Trustees
Minutes
September 25, 2025 Town Hall, 7 p.m.

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chair Sandra Venner.

- I. **Present:** Board members Sandra Venner, Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorcello, Brienne Walsh, Bridget Batcheller, Dawne Young and Phil Parry.
- II. **Approval of Minutes for June 26, 2025:** With a motion by Dawne Young and a second by Phil Parry, board members approved the minutes for the June 26, 2025 meeting. Vice Chair Brienne Walsh abstained from the vote since she was not present at the June 26, 2025 meeting.
- III. **Approval of Minutes for July 24, 2025:** With a motion by Brienne Walsh and a second by Phil Parry, board members approved the minutes for the July 24, 2025 meeting. Treasurer Dawne Young abstained from the vote since she was not present at the July 24, 2025 meeting.
- IV. **Action on AHBT's Grant of \$20,000 to NSCDC:** Board members reviewed expenditure documentation from NSCDC outlining the work completed by NSCDC as part of the \$20,086 grant. Chair Venner noted that the work included preliminary surveys, engineering work, planning work with consultants and legal assistance and was related to the project but almost all of the expenses predate the when the AHBT signed the agreement on June 24, 2020. Treasurer Young explained that the board approved the money for the grant on November 17, 2016 and that the Purchase and Sale was signed on March 13, 2017. The contract said that the money was to be used for project planning, permitting and design. Treasurer Young said the costs fit with the contract and the earlier costs were consultations and work on the Purchase and Sale. Board member Phil Parry said the preliminary work was needed to lead to the Purchase and Sale but the Purchase and Sale was never executed. NSCDC did their due diligence period but the Purchase and Sale kept being extended since they could not attain clean water at the Coastal Metal site. Chair Venner said the NSCDC was working in good faith. **In a motion by Treasurer Young with a second by Board Member Phil Parry, board members agreed after a thorough review of the expenditures that all money spent by NSCDC were in accordance with the provisions of the grant. All members present voted to support the motion. Chair Venner said the board is satisfied with the review of the expenditures. With no further action required, Chair Venner said the issue has been resolved.**
- V. **Next Steps for Development of Rental Assistance Program:** Vice Chair Brienne Walsh reported that she talked with Kristen Costa from Wilmington who has led Chapter 40B lottery projects and worked with developers on housing developments. Vice Chair Walsh said that Ms. Costa said that working with AHBT to develop a rental assistance program is outside her scope of work but feels that the AHBT path is correct and the suggested providers are a good plan. Criteria for an RFP to seek providers for the future program include a commitment of three years or less and administrative fees not to exceed \$10,000. Vice Chair Walsh said that Amesbury/Merrimac Housing Director AnnMary Connor said that a 5 percent administrative fee is planned for an Amesbury Rental Assistance Program administered by Pettingil House. Vice Chair Walsh will contact Director Connor about the RFP planned for the Amesbury project. Similar projects in Worcester and Carlisle may have RFPs available to review. Norfolk has a Retire in Place program with guidelines and the board has past guidelines from the Georgetown Rental Assistance Program that might assist the development of an RFP for the future Merrimac program. A list of potential RFP Recipients to possibly administer a rental assistance program include the Newburyport YWCA, Community Action of Haverhill, Bread and Roses and Pettingil House.

- VI. Update on MBTA Communities Zoning (vote STM October 20, 2025):** The Planning Board held a public hearing on the MBTA Communities Zoning planned for presentation at the October 20, 2025 Special Town Meeting on October 15, 2025. Board members Phil Parry and Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello attended the hearing. Two residents raised questions regarding the impact to the town if the zoning was not approved. Planning Board members said there would be a loss of grant money to the town. In answer to a question regarding utilities, Planning Board members said it would be up to developers to determine how and what utilities to provide.
- VII. Budget/Expenditure Report-** Treasurer Young said Town Accountant Annie Jim provided accounting for the past two fiscal years. In August 2024, the board had a balance of \$634,206. In August 2025, the board had a balance of \$653,315. The additional money deposited to the board was money that had been held until Pat True's estate was closed. There is also a \$70 credit related to an email change.
- VIII. Correspondence:** Chair Venner said that a letter was sent to the Select Board noting that the AHBT is unable to use the federally-funded state-administered HOME funds and asking that the funds be returned to the competitive pool.
- IX. Scheduling Next Meeting and Adjournment.** The board will meet again on Thursday November 20, 7 p.m. No meeting will be scheduled in October. With a motion by Treasurer Dawne Young V and a second by Board Member Phil Parry, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello, Secretary, November 15, 2025.