

**Merrimac Affordable Housing Board of Trustees
Minutes**

April 17, 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-Fiorello, Dawne Young, Brienne Walsh, and Phil Parry.
- II. **Approval of Minutes for January 16, 2025:** With a motion by Brienne Walsh and a second by Dawne Young, board members approved the minutes for the board's January 16, 2025 meeting. Board member Phil Parry abstained from the vote.
- III. **Review March 31st Response from Legal Counsel to Feb. 6, 2025 Consultation:** In her response to the board, Town Counsel Lisa Mead said that the Declaration of Trust provided by her office will ensure that the Merrimac affordable Housing Trust is properly registered. She said that a rental assistance program can be established under the Power of Trustees and that in order to comply with the state legislation regarding procurement, the board can request three written quotes from potential administrators of a future rental assistance program.
- IV. **Vote to accept Trust Document:** With a motion by Brienne Walsh and a second by Dawne Young, board members voted to accept the Trust document with corrections and to sign the document with a notary. As the board further reviewed the Trust document, board members raised additional questions regarding the technical handling of the Trust as written in Articles First and Tenth. With a motion by Brienne Walsh and a second by Dawne Young, board members voted to rescind the prior vote and table acceptance of the Trust document until the additional questions can be answered by Town Counsel.
- V. **Next Steps for Development of Housing Assistance Program:** Following a discussion regarding whether or not to establish a rental assistance program, a first-time home buyers program or a program to assist with homeowners with repairs or safety updates, board members said that a rental assistance program might serve a broader population in town. With a motion by Dawne Young and a second by Brienne Walsh, board members agreed to move forward with plans to establish a rental assistance program. Potential administrators for the future program could include Community Action, Bread and roses, Pettingil House and the YWCA. Board members discussed committing \$300,000 to the program with an administrative fee for a three-year contract.
- VI. **Correspondence:** Chair Sandra Venner said voters will act on the proposed MBTA Zoning Overlay at a fall Special Town Meeting rather than the Annual Town Meeting. Town Counsel suggested holding off on voting on the proposed zoning change until the fall Special Town Meeting in order to allow the state to resolve legal issues about whether or not the new law represents an unfunded mandate to communities that could see additional strain as a result of the new law.
- VII. **Scheduling Next Meeting and Adjournment.** The board will meet again on Thursday May 22, 7 p.m. With a motion by Brienne Walsh and a second by Phil Parry, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello, Secretary, May 14, 2025.