**Merrimac Affordable Housing Board of Trustees**
**Minutes**
**June 4, 2026 Town Hall, 7 p.m.**

**Call to order**: The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. by Chair Sandra Venner.
**Present**: Board members Sandra Venner, Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello, Phil Parry, Brienne Walsh and Dawne Young. Guests included: Robert Gould, Director of Community Services at Community Action Inc., Julie DeMarco LaPorta, Amesbury Center Coordinator for Community Action, Inc. and resident Forrest Lennhoff.

I. **Approval of Minutes for January 22, 2026 and April 23, 2026:** With a motion by Vice Chair Brienne Walsh and a second by Treasurer Dawne Young, Board members approved the minutes for the January 22, 2026 meeting. With a motion by Treasurer Dawne Young and a second by Phil Parry, board members approved the minutes for the April 23, 2026 meeting with edits regarding dates in the Treasurer's report and ~~information in~~ the years noted in the information on the Town's HOME funds.

II. **Discussion with Community Action Inc. regarding the Rental Assistance Program:** Selected as administrators for the Town's Rental Assistance Program, Director of Community Services Robert Gould, and Amesbury Center Coordinator Julie DeMarco LaPorta, Amesbury Center Coordinator attended the meeting to discuss plans for the Rental Assistance Program.

a. **Contract and Program Start-up:** Director of Community Services Robert Gould said ~~that will~~he will talk with Community Action (CAI) officials, to determine if a CAI might have a contract model that might fit the new Rental Assistance Program. He said the proposed contract will outline the responsibilities for all parties. In planning to administer the program, Bob Gould said CAI will seek to streamline the parameters of the program for the Town, CAI, along with landlords and tenants. Board members agreed that out-of-town residents can apply to the new program for rental start-up costs. Amesbury Center Coordinator Julie DeMarco LaPorta said applicants will need a signed lease in order to move forward with applications for rental start-up costs. To share information about the new program, Chair Venner said she gather information from the Board of Assessors in order to reach out to larger landlords. Representing an income of approximately $80,000 per year for one person, the AHBT will use 80 percent of the Areas Median Income (AMI) as an eligibility guideline for participants. The program will begin with 10 clients who could each receive a maximum grant of $2,500that could be used for security deposits. The rental assistance money could also be used for clients seeking to rent subsidized housing units. After CAI drafts language for the proposed contract, the contract will be reviewed by Town Counsel and approved by the Select Board. It was agreed that Brienne Walsh and Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello will serve as the Board contacts for CAI once the program is operational.

III. **Budget/Expenditure Report:** Treasurer Young said Town Accountant Annie Jim is working on end of the year reports, Treasurer Young reported. No report for the AHBT is ready at this time, she said.

IV. **Correspondence: A.** Northshore **HOME Consortium notice re HOME Funds:** AHBT members agreed to recommend to the Select Board that 2025 Federally-funded and state-administered HOME funds to revert to the ~~state's~~ Consortium's competitive grant.
**B.** Chair Venner will notify the Select Board that Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello, Phil Parry, and she want to be reappointed to the AHBT for two-year terms. Without a current opening on the AHBT, Chair Venner said that she will ask if the Select Board can create an alternate position that resident Forrest Lennhoff could apply to fill. Chair Venner will also ask the Select Board if either Select Board member Matt Passeri or Gwen Lay Sabbagh could be appointed as the Select Board's representative to the AHBT.
**C.** The AHBT will not participate in the 150th Committee's October 17 event.

V. **Schedule Next Meeting and Adjournment.** The board is scheduled to tentatively meet on Thursday July 23, 2026, 7 p.m. pending completion of the draft contract from CAI. With a motion by Vice Chair Brienne Walsh and a second by Treasurer Dawne Young, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello, Secretary, June 20, 2026.