

TOWN OF ESSEX HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Housing Commission (HC): Anna Brouillette (Chair), Carolyn Ellenberger (Clerk), Lois Whitmore; Absent: Noah Detzer, Lauren Ressue (Vice Chair)

Administration and Staff: Brittany McGregor (Town of Essex)

Guests: Karen Adams (Town of Essex)

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
- 3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
- 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - a. Approve minutes from January 6, 2026 meeting
- 5. BUSINESS ITEMS**
 - a. Housing Fund Discussion and Update from Karen Adams
 - b. Zoning Regulations Updates
 - c. Discuss Winter/Spring Event and Community Engagement
- 6. MEMBER AND STAFF UPDATES**
- 7. READING FILE**
 - a. Notice for Boards with link to Handbook
- 8. ADJOURN**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Anna called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Discussion of zoning regulations was postponed to the March meeting to allow Noah to join the conversation.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

No comments were made by the public.

4. APPROVE MINUTES FROM JANUARY 6, 2026 MEETING

The minutes from the January 6, 2026 meeting were approved unanimously.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

- a. Housing Fund Discussion and Update from Karen Adams
 - i. The Selectboard approved \$37,500 to support the development of a long-term Housing Fund, an initiative to be spearheaded by the Housing Commission with staff support
 - ii. Overview of proposed steps:
 - 1. HC develops draft project schedule
 - 2. Phase 1: program design and sustainability; HC should seek technical support to identify successful programs in communities similar to Essex, identify best management practices when operating a program like this as a municipality, and receive other guidance as to how to implement a successful fund
 - 3. HC prepares proposal for Selectboard review (target deadline: June 2027) that identifies the recommended program:
 - a. Goals
 - b. Eligibility
 - c. Award amounts
 - d. Award criteria
 - e. Sustainable funding sources
 - f. Frequency of awards
 - g. Roles of various Town officials in operating a program
 - h. Any other information necessary for the Selectboard to full consider and evaluate the program
 - iii. Staff-recommended initial action steps:
 - 1. Identify possible source of technical assistance (e.g., CCRPC)

2. Identify possible sources of anecdotal information and education gaps that need to be addressed. Examples of this task may include reviewing [this presentation](#) by Champlain Housing Trust on barriers to homeownership, [these materials](#) from the CCRPC on Housing Trust Funds, speaking to regional Housing Trust or Fund operators and/or participants about their experiences in lessons learned ([Burlington](#), [South Burlington](#), [Williston](#), [Winooski](#) are a few examples of local Funds), or similar.
3. Identify the main priorities of a program, which ultimately will be the guiding framework for other program design decisions.
4. Develop a timeline for project stages and anticipated date to present to Selectboard (by June 2027).

iv. Discussion:

1. Procurement requirements at the ~\$7,500 amount includes 3 written quotes (no bidding required); Karen will be involved in drafting contract
2. As next steps, consider inviting individuals/groups for educational purposes, e.g., Maya from CCRPC, local credit union, Champlain Housing Trust
3. Karen recommended identifying a program goal to aim for, e.g., keeping people in homes, making housing more affordable, etc. Consider HC-wide goals in setting program goal and highlight any limitations due to budget constraints in proposal.
4. Consider boarding house / co-op / community housing
5. Proposal could include different models/options based on cost
6. Note: impact fee process does not apply to housing
7. Tax stabilization agreement could be used to offer tax relief for constructing affordable housing (currently there are no requirements for including affordable housing)
8. If considering affordable housing development, it was recommended to consult emergency services for impact considerations related to such developments, e.g., due to density and building access.

9. **Actions:**

- a. Karen to identify available 2+ acre sites owned by Essex Town

- b. HC to invite Maya from CCRPC to join upcoming meeting
- c. Lois to invite a representative(s) from local municipalities to discuss their experience with Housing Funds at upcoming HC meeting
- d. HC members to consider potential goals of the program for discussion

b. Zoning Regulations Updates - *postponed to March 2026 meeting*

- c. Discuss Winter/Spring Event and Community Engagement
 - i. Town Soup Night March 2; **Action:** Anna to coordinate by email HC member staffing of event
 - ii. Housing Roundtable postponed for the moment, could be part of work to prepare proposal for Housing Fund

6. MEMBER AND STAFF UPDATES

- No member/staff updates were discussed

7. READING FILE

- a. Notice for Boards with link to Handbook

8. ADJOURN

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 1:01 PM.

Minutes submitted by Carolyn Ellenberger, Clerk.