

Town of Essex Housing Commission

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 7, 2026

Housing Commission (HC): Noah Detzer, Carolyn Ellenberger, Cheryl Van Epps, Lois Whitmore; absent: Lorraine Zaloom.

Administration and Staff: Brittany McGregor (Town of Essex); Georgia Levine (Planning Commission, PC, Liaison)

Guests and Public: none.

CALL TO ORDER: at 12:15PM, Brittany called the Meeting to order and outlined the procedural steps that follow the Organizational Meeting protocol.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Brittany asked for nominations for Chair position. Cheryl nominated Lois Whitmore. Vote was taken and after some discussion about procedure, Lois was elected Chair of the HC (4 years, 0 days). Chair Lois asked for nominations for Vice Chair (VC) and Cheryl nominated Lorraine Zaloom. Vote was taken (4 years, 0 days), and Lorraine was elected VC. Lois asked for nominations for Clerk, Cheryl gave a self-nomination and after some discussion, Cheryl was elected Clerk (4 years, 0 days). Some requirements, instruction and advice on Meeting Minutes taking was given, including looking into AI generated minutes.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES: Lois proposed we table discussion on the Agenda's content until all five members of the HC were present and instead that we discuss rescheduling as evening HC Meetings and a possible addition of a second meeting at the end of the month (unsure whether bimonthly or just for July 2026). Lois conducted a vote on approving the Amended Agenda (4 years, 0 days).

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD: none.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Approval of Meeting Minutes: because Cheryl was not a HC member at the previous HC Meeting, so Cheryl was not able to vote on or correct the spelling of her last name on the minutes; Noah moved to approve the Minutes, Carolyn seconded; the Minutes were approved (3 years, 0 days). (See <https://essexvt.portal.civicclerk.com/event/3161/files/report/6151>)

BUSINESS ITEMS: Lois raised discussion on the new Meeting schedule. Carolyn asked if we should do this without Lorraine being present. Brittany said we had to find a time that fits for everyone. Lois took a quick survey of times that Carolyn and Noah would be available and stated when Lorraine would be available. Cheryl had no preference. Brittany explained the need of an available venue from which we are capable of conducting Hybrid Meetings (Town Offices at 80 Main St or the EPD Community Room). Wednesdays were looked at as an option but Carolyn could not meet on the last Wed of the month. Discussion on requirements of the presence of a staff member during HC Meetings ensued. Lois discussed the benefits of having HC Meetings during the evening to permit a broader public audience to attend them. Brittany assigned **Aug. 5th as the next HC Meeting.**

Lois asked about scheduling a Special Meeting at the end of the month to work on the next Agenda. Brittany explained it was not usual for the HC to have a meeting to put together an Agenda. Lois wants all of the HC members to give input on their interests, concerns and issues. Lois asked about Thursdays of the month and Brittany told us they were reserved by the PC and Development Review Board (DRB) in case they need an additional meeting. Informal discussion ensued about adopting the time of an evening meeting, and **6 PM on the first Wed. of every month** (which also fits Georgia's schedule) was settled on.

Lois asked how to share information, and Noah said that Kent (Town Staff) told them even a shared Google Doc with content would violate VT Open Meeting Law, which Brittany confirmed.

Georgia reminded her role as HC liaison is to answer questions on regulations and zoning, and offered to give us updates on what the PC is doing. Chair Lois suggested an update on PC work to become a standard Agenda item.

Georgia also stated her role could be to share with the PC any guidance that the HC could give them. Cheryl asked whether her attending of Conservation and Trails Committee (CTC) Meetings could be an opportunity: as an HC liaison, she help smooth out silos between Boards. Brittany said she would check with the CTC if they see any need for one.

There was discussion about the HC advising the DRB on review of applications, and Brittany suggested it was unclear whether the HC would give such recommendations, as the CTC and Economic Development Commission do; she could not think of specific issues or regulations that the HC would deal with, like building codes. Cheryl raised that the role of such a liaison would fit under the Housing Commission Charter's Purpose which states that the HC advises the different Boards on the community needs for housing. (See <https://essexvt.portal.civicclerk.com/event/3161/files/report/6153>) Lois suggested this topic, along with connection and transportation, are addressed by multiple Boards and will need additional discussion.

Georgia was asked how she was appointed as liaison to the HC. She responded it was an item on the PC Agenda and was voted on because of obvious overlap and room for improvement of communication. Lois raised the Coffee Talks between the Boards (Chairs) as an opportunity to connect between Boards and the need to communicate better between each of the Boards.

Brittany brought up review of the goals for the HC set by the Select Board, eg. the Housing Trust Fund and suggested the HC focus on those three items. Lois proposed that the HC members compile a wish list of concerns and interests that are important to the HC members for us to realize our Mission, raising the fact our backgrounds and perspectives are very different. The HC could then condense them into items the HC will work on discerning which items are discreet or could be consolidated, urgent, quick and easy to complete or too time consuming. Lois proposed work groups or other means to efficiently address the topics than as the whole HC.

MEMBER AND STAFF UPDATES: none.

ADJOURN: Lois asked for a motion to adjourn, Carolyn made the motion and Cheryl seconded it. Votes tallied 4 yeas, 0 Nays in favor of adjourning.

*"Committee" was the exact word spoken but the Minutes use "Board" as a term meaning both Committees and Commissions as was its understood context.