

Martha's Vineyard Land Bank Commission

MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 16, 2019

Public Library. West Tisbury, Massachusetts

CALL TO ORDER: 3:48 pm

LAND BANK COMMISSIONERS PRESENT AT CALL TO ORDER

Pamela Goff, Richard Knight, Jr., Mary Robin Ravitch, Kristen Reimann, Sarah Thulin, Nancy Weaver

LAND BANK COMMISSIONERS ABSENT AT CALL TO ORDER

Wesley Mott

STAFF PRESENT AT CALL TO ORDER

James Lengyel

OTHERS PRESENT AT CALL TO ORDER *(and not cited elsewhere herein)*

None

PRESENTATION OF THE WARRANT

Warrant no. 2020-07 was made available for the Commission's inspection.

PUBLIC INPUT

None

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

By a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the agenda as amended.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 9, 2019

By a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes as written.

COUNTY AND LAND BANK COMMISSION TREASURERS' REPORTS

None

TRANSFER FEE HEARINGS

1. Daniel Demers (Town of Chilmark)

The Commission conducted a hearing on the possible extinguishment of this "m" exemption (transfer no. 57792). Mrs. Thulin opened the hearing at 3:49 pm.

Staff read aloud an email from Mr. Demers dated September 13, 2019 in which he reports that a chronic illness has prevented him from domiciling on his property within the statutory two-year timetable. Outstanding is a fee of \$8,500; interest, \$2,380; penalty, \$2,125. The aggregate total is \$13,005. Mrs. Thulin closed the hearing at 3:52 pm.

After discussion and review of precedent, and by a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously to offer Mr. Demers two options: he may either (1.) pay the outstanding \$8,500 fee, with penalty and interest to be waived upon a finding of extraordinary circumstances (prolonged illness) and financial hardship (reduced wages, owing to illness); or (2.) a one-year extension of the timetable by which he must domicile. If he chooses the former the Chilmark Town Advisory Board must weigh in; if he chooses the latter he will be informed that a second one-year extension is possible but not guaranteed.

TRANSFER FEE REVENUES

Revenues for the week ending September 13, 2019: \$256,600.00

NEW BUSINESS

1. Agency Policy: Public Use of Land Bank Properties

The Commission reviewed a staff memorandum, dated September 12, 2019, regarding agricultural use of land bank land; this matter had been most recently discussed at the Commission's July 22, 2019 meeting.

Wide-ranging discussion occurred as to (1.) the reality that farming need not be confined to prime soils, as farmers have historically made a go of it on poor land; (2.) the relative aptness of choosing prime soils, when possible, in prioritizing public expenditures involving agriculture; (3.) the philosophy of eschewing large-scale clearing, on the grounds that individual farmers can themselves sweat their way into accomplishing such clearing on a more modest scale; (4.) the multiple benefits, above and beyond agricultural ones, of clearing, e.g., scenic, wildlife, hiking; (5.) the role that trees play in carbon absorption; (6.) whether Vineyard woodlands, as opposed to fields, contribute meaningfully in any carbon analysis; (7.) the value of a delphic approach to any tree removal: *everything in moderation*; (8.) whether savannas

accomplish multiple goals, as trees are retained but grasslands are expanded — and whether quality trumps quantity, such that a planned thinning of woodlands would improve their stock and therefore their value; (9.) whether historical landscape patterns deserve to be revived or are instead merely interesting markers; (10.) whether grazing near the great-ponds need be summarily disqualified, owing to water quality concerns; and the like.

After discussion and by a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously to calendar this subject for future discussion in a month.

2. Agency Administration: Site-visits

Mrs. Reimann suggested that, under ordinary circumstances, site-visits be scheduled immediately prior to Commission meetings; Commissioners concurred.


ENDORSEMENT OF THE WARRANT

The Commission endorsed Warrant no. 2020-07.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

By a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously in a roll call vote to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing the purchase, lease, exchange or value of real property. Mrs. Thulin stated that the subjects to be discussed are the purchase or value of real property and declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Commission. She further announced that the Commission would not reconvene in regular session after the conclusion of the executive session. The Commission entered executive session at 4:44 pm.

certification:


Mary Robin Ravitch, Secretary