



Martha's Vineyard Land Bank Commission

MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
MEETING OF OCTOBER 26, 2020

via remote technology

CALL TO ORDER: 3:00 pm

LAND BANK COMMISSIONERS PRESENT AT CALL TO ORDER

Pamela Goff, Wesley Mott, Kristen Reimann, Sarah Thulin, Nancy Weaver, Peter Wells

LAND BANK COMMISSIONERS ABSENT AT CALL TO ORDER

Steven Ewing

STAFF PRESENT AT CALL TO ORDER

James Lengyel

OTHERS PRESENT DURING THE SESSION (and not cited elsewhere herein)

None

PRESENTATION OF THE WARRANT

Warrant no. 2021-20 was made available for the Commission's inspection.

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 reconvene in regular session after the conclusion of the executive session. The Commission entered executive session at 3:00 pm.

RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION: 4:03 pm

Commissioner Steven Ewing had joined the meeting during executive session.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

By a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously in a roll call vote to approve the agenda as presented.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 19, 2020

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

COUNTY AND LAND BANK COMMISSION TREASURERS' REPORTS

None

TRANSFER FEE REVENUES

Revenues for the week ending October 23, 2020: \$268,540.00

NEW BUSINESS

1. Agency Administration: Fiscal Year 2021 Budget

Staff reported that each of the Town Advisory Boards had approved the proposed amendment to this budget discussed by the Commission at its October 19, 2020 meeting, details of which are contained in the minutes of that date.

After discussion and by a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously in a roll call vote likewise to approve the amended budget.

2. Tisbury Meadow Preserve (Town of Tisbury)

The Commission continued, from its October 19, 2020 meeting, its discussion of the sole bid submitted for the upgrading of the Mai Fane House: (1.) Thomas Brennan Homes, dated September 17, 2020, \$225,002. Land superintendent Ian Peach was present for this discussion.

Mr. Lengyel reported that the Tisbury Town Advisory Board, at its October 22, 2020 meeting, raised a number of questions about the details of the upgrade, which he passed along to Mr. Peach. Mr. Peach reported that he believes that two of them can be incorporated into the upgrade at this time: (1.) forgoing the use of plastic trim in favor of instead using cedar; and (2.) inspecting the septic system immediately, in order to determine if there are any issues as regards kilter and capacity. The former will raise the total price by \leq \$2000, the latter will cost approximately \$500.

After discussion and by a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously in a roll call vote to accept the bid, with the understanding (1.) that Mr. Peach will bring to the bidder all of the land bank's concerns

about the important historical considerations (e.g., preservation of the wide-plank floors and period doors; inappropriateness of the plate-glass window, etc.); (2.) that cedar rather than plastic trim will be used; and (3.) that the septic system will be examined. Mr. Peach departed the meeting at this time.

3. Eachpoquassit Hill Preserve (Town of West Tisbury)

The Commission discussed the contents of an assignment agreement involving the land bank, Island Housing Trust (IHT) and Island Autism Group (IAG) in which IHT withdraws from the agreement and IAG steps into its shoes. The agreement has been reviewed by land bank counsel.

After discussion and by a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously in a roll call vote to approve the assignment.

4. Agency Administration: Election of Officers

The Commission conducted its annual election of officers.

By a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously in a roll call vote to renew, for another twelve months, its current slate, viz., Mrs. Thulin as chairman, Mrs. Goff as vice-chairman and Mr. Mott as secretary-treasurer.

PUBLIC INPUT

1. Agency Administration: Public Input Session

The Commission conducted its biennial public input session, to take comment on land acquisition priorities or any other matter of interest to the public. The following individuals were present: Christopher Anderson, Andrew Dimmick, Sharon Cooke, Elizabeth Durkee, James Feiner, Ewell Hopkins, Philippe Jordi, Eben Lazarus, Antone Lima, Lilian Robinson, Douglas Ruskin, Leah Smith, Peter Temple, Richard Toole and others. Mrs. Thulin opened the meeting for comment.

James Feiner recommended that the land bank make an even higher priority of collaborating with its affordable housing colleagues.

Identifying himself as a bicyclist (and a member of the Oak Bluffs Town Advisory Board), Richard Toole remarked that Vineyard biking would be a totally different experience were the land bank not to exist. He (1.) echoed Mr. Feiner's comments on affordable housing; and (2.) noted that the town of Oak Bluffs is considering a saltmarsh migration district of critical planning concern, which will necessarily have a role for the land bank.

Christopher Anderson referred to the section of the land bank's affordable housing policy in which it offers to cooperate and be helpful if voters add, for affordable housing purposes, an increment to the 2% fee — he hopes that the land bank will remind voters of this support when/if the subject arises.

Ewell Hopkins identified himself as a member of the Oak Bluffs Town Advisory Board and asked whether the land bank might expand its efforts into providing advocacy services to local governments on the subject of land planning regulation. Mr. Lengyel responded that the Commission has avoided doing so as (1.) the land bank is known for doing one thing and one thing only — purchasing and managing open space — and that there is strength in an organization's remaining focused on its plain mission; and (2.) the land bank would wish to avoid any possible belief or perception that it is "colluding" with towns to regulate land for the purpose of reducing land values so that it can obtain better bargains.

Andrew Dimmick asked about undevelopment in watersheds, in order to improve water quality. Mr. Lengyel responded that wholesale properties in watersheds are logical for consideration, depending on circumstances, but less so retail properties as (1.) they are, because they are retail, usually quite expensive; and (2.) they are apt to be plentiful, such that it would be impossible to afford a critical mass of them. He added that the land bank has under-taken significant undevelopment projects in watersheds, e.g., Cove Meadow Preserve in Edgartown.

Mr. Anderson asked whether an affordable housing set-aside was considered as part of the land bank's recent acquisition of Arrowhead Farm. Mr. Lengyel replied that the acquisition itself is a *de facto* affordable housing project: land value is the critical limiting factor in island agriculture and, by being able to make an entire farm (with farmstead) available for lease at the end of the current owners' life-estate, the land bank will be creating a permanent affordable housing opportunity for a farm family. He noted, apropos of the land bank's affordable housing collaborations in general, that the land bank law would prohibit anything that could be deemed a subsidy and therefore the policy will work only when the target property's per-acre price is reasonable for all parties.

Mr. Hopkins stated that he appreciated staff's earlier response about the perils of adding an advocacy component to the land bank's duties: "the discipline of staying true to the mission of the land bank" is important.

Mr. Feiner asked whether a campground was a viable response to the seasonal housing shortage and whether the land bank could play a role. Mr. Lengyel noted (1.) that the land bank had tried to purchase the Webbs

Camping Area in the 1990s with the intention of maintaining the business, but failed — the owners sold to a golf course developer (who himself then later failed, with the land bank's subsequently purchasing the land but long after the business had evaporated); and (2.) that the land bank had then tried to solicit bidders to create a campground elsewhere on the Southern Woodlands Reservation but that none was able to make the numbers add up. Ms. Weaver enumerated the various land bank properties where the Commission supplies its own staff housing, which acts to address the problem directly.

Mr. Toole wondered if the Island Housing Trust, given its extensive experience and contacts across the commonwealth, could orchestrate the establishment of a such a campground and make it succeed.

Hearing no additional comment, Mrs. Thulin closed the public input session. Mrs. Goff noted that public input is the first item on the agenda of every Commission meeting.

ENDORSEMENT OF THE WARRANT

The Commission endorsed Warrant no. 2021-20.

ADJOURNMENT

By a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously in a roll call vote to adjourn. 5:06 pm

certification:



Wesley Mott, Secretary