

**HARTFORD BUSINESS REVOLVING LOAN FUND COMMITTEE/
HARTFORD VCDP REVOLVING LOAN FUND COMMITTEE**

Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2023 at 8:30 a.m.

Hartford Town Hall, Room 312

171 Bridge Street, White River Junction, VT

And via Zoom and by Conference Call

This meeting was conducted in compliance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law with electronic participation. The public was able to join the meeting from a computer, tablet or smartphone.

The HBRLF/ VDCP RLF Committee is:

Crystal Pearson (term expires 5/18/2023)

Frank Klymn (term expires 2/21/2026)

Michael Gabriele (term expires 3/8/2024)

Ryan Scelza (term expires 1/11/2024) – Chair (This was his last meeting)

Jay Zanleoni (term- expires 1/11/2024)

Members attending online/by phone: Ryan Scelza - Chair, Frank Klymn, and Michael Gabriele

Members attending in person: Crystal Pearson

Others present in person: Mark Condon, GMEDC Executive Assistant and Lori Hirshfield, Town of Hartford Department of Planning and Development Director.

With quorum met, Committee Chair Ryan Scelza called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

Ryan asked if there were any changes to the agenda. There were none.

Minutes

Frank Klymn made a **motion** to approve the minutes from the December 7, 2022 HBRLF/VCDP Committee Meeting, Crystal Pearson seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session: Review of the Confidential Loan Summary Report for February 2023 and Updates on any Potential Loan Applications

Frank Klymn made a **motion** to go into Executive Session due to the proprietary nature of the information in the February 2023 Loan Summary Report and to receive an update on any potential loan applications. Mike Gabriele seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

The Committee went into Executive Session at 8:34 a.m.

At 8:47 a.m. the meeting came out of Executive Session. No actions were taken.

Committee Membership

Ryan reminded the Committee that at the prior meeting he had announced he was stepping down as Chair given, he has moved out of town. He noted that also at the last meeting Crystal Pearson had nominated Jay Zanleoni to be the new Chair. Ryan has spoken to Jay since then and Jay has agreed to accept the position if elected.

Crystal Pearson made a **motion** to elect Jay Zanleoni as Chair of the HBRLF/Hartford VCDP RLF Committee. Frank Klymn seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Ryan asked if Crystal also needed to be re-elected to the position of Vice-Chair. Lori Hirshfield stated that yes, both the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair need to be elected each year.

Ryan Scelza made a **motion** to re-elect Crystal Pearson as Vice-Chair of the HBRLF/Hartford VCDP RLF Committee. Frank Klymn seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

It was noted that normally the new Chair would take over running the meeting at this point, but as Jay Zanleoni could not be in attendance today, it was decided that Ryan would continue running it.

Ryan would also be stepping down from the Committee itself. Lori stated that the guidelines list the eligibility for the Committee as “Hartford residents, business owners, those who are employed in the Town or otherwise having business interest within the Town of Hartford.” Lori said that as Ryan no longer meets any of these requirements, he needs to step down.

The guidelines say there are to be five voting members of the Committee. With Ryan stepping down, there is one open position. Crystal asked what qualities the Committee members were looking for in a new member. Crystal noted that the remaining members are all bankers, so we should be looking for a Hartford business owner and resident. Ryan asked how the current members were identified as candidates. Frank knew Crystal and Mike and asked them if interested. Ryan asked Frank if he knew more possible candidates. Frank said he had a list and had one possible person in mind. Crystal said she knew of a life-long Hartford resident who might be interested.

Ryan thanked everyone for his six years on the Committee.

Discussion of Potential Housing Programs

Lori said the Town has been working closely with Vital Communities and TRORC to plan a May 6th Community Meeting/Trade Show on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). There will be vendors there and information on how to set up ADUs.

Lori noted that if the Hartford Town Budget passed yesterday, it included \$14K to help start an ADU program. This program could be used provide some technical assistance. She added that she proposed using some ARPA funds to provide financial incentives to encourage property owners to build ADUs and other multifamily units. She is targeting 15-20 living units in FYs

2024 and 2025. She will be going back to the SB this year for approval once program structure is more fully developed. There is a new Housing and Homelessness Committee that will be looking at what we can do to stimulate housing in Hartford just like we do to stimulate businesses. Lori said the region has a deficit of more than 4,000 housing units to meet needs.

Lori noted the housing development program use some of the RLF funds to complement providing technical upfront assistance, such as X number of hours of an architects time to show what would go into creating an ADU at someone's home. Incentives also could be part of conventional loans to finance building the ADU similar to financing structure for the HBRLF. It was noted that there are many businesses in town that are desperate to have housing for employees.

Crystal stated that she was currently in the process of making an ADU at her home and it has been arduous and expensive. There is trouble finding contractors to do the work. She recommended that the Fire Marshal be involved in the technical assistance to go over details of what is needed for units above garages, such as double sheet rock and fire-proof paint. This will make their budgets for the buildouts more accurate to what the true costs will end up being.

Frank asked what would be charged for the units if the RLF were used. Lori said that the VCDP RLF is required to be used for at least 51% low to moderate income (LMI) households. Crystal said a State grant allowed for \$925/month all-inclusive to be charged. Frank asked about the Woodstock program. Lori said she has spoken to Woodstock about their program. She thought how they went about qualifying tenants was a bit clunky as people's ability to remain in the unit depended on their incomes, but not sure how this works when the tenant's income goes up. She would need to talk to VCDP about the rules for the funds, noting that it needs a "good faith effort" to meet the LMI requirements.

Lori said that for right now she was looking to see if the Committee has interest in going forward with a housing component in the RLF especially given how the housing shortage is negatively impacting the ability of business to hire people. The Committee members agreed it is worth further discussion.

Frank asked for some information on the proposed VT legislative bills on affordable housing and the State looking to change what it perceives as local zoning issues. Lori noted that currently Hartford takes advantage of the state's maximum allowance for ADU sizes, which is 30% of the of the principal structure living area, or 900 SF, whichever is larger. A couple of concerns are be the number of dwelling units per lot and overriding some local regulatory process like the number of required parking spaces parking spaces on a plot and voiding local issues like parking. There was some discussion availability of public transit in some parts of town and not in evening or on weekends at all, loss of on-street parking in evening during winter months, and the challenges this poses for reducing the parking requirements.

Lori posed one possible concept of packaged HBRLF to a business to come to or expand in town along with creating 3 or 4 units for employees. Crystal agreed that housing would bring in business. Crystal asked Lori is she was looking for a dollar amount commitment per unit. Lori

said that if the Committee said “Yes, we are interested,” the Committee could begin look at dedicating an amount, say \$150K, from one of the funds, or possibly a combination of the funds. Crystal asked if it would be for loans or grants. Lori said it could be for both. Crystal asked that if the goal was for 20 units in the next year, would it be equal amounts per unit or would each depend on the situation? Lori suggested considering using the same case-by-case application review process currently used for the HBRLF business loans.

Frank said he doesn’t object to the idea of RLF funds going to a housing program, but thought the Committee needed to consider it some more prior to committing to it.

Other Business

Ryan thanked Crystal for getting more brochures ready to be distributed around town.

Frank requested that we continue a prior discussion about interest rates at the next meeting.

Ryan had to depart the meeting right at 9:30am, so Crystal Pearson took over running the meeting as Vice-Chair.

Lori suggested including in the interest rate discussion the possibility of a special outreach campaign such as offering a special interest rate for a period of six months. Crystal agreed we should discuss interest rates at the next meeting. She will talk to the banks in the area about what they are currently doing.

Adjournment

Frank Klymn made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mike Gabriele seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:33 a.m.