



# Martha's Vineyard Land Bank Commission

MINUTES  
REGULAR SESSION  
MEETING OF OCTOBER 23, 2023

via remote technology

CALL TO ORDER: 3:00 pm

LAND BANK COMMISSIONERS PRESENT AT CALL TO ORDER

Steven Ewing, Pamela Goff, Wesley Mott, Sarah Thulin, Nancy Weaver

LAND BANK COMMISSIONERS ABSENT AT CALL TO ORDER

Kristen Reimann, Peter Wells

STAFF PRESENT AT CALL TO ORDER

Harrison Kisiel, James Lengyel

OTHERS PRESENT DURING THE SESSION

Philip Cordella, David Foster, Eunki Seonwoo (*Martha's Vineyard Times*)

PRESENTATION OF THE WARRANT

Warrant no. 2024-18 was made available for the Commission's inspection.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Hearing no proposed additions, Mrs. Goff declared the agenda approved as printed.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 16, 2023

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 20, 2023: \$447,802.00

*Commissioner Kristen Reimann joined the meeting during the following discussion.*

## NEW BUSINESS

### 1. Agency Land Management: Wildfire Mitigation Planning

The Commission discussed an October 17, 2023 staff memorandum regarding a proposal — advanced by the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) and the Dukes County Fire Council — to seek grant funding to create a firebreak along the main spine trail in the Wapatequa Woods Reservation. It is part of a larger proposal that includes the creation of a firebreak in the Frances Newhall Woods Preserve in West Tisbury, plus the installation of six hydrants in various locations across the Vineyard. Commissioners most recently discussed this matter at their March 27, 2023 meeting.

Mr. Kisiel stated that a contractor would be hired, at no expense to the land bank, to create a corridor along the trail that is 12 feet wide and 14 feet high. The land bank would be asked to maintain it thereafter.

Commissioners variously discussed (1.) whether such a proposal would affect the land bank goat herd, which overwinters here, to which Mr. Kisiel replied that goatherd Zachary Jessee has no objections; (2.) whether the commonwealth's endangered species law is implicated, to which Mr. Kisiel replied that all permitting would be undertaken by the MVC and that, as it happens, the reservation is outside the so-called "bubble"; (3.) whether upkeep would be burdensome, to which Mr. Kisiel replied that he would expect it to entail one day's labor per annum; (4.) the ecological impact of such an undertaking, as clearing often lures invasive/exotic species; (5.) the effect on carbon sequestration occasioned by such tree removal; and (6.) the value of a site-visit, open to all, to examine this prospect.

After discussion and by a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously in a roll call vote to direct staff to schedule a site-visit, identifying and inviting as many interested parties as possible, and to post notice of its date and time on the land bank website.

### 2. Featherstone Farm (Town of Oak Bluffs)

Commissioners reviewed the two proposals that were received for an agricultural lease over the west field here, in response to the request-for-proposals voted by the Commission at its August 14, 2023 meeting: (1.) Dalila Bennett et al., who propose in an October 20, 2023 letter to grow vegetables and flowers; and (2.) Gary Stead, who proposes in an October 6, 2023 letter to graze livestock. Mr. Stead is the current lessee.

Mr. Kisiel recommended (1.) that Mr. Stead's lease be renewed; and (2.) that the east field here be investigated as a location for the enterprise proposed by Ms. Bennett et al. The Commission had most recently voted to issue a

request-for-proposals for the east field on February 27, 2023; there were no takers.

Commissioners variously discussed (1.) water, both availability and restrictions; (2.) whether/how a farmstand for Ms. Bennett et al. could be accommodated; (3.) the need to involve the Featherstone Meetinghouse for the Arts, as it is sandwiched between the east and west fields; and (4.) whether off-premises alternatives to the east field exist.

After discussion and by a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously in a roll call vote (1.) to grant a lease to Mr. Stead for the west field, in accordance with its *Public use of land bank properties* policy; and (2.) to direct staff to investigate the suitability of the east field for Ms. Bennett et al. and to report back with the results.

3. Poucha Pond Reservation (Town of Edgartown)

Commissioners reviewed the sole proposal that was received for an agricultural lease here, in response to the request-for-proposals voted by the Commission at its August 14, 2023 meeting: (1.) Lillian Walter, who proposes in a September 21, 2023 letter to grow vegetables and flowers. She is the current lessee. Mr. Kisiel recommended renewal.

After discussion and by a motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously in a roll call vote to grant a lease to Ms. Walter, in accordance with its *Public use of land bank properties* policy.

*Commissioner Peter Wells joined the meeting at this time.*

PUBLIC INPUT

1. Agency Administration: Public Input

Philip Cordella spoke to (1.) remote versus in-person meetings; (2.) the farmstead proposed for Featherstone Farm; and (3.) the proposed firebreak at the Wapatequa Woods Reservation.

David Foster spoke to the history and nature of wildfires in New England.

ENDORSEMENT OF THE WARRANT

The Commission endorsed Warrant no. 2024-18.

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. Goff 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 3:32 pm.

certification:



Kristen Reimann, Secretary