

September 15, 2025, CD Board Meeting Minutes
ACCD-Calvin Coolidge Conference Room 6th Floor, National Life
Virtual Microsoft Teams (Meeting ID: 244 224 732 197 6 Passcode: bm3Km7Uw)

Board Members in attendance in-person: John Kascenska

Board Members in attendance virtually: John Biondolillo, Cynthia Gubb, Maura Collins, Lisa Sullivan, David Riegel, Angus Chaney, and Gabriel Lajeunesse

Board Members Absent: Liz Ruffa

Staff in attendance in person: Alex Farrell, Ann Kroll, Julia Connell, Nathan Cleveland, and Cindy Blondin

Members of the public: None

Cynthia chaired the meeting and called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Ann introduced David Riegel, a new board member who replaced Gregg Over. There were no members of the public in attendance for Public Comment.

City of St. Albans - Hope Grove Recovery House RHP Grant

Julia presented the open issues for the City of St. Albans Hope Grove application that is requesting \$770,760 from the Recovery Housing Program for the acquisition, rehabilitation, furnishing, and programming for the property located at 296 South Main Street, St. Albans, VT 05478-1866. The RHP funds will be used for transitional housing specific to women recovering from substance use disorder.

The following individuals –came and presented on behalf of the City of St. Albans: Janet Lee and Kate Blouin.

Questions, comments, and discussions raised by the board, staff:

Julia said typically RHP applicants don't appear before the board, but because the project had previously not been awarded and had outstanding questions the Board would like answered, the applicant wanted to come in and speak with the Board. The funding is for acquisition and there currently is an option agreement which is about to expire. She said Kate will be attending the meeting at 10:15 a.m. Their request increased due to the cost associated with the environmental review that needed to be done on the property, which is currently in the public notice period. The current option agreement expires at the end of September 2025. The seller is a private homeowner, and they are not looking to extend the option agreement further. There is additional state funding going to the Department of Economic Development (DED) that this project may be eligible for and is expected to apply to. This project will have 6 beds, 5 beds for women and 1 additional bed for the house manager. They have draft MOUs with some service providers – Step Out and Turning Point. They have done a great job reaching out to service providers. Anns spoke about the additional fencing that was required by the environmental review.

Kate Blouin said it will be a level 3 certified home for up to 6 women's. It's close to the BART clinic. She said it will be peer supportive, with in-house programming with Step Out. They will help the women to gain employment. She said the women will cook together and eat together in the home. She said they are still seeking more board members for HOPE Grove. There is a lot of community support. She is starting a google document for the waiting list. She said they are trying to reduce stigma in the community around substance use recovery. An organization in the community has donated 7 bikes for the women to support their health. She is working with the hospital trying to explore a respite bed across the street in a motel to be shared with other providers in the event someone relapses.

John B asked about the purchase price. Kate said it's \$435,000. John asked if there were sufficient contingency reserve funds. Kate said they have an angel donor. She said there has been a lot of updates to the house.

Cynthia asked about the other resources grants that were still pending. Kate said she's pretty confident about securing the opiate settlement and ACCD-DED funds. She said the \$8,000 from rotary is committed.

Angus questioned the appraised amount and how big the lot was. Kate said it's a ½ acre and was appraised for \$459,000.

Cynthia asked about the private donation for taxes and how that impacted the acquisition price.

John K. asked what the average timeline might look like for the people served. Kate said she anticipates people being served for a year. Julia said there is a requirement that RHP can only serve people for up to 2 years.

David noted Vermont Foundation on Recovery has been in communication with HOPE Grove. He asked if there are any pending other resource dollars that are a showstopper for the project. Kate said the DED and Hoehl Foundation applications. David questioned being able to serve people over 80% median income. Julia said the project needs to serve 51% LMI at or below 80%. David asked if the house manager would need to leave after 2 years. Ann said, if they are paid staff they would not have to transition out of the home. David asked if the income surveys were only on entry to the program. Ann said yes.

Cynthia noted this project is meeting only a small need and asked what the need was for the area. Kate said for women easily 25 beds are needed in Franklin County. Kate noted according to statistics that people in recovery often relapse between 18 to 24 months out.

Funding Discussion

Julia said staff are recommending for funding with conditions that the MOUs be drafted or executed and there is a plan for tenants that relapse, prior to executing a grant agreement. The timing pressure on this grant is the option agreement.

Maura asked if HOPE Grove had run homes previously and asked where our prior Recovery Housing Program awards were around the state. David didn't think they had but that Kate has professional background in the industry.

Angus wondered about the 5-year change of use clause. Ann said they would first look to find another provider to take over the home. Maura asked what regulatory clause allows CDBG to have the right of first refusal. Maura said that it needs to be a condition of funding.

Cynthia was concerned with the three very large grants for other resources that were pending. Julia said the DED funding is new and must be awarded by September 30, 2025.

David questioned timeline for the facility to be set up by Feb 2026 and wondered if there was wiggle room.

Lisa moved to fund the City of St. Albans Hope Grove RHP grant as presented on the consent agenda. Angus seconded the motion.

The motion carried – 7 Yes – 1 Abstention -0 No

Cynthia – Yes

Angus - Yes

John K – Yes

Lisa - Yes

John B - Yes

Gabriel - Yes

Maura – Yes

David – abstained

Adjourn

Gabe moved to adjourned, John K seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 11:02 AM, all were in favor, the meeting adjourned.