



## **VERMONT HOUSING and CONSERVATION COALITION**

### **Talking Points and Tips for talking to Legislators on *Legislative Day Friday, February 9, 2018***

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board is the main engine of State investment into permanently affordable housing and permanent land conservation.

#### **OUR MESSAGE**

Lawmakers should support VHCB funding required by statute at \$20.4 million from the Property Transfer Tax.

#### **WHY? BECAUSE VHCB equals RESULTS for Vermonters**

Both in conservation and in affordable housing, there is a strong pipeline of critical projects ready to go. With VHCB support, these types of projects are a proven, effective and efficient way to boost Vermont's economy. For nearly 30 years, lawmaker's balanced and sustainable approach to VHCB investments has been a key to success.

#### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

With the proper VHCB investment level, together we can:

- Save state money by reducing the costs of homelessness
- Create more workforce housing
- Provide safe, decent housing for the elderly, vulnerable Vermonters, people with disabilities and criminal justice offenders in transition
- Preserve existing assisted housing at-risk of losing its affordability
- Grow our downtown and village centers

#### **CONSERVATION**

With the proper VHCB investment level, together we can:

- Improve water quality and reduce flood damage
- Ensure traditional public access to recreation and expand trail systems
- Protect farms and make sure they are affordable for the next generation
- Create more Town Forests to benefit local communities
- Boost our working farm and forest economy
- Conserve critical habitat for wildlife
- Sustain and enhance opportunities for hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation
- Leave no available federal matching dollars on the table in Washington.

## **TIPS FOR TALKING TO LEGISLATORS**

Discussions with your legislators and testimony before legislative committees are effective ways to get across a personalized message about why the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board is important to you and your community.

**Here are some general suggestions:**

### ***Introduce yourself***

- a. Name, where you live, your organization, business or occupation.
- b. Your interest in VHCB -- Why is it important to you? What did VHCB enable you to accomplish? ***Please be sure to relate your testimony to VHCB!***

***Thank legislators*** for their past support for VHCB.

***How did you get involved with the program?*** (i.e. homeowner, participating farmer, tenant, contractor, financial institution, developer, land trust or conservation organization, private landowner or contributor) Would you have been able to accomplish your project or participate in a project without help of VHCB?

***Describe the economic impact of the project.*** How many jobs were created or how many people employed? How was the private sector involved? Did you hire or employ contractors, construction workers, trades people, architects, engineers, legal counsel, or other professionals?

***Did VHCB funds help leverage additional private or public funds? If so, how much?*** Describe the leveraged funds, such as donations of land or money, donations of conservation easements, bargain sales, low-income housing tax credits, bank loans, or other federal or state funds.

***What are the benefits of your work?*** Does it result in savings to the State? Did the project revitalize or stabilize a neighborhood or community?

***Describe the relationship with the local community:*** The town zoning and planning commissions, select boards, community revitalization groups, or conservation commissions.

***Who are the beneficiaries of the project and your organization's work?*** Farmers, communities, families, low or moderate-income persons, people who are at risk, families with children, or the public?

### **Other Talking Points – with more specifics**

The Housing Revenue Bond is off to a strong start. VHCB has committed \$6.25 million at eight locations around the state that will result in building and rebuilding 265 homes and apartments for Vermonters. Further, these investments will leverage an additional 200 market rate units around Vermont.

The Board has invested in the protection of agricultural lands drawing down a dollar-for-dollar federal match from the Natural Resource Conservation Service that will total \$5 million over the next several years.

The Board's Farmland Program will result in more farms with river buffers, water quality protection zones and other practices intended to reduce phosphorus flowing into Vermont's rivers and lakes. The state has made a multi-year commitment of VHCB funding as match to the federal Regional Conservation Partnership Program allowing Vermont to draw \$16 million in federal funding for water quality.

Approximately half of each year's farm conservation projects support land transfers to new ownership. At least half of the new owners are young farmers acquiring their first farm.

Protecting our floodplain and upland forests is also critical to improving water quality and flood resilience in our communities.

VHCB has invested in five town forest projects over the last 18 months, adding miles of trails and other opportunities for outdoor recreation that are bolstering local economies and enhancing quality of life for residents and visitors.