

Dear [Chair/Committee Members],

For the record, my name is Linda Martin, and I am here representing the Town of Wolcott. I am here today in strong support of maintaining full base funding for the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board at \$37.6 million, as included in the Governor's recommended 2027 budget. In a small rural town like Wolcott, VHCB is not just a funding source – it is a critical partner.

Through VHCB's support and partnership, I would like to speak to the meaningful impact the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) has had on the Town of Wolcott.

1. Wolcott Community Forest — Conservation and Public Land Access

VHCB was a **partner and funder** in creating the *Wolcott Community Forest*, a major conservation and public-access project for the town:

- In 2024, Wolcott permanently protected **735 acres of forestland** within walking distance of the village center, Wolcott Elementary School, and the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. This project was done in partnership with the Town of Wolcott, the Trust for Public Land, and the Northern Rivers Land Trust, with **VHCB co-holding the conservation easement** that ensures long-term protection of the land.
- The community forest provides **close-to-home outdoor recreational opportunities** (hiking, skiing, biking), supports outdoor education for local students, protects significant wetlands and waterways, and improves ecological connectivity and climate resilience.
- Part of the conserved property is also expected to be used to support affordable housing — a small lot is being donated to **Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity** to help build a permanently affordable home near the forest and school.

2. Historic Preservation — Wolcott Schoolhouse

VHCB has also invested in **historic preservation in Wolcott**:

- In 2025, VHCB approved up to **\$100,000 in funding** for rehabilitation and restoration of the **historic Wolcott Schoolhouse** — a local landmark from the 1850s — under its historic preservation program. This funding supports restoring the building's structure and helps maintain its historic character. The building is planned to house the community library and historical society.

Without VHCB's partnership, projects like these would simply not be possible. Wolcott does not have the local tax capacity to undertake major conservation acquisitions or historic rehabilitation projects on our own. VHCB funding makes it possible for small towns to protect what matters most – our landscape, our history, and our future.

VHCB represents a uniquely Vermont approach – balancing housing, conservation, and community development. That balanced model works. We have seen it work in Wolcott.

Again, I ask that you support VHCB's full funding of \$37.6 million dollars.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Vermont's communities. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Linda Martin

Selectboard Chair

Town of Wolcott