

# **Block Island Housing Board Annual Report**

## **July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019**

The Block Island Housing Board has spent much of FY 2019 working on the development of the Cherry Hill Lane affordable housing project, a five home subdivision off of Cooneymus Road. Development RFPs were issued and reissued, ultimately breaking the project into two parts: site work and structures. The Board was initially disappointed by the high prices of the RFP returns. However, a very generous donation by Josie Merck and the Ocean View Foundation (outlined later in this report) allowed the project to move forward. By the end of the fiscal year, contracts were in place with A. Transue Corp. for the site work and foundations, and with Pariseault Builders for installation and finishing of the modular homes.

In other Cherry Hill Lane news, the Board was honored to have Herman Mast volunteer as the Clerk of the Works for the project. His initial help was invaluable, and when a family emergency ended his ability to stay on Block Island, Board members were able to take over and carry his work to completion. Closings and occupancy by the new homeowners are expected to take place early in the summer of FY2020.

Meanwhile, the Board invested time in its outreach to potential homebuyers via social media and other means, including the preparation and dissemination of a “Getting Ready to Buy Your Home” document. Plans were developed for deed restrictions, homebuyer notifications, community and homeowner education, and for the lottery process. Ultimately, five individuals and families were selected from an income-qualified pool of thirteen applicants for the new homes.

In the winter of 2019, the Housing Board was thrilled to be approached by Josie Merck and the Ocean View Foundation, with a proposal to convert a single-family dwelling and accessory apartment at Bakers Hill into two affordable housing units. The Board went through the Planning Board process as co-applicant with the Ocean View Foundation seeking a minor subdivision to create the two affordable lots. In a true act of generosity, Josie Merck and the Ocean View Foundation then donated the funds generated from the sales of the new affordable housing units to the Housing Board, which were used to augment funds and bring Cherry Hill Lane to life.

In other news:

- The Board was excited to welcome new member Stacy Henshaw as an affordable housing advocacy member.
- An RFP and selection process was undertaken for a new attorney, ultimately resulting in the retention of law firm Gidley, Sarli & Marusak.
- The Ball O’Brien property is the next development opportunity on the Board’s horizon, and preliminary discussions and research are underway.

Affordable housing is an integral part of creating and sustaining a viable community. The Board is very dependent on, and thankful for, the dedicated participation of Block Island homeowners who rent their homes weekly. For fiscal year 2018 – 2019, the tax receipts raised were \$123,469.40. Attached, please find a year-end statement of accounts.

Respectfully Submitted,

Millie McGinnes  
Block Island Housing Board