

Boothbay Region Housing Trust receives \$21K grant

By BILL PEARSON

A Boothbay Harbor housing project is the first to receive an American Rescue Plan Act grant from Lincoln County. On Aug. 1, county commissioners approved a \$21,000 grant for Boothbay Region Housing Trust, a non-profit organization. The trust has a project under construction at 1 Alexander Way which will provide seven modular homes with three bedrooms, two baths and a one-car garage. The trust will sell these units to income-qualified applicants for \$287,000 each.

BRHT's application was reviewed by Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission. County Planner Emily Rabbe told commissioners the \$21,000 grant would extend town water and sewer to the development along with paying for additional blasting. The county has set aside \$1.5 million in ARPA funds for affordable housing projects. "This is the first one, and we expect the floodgates to open with more applications coming," Rabbe said.

BRHT expects to have construction completed this November. Rabbe expects a Boothbay affordable housing project to also submit a funding request. Last September, Boothbay Region Development Corp. received a \$50,000 ARPA grant from Boothbay. BRDC has selected a Butler Road location for its proposed 36-acre site with 162 units. "They (BRDC) haven't submitted an application, but we've talked to them," Rabbe said.

In other action, commissioners approved a housing inventory contract with Camoin Associates of Saratoga Springs, New York. LCRPC recently worked with Camoin on a housing study. Rabbe described the housing inventory contract as the study's next step. "Phase 2 is looking at

properties which make sense for affordable housing. It will look at sewer and water, zoning and catalog which sites are ready for development," she said. Commissioners approved a \$26,000 contract to Camoin for services.

LCRPC also received approval to seek a \$75,000 Maine Department of Economic and Community Development Grant. Commissioners also agreed to write a support letter for the commission's application. The grant would assist local towns with implementing LD 2003 which takes effect in 2024. LD 2003 establishes statewide and regional housing production goals. The law imposes density and other requirements for affordable housing developments that preempt inconsistent municipal regulations. It requires municipalities to allow up to four dwelling units on each lot where housing is allowed, depending upon the lot and whether it contains an existing dwelling.

It also requires municipalities to allow accessory dwelling units in any area where housing is permitted and comply with certain accessory dwelling unit requirements. "This helps us move forward working with local communities to implement the new law," Rabbe said. "The grant would pay for land use specialists who would look at local ordinances and how to use ARPA funds to implement the law's goals. The specialist would also look at possible zoning changes and provide education regarding LD 2003."

The grant is for 12 months, but could be extended another 36 to implement the scope of an applicant's complete work, according to Rabbe.

The commissioners meet next at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 15 in the courthouse.