

# Land Access and Opportunity Board Meeting

Feb 20, 2024, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Meeting Facilitator: Ornella Matta-Figueroa & Jean Hamilton, LAOB Staff

Attendee	Present	Not Present
<b>Board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Samantha Langevin, VT RELEAF Collective</li> <li>● Xusana Davis, Office of Racial Equity</li> <li>● Susan Aranoff, Vermont DDC</li> <li>● Ana Mejia, Vermont Every Town Project</li> <li>● Dan Coutu, VT Commission on Native American Affairs</li> <li>● Brian Cina, National Association of Social Workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pacifique Nsengiyumva, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)</li> <li>● Britaney Watson, NAACP</li> <li>● Arnold Thomas, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance</li> <li>● Raheemah Madany, Pride Center of Vermont</li> <li>● <i>Vermont Psychiatric Survivors (no active board member)</i></li> </ul>
<b>Board Alternates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mark Hughes, VRJA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jennifer Morton-Dow, VT Releaf Collective</li> <li>● Kirsten Murphy, Vermont DDC</li> <li>● Shingai Kagunda, Vermont Every Town Project</li> <li>● Rich Holschuh, VCNAA</li> <li>● Ashley Devereaux, NASW</li> </ul>
<b>Guests &amp; Public</b>	<u>Public</u> : <u>Guests</u> : Ellen Kahler and Kelly Dolan from VSJF; Ernest 'Buster' Caswell , Gus Seelig	

## Agenda

1. **Convene the DATE, 2024 virtual meeting of the LAOB at 5:30pm**
  - a. Welcome, Facilitator Team Introductions, and overview of meeting
  - b. Touchstones
    - i. Listen generously. Speak your truth from your heart & mind.
    - ii. Make the way we work together an example of what's possible.
    - iii. Trust that we all hold a piece of the puzzle & we need each other's pieces to understand the whole picture

c. LAOB Board Member & Staff Introductions: Name, Identifiers, Board seat and location (county)	
<b>2. Review &amp; Approve Meeting Notes from 2/5/2024 meeting</b> ○ <a href="https://vhcb.org/sites/default/files/meeting-minutes/2024/LAOB/2.5.24%20LAOB%20Minutes.pdf">https://vhcb.org/sites/default/files/meeting-minutes/2024/LAOB/2.5.24%20LAOB%20Minutes.pdf</a>	
<b>3. LAOB Introduction –</b>	<b>LAOB Presentation - Ornella</b> <a href="#">LAOB Presentation Board.pptx.pdf</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slides presented</li> <li>• Questions for LAOB - <i>None</i></li> </ul>
<b>4. Advisory Powers</b> <b>Learning Journey: VT Sustainable Jobs Fund</b> a. <u>Presenters:</u> Ellen Kahler and Kelly Dolan	<b>Intro of Guests from VT Sustainable Jobs Fund presentation - Jean</b> <b>Presentation (20-30 mins)</b> Ellen K - Executive Director, VSJF is based out of Montpelier. Kelly Dolan - Network Manager for Farm to Plate. Help host the 20 different community groups that operate within Farm to Plate Network. Excited to keep learning more about LAOB. VSJF was created by the VT Legislature - in 1995. Created to focus on sustainable economic development. Tasked VEDA with standing up the VSJF as a 501c3. Focus on specific economic sectors Food & Agriculture, Forest Products, Renewable Energy and Green Technology, and waste/pollution reduction. Annual revenue in 2023 was \$2.8M. \$300,000 of that budget is VT Releaf Collective, which is fiscally sponsored by VSJF. Mission: We nurture the economic prosperity, ecological health, and social connectivity of people, businesses, organizations and communities in Vermont for the benefit and well-being of all who live here Core Values: DEIB, Respect, Authenticity, Collaborative Relationships, Sustainability, Systems Level Change. We have a paragraph long values statement that explains what our values mean to us. Staff is currently 100% white. Would like to see staff diversify with the changing demographics of Vermont.

Board: VAAFM secretary Ansen Tebbets, and Tayt Brooks is the Secretary of Commerce's designee. Amanda Wheeler is the Governor's assignee. Interesting and diverse board representing differing perspectives.

#### Programming:

- Business assistance
- Supply Chain Facilitation
- Strategic Planning and Implementation: 2009 Farm to Plate Network Plan was authorized by the Legislature. VSJF does not do strategic planning for others, but does so at a systems elevation for whole sectors, like farm to plate
- Network Development, alignment and action → relationships building

#### Core Programs

- Farm to Plate, forest product sector facilitation, Delta Clime business accelerator, business coaching, fiscal sponsorships (e.g. VT Releaf Collective)

#### Farm to Plate

- 10 year strategic plan to develop local food systems → guide policy, investments, and market development.
- In practice - look at examples around racial equity and land access
  - Racial Equity Priority Strategy Team: worked with Julian \_\_\_\_ facilitated two meetings with 21 people who work in and around the food system. Next steps will be to establish a community of practice doing equity related work in the food system.
  - Food Security Roadmap: 600 individuals participated around the state. Three goal categories are agriculture....
  - Financing and Farmland Access Team - convene monthly mostly includes land financiers and TA providers. Last year looked at lending models and create better funding models.
  - Land Access and Land Use Topic Exchange: meet quarterly to discuss specific topics, like housing including farmworker housing.
- VSJF does not intersect significantly with housing other than farmworker housing
- Significantly intersect with LAOB's work around land access, in addition to agriculture VSJF also works on Forest Products Sector and how forest products create 'working lands' economic opportunities

- Services: Business Management Coaching and Fiscal Sponsorship
  - On Business Coaching: we have 10 coaches who are entrepreneurial, founder/managers. Do a lot with food businesses, especially manufacturing and some forest products businesses. Would like to do more in energy sector and waste management.
  - Managing member of Flex Cap Fund - \$4.6M revenue based financing fund. Often business coaching clients also participate in financing from the Flex Cap Fund.
- Services: Fiscal Sponsorship
  - Flex Cap Fund: operating from VSJF's shop
  - VT Releaf Collective: in process of pursuing 501c3, and currently VSJF is helping to support the spin off. Currently managing payroll, books, etc.
- Other areas of exploration: VT Prosperity Project
  - Exploring Donut Economics and creating a well-being economy to support people in their fullness to have all of their needs met within the ceiling of available planetary resources. Partners include: Abundance Sun, Gund institute for environment, Public Assets Institute, and others.

**Question & Answer**

**Ana** - Appreciation for delta-clime translations into 6 languages. Language access continues to be a significant barrier for many programs. Thank you for being a leader on this.

Seeing a lot of bold language around equity, inclusion, belonging. Those words rang hollow given the experience. Not feeling alignment with personal experience and lack of support and solidarity. When we dont acknowledge areas of growth, we aren't reaching as far as we can. Looking to tease out the value around strong and authentic relationships. VSJF has those authentic and strong relationships. A lot of grassroots initiatives, esp BIPOC-led don't have those strong relationships with powerful institutions, and sometimes orgs like VSJF will need to decide if their relationship is stronger with the powerful institutions or the grassroots, BIPOC-led initiatives. This is hard to say and acknowledge that it may be hard to hear. Hoping to offer an invitation to work together, especially on the difficult path.

- Ellen: Appreciate your clarity and specificity of ways that VSJF has not lived up to our values. Would like to repair the harms that have occurred and want to work with you to repair those harms.
- Kelly: appreciate the feedback and the framing of the invitation. Have been engaging in reflecting deeply on our work, and recognize that the stumbles are opportunities for growth. Really appreciate the framing of learning together.

**Mark** - shout out to sister Ana. I respect and appreciate you. Everywhere you show up you show up so positively. It is so encouraging because this is life work. This is not a project. This is not a program. This is life work. Lift up Kelly and Ellen as well. You are working in challenging situations because you are part of something that was not constructed to be transformational though you aim for it to be so. So many organizations are due for an overhaul so they can work better. Lets consider: how can we tweak the system so it doesn't rely on a good person being in the seat, but the system itself holds the good work.

Excited to hear the work that VSJF is doing. Really impressed and didn't know that this work was going on. Another challenge we have in some of our communities is that these programs are inefficient, ineffective, or non-existent. Sometimes that lack of awareness is what creates the feeling of non-existent.

- Ellen: Thank you. Appreciation.

**Samantha** - highlight land use topic exchange group. It meets quarterly and there has been a lot of good information there specifically around alternative land financing. E.g. Potlikker Capital - financing and farm equipment tool shares.

- Kelly: appreciate hearing that and that it has been a useful conversation. For those who want to become more involved in any of these teams, email kelly [kellydolan@vsjf.org](mailto:kellydolan@vsjf.org)

**Dan** - really useful to learn more about VSJF. Struck by the purpose of the organization. Perceiving a possible dichotomy on one hand created to grow certain economic sectors and on the other hand help Vermonters from all walks of life. I've observed that growing economies often start with the people who have the most money but that can be in contrast with those who need the most help.

- Ellen: this is partly why we are exploring the concept of donut economics. Constant growth for GDP's sake is creating wealth disparity, harming the planet, etc. We are trying to have a different kind of conversation about the economy as a whole. The current economy feels like we are supposed to serve it rather than the other way around. The donut economic framework talks about transforming the economy to be distributive and regenerative.
- Dan - in case its helpful, the LAOB has the ability to review systemic structures including laws, organizations, and policies.
- From chat - Samantha: I want to add to the shout out for the VT Prosperity Project, I attended an introductory event last year that was fascinating and informative.

	<p><b>Jean</b> - impressed by the breadth of experience VSJF has in engaging community in participatory planning processes.</p> <p>From chat - kelly: <a href="https://vtfarmtoplate.com/2023.5.9_vtf2p_findings_from_racial_equity_process_2.0_final.pdf">2023.5.9 vtf2p findings from racial equity process 2.0 final.pdf (vtfarmtoplate.com)</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kelly - integral to the food security road map was leaning into the trusting relationships that organizations who serve food insecure individuals.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ornella</b> - want to circle back to Ana’s original comment, thank Ana for surfacing opportunities for growth and difficult conversations. The LAOB is here to support these conversations and honors them. Both the growth and the difficult conversations and the joyful collaborations.</p>
<p><b>BREAK</b> - 5 mins from 6:30-6:35pm</p>	
<p><b>5. Public Comment &amp; Board Responses -</b></p>	<p><b>Ernest 'Buster' Caswell</b> - thanks to VT Sustainable Jobs Fund for their presentation. They have a lot of data. They have a lot of data in their network that needs to be translated into other areas of state government. For example VHFA has a lot of data, but it doesnt talk to VSJF. Housing doesn’t understand the tangible benefits of collaborating and working together. They dont understand that to have a farm/a collaborative business, you and your employees need a home. The housing crisis cannot be overlooked by the VSJF. We have to improve the communication. The last VSJF newsletter that had anything to do with housing, they barely scratched the surface. We need to make sure that farms have access to homes →this is our food security. Other states have been doing farmworking housing for decades. NY, OR, WA, NM, ME, NJ. Google “farmworker housing.” None of the housing committees know about farmworker housing. VT Sustainable Jobs Fund has made improvements, esp gathering farmworkers together. Data on agriculture is missing on the housing side. Food security depends on a home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Susan:</b> thank you for being here tonight and being in so many places so often. There are 11 organizations in the original statute. Is the table full? Could we talk about expanding the LAOB next biennium? If so, who would be a good voice at the table for the farmworker community.</li> <li>- <b>Buster:</b> I’ve always and can’t encourage it enough, you need to hear their voices not mine. We need to do better bringing their voices in. The only org that has made improvement has been the VSJF. Migrant Justice could be here every time. Milk with Dignity. Addison Allies. Pathstone.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brian: I invited migrant justice come to public comment once, but that is not enough. I could see adding 1-2 organizations. Acknowledge what Buster said. There is a unique voice from the Migrant Farmworker community.</li> <li>- From Chat: Xusana: Today's hearing in Senate Economic Development: 11:15 AM Reviewing Housing Access for Migrant Families proposal Will Lambek, Organizer, Migrant Justice, Zeynabe Kouyate, Multicultural Youth Program Director, Spectrum Youth and Family Services, Diego Torruco, Migrant Justice, Yari Hernández, Migrant Justice, Yesenia Hernández, Migrant Justice Here's the link to watch the footage: <a href="https://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/streaming/senate-economic-development-housing-and-general-affairs">https://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/streaming/senate-economic-development-housing-and-general-affairs</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Mark</b> - Thank you Buster for all of your consistency in being here. It is refreshing.</p> <p>From chat: Xusana: - Also it can be helpful to offer an org the option to be an as-needed consultant instead of having to commit to a permanent seat on a committee</p>
<p><b>6. Programming Presentation -</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Moving to monthly board meetings – any input from the public?</li> </ul> <p>Samantha: supportive, but particularly if we make sure there is continued committee work and effort to engage the orgs that have dropped off.</p> <p>Mark - with monthly meetings it means that a lot of activity will happen between meetings. I've see this LAOB be so super productive and don't want to see that momentum drop off. With monthly meetings, momentum can slow down.</p> <p>Brian - feel flexible and supportive about this. Would like to see the board meetings fed into from the committee work. Our subcommittees can do more. It may be productive to compensate people for subcommittees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Upcoming dates: next meetings march 4 and march 18</li> <li>● March 5: review proposed fy24 budget, review initial draft of equity assessment rfp</li> <li>● March 18: review initial draft of grant making “Homeownership Coaching Program” “translation services” and “Technical Assistance”</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION ITEM</b> - staff create a survey to request optimal board engagement times, committees, and ways on engaging</p>
<p><b>7. Legislative Updates -</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meetings at both house appropriations, and House General and Housing. Both were successful. Have met with many senators and representatives over the last two weeks. We have a meeting (tomorrow) at House Ag. We hope to be included in both of those budget memos.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exploring two different revenue sources for us: Increase in the property transfer tax and cannabis tax money.</li> </ul> <p>Susan: I also saw that you organized public testimony.</p> <p>Ornella- Yes! I forgot to mention that we had at least 6 testimonies 4 in person/zoom, 2 written)</p> <p>Xusana - if we tie LAOB’s funding to a source that is variable year over year. Let's be careful about what we tie it to. For example: ORE is a percentage of the dept of human resources. Be careful of the retail market.</p> <p>Ornella - We heard from advisors that it is not our role to decide how the legislature funds our programming.</p> <p>Xusana - there is a way that we can balance that while respecting their authority. It is within our right to say “this is what we need.” and respectfully “we recommend you pull it from these sources or not these sources.”</p> <p>Rev Hughes - instigating in the back rooms about conversations around excise tax distribution. Stay tuned. I am meddling, aiming for good trouble, Trying not to speak on behalf of the LAOB.</p> <p>Gus - we need the money. Here are some ideas of where the money can come from. Get it done.</p> <p>Gus - Charles Hamilton - an apostle of black power dies at 94. RIP.</p> <p>Rev Hughes - Ruben Jackson, jazz DJ. RIP.</p> <p>Rest in Power!</p> <p>ACTION ITEM – staff send email written public budget hearing testimony to board</p>
<p><b>8. Board Announcements -</b></p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>9. Meeting Adjourned 7:30pm</b></p>	

ZOOM LINK - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84633679177>

DOCUMENTS

- **Prior meeting notes-** <https://vhcb.org/sites/default/files/meeting-minutes/2024/LAOB/2.5.24%20LAOB%20Minutes.pdf>



