

# Land Access and Opportunity Board Meeting

March 18, 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>● Susan Aranoff, Vermont DDC</li> <li>● Ana Mejia, Vermont Every Town Project</li> <li>● Xusana Davis, Office of Racial Equity</li> <li>● Brian Cina, National Association of Social Workers</li> <li>● Britaney Watson, NAACP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●</li> <li>● Dan Coutu, VT Commission on Native American Affairs</li> <li>●</li> <li>●</li> <li>● Pacifique Nsengiyumva, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)</li> <li>●</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> <li>● Kirsten Murphy, Vermont DDC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jennifer Morton-Dow, VT Releaf Collective</li> <li>●</li> <li>●</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>	<p><u>Public</u>: <u>Guests</u>: Trey Martin (VHCB), Pollaidh Major (VHCB), Cara Hansen (VHCB), Jenny Hyslop (VHCB), Liz Gleason (VHCB), Karen Freeman, Francis Sharpstene (VHCB), Gus Seelig (VHCB)</p>	

## Agenda

1. **Convene the March 18, 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)

**2. Review & Approve Meeting Notes from March 4, 2024 meeting**

- <https://vhcb.org/sites/default/files/meeting-agendas/2024/LAOB/3.4.24%20LAOB%20Minutes.pdf>

Approved as is

**3. Public Comment & Board Responses - 15 mins -**

No comments

**4. Event at the Statehouse March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024 & Legislative update**

Planning for LAOB community event at the Statehouse on 3/22

**5. Review and Approve the Budget for 2024**

Jean present FY24 operating budget - [Budget document for review](#)

Ana - how is this budget different than what the board worked on earlier this year? And have we gotten any appropriations this year?

- Jean - This budget is our spending plan for FY24, whereas earlier this year the Board worked on the FY25 appropriation. We have not yet received an FY25 appropriation.

Samantha - lots of focus on home ownership, what thought has gone into addressing land access.

- Jean - curious about this question and wanting to deepen the thinking with you all. Instinct is that housing is connected to land access and that there is room to think more about how to deepen into land access.
- Ornella - this feels responsive to the priorities we are hearing from community and statute, and yes, there is room for more conversation and deepening work in land access.

Brian - programming looks responsive to what we have learned from community input and learning journey. Feels consistent with the goal of spreading power and resources into the community. Build networks of self-sufficiency that don't need to rely so heavily on systems of government. One caution, with the FY25 appropriations ask to be clear that we are planning to build on what we

	<p>establish and learn from this year’s programming. We have a plan and we will adapt with what we learn.</p> <p>Kirsten - DDC is available and interested in helping to make all of these program materials available in plain language. Safety is a major issue. Last year’s flooding was very confusing for many members in the DD community.</p> <p>Ana - would like to talk about the homeownership coach program to help ensure that the program is enhancing the existing resources/programs in the state. And look into grant sizes, possibly combining safety and emergency minigrants so that there is more flexible room in the budget.</p> <p>Mark - can you talk more about the scope of the equity assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jean - shared equity assessment rfp. This is a responsibility assigned to us by statute. Goal of making good and efficient use of pre-existing assessments and using a community engagement process that is compassionate and respectful.</li> <li>- Ornella - will work with housing &amp; land entities to self assess. This is a baseline that then feeds into our programming, which feeds into our advisory powers. All parts of the LAOB are learning together. And all of this will be shared with the Legislature in our annual report?</li> </ul> <p>Samantha made motion to approve budget for FY24  Brittaney seconded  Budget unanimously approved</p>
<p><b>BREAK - 5 mins from 6:34-6:40pm</b></p>	
<p><b>6. Advisory Powers Learning Journey: VHCB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Presenters:</u>  Trey Martin (Conservation Director), Jenny Hyslop (Housing Director), Liz Gleason (Farm and Forest</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intro of Guests for the presentation</b> (Jean) - no LAOB presentation because of VHCB’s familiarity with our work and we are presenting at VHCB’s board meeting on Wed.</p> <p><b>Presentation</b> (60 mins) - <a href="#">link to presentation</a></p> <p>Gus Seelig - Executive Director</p> <p>Coming to LAOB board meetings has been informative. Reminder of lessons from my youth. Listening is the first step to building trust. The LAOB is committed to centering people with lived experience.</p>

Viability Director, Gus Seelig (Executive Director)

Important to listen. LAOB is an extraordinary example of bringing community into government and listening to build the trust.

Fundamentally what VHCB does is act as a funder for conservation, housing, agricultural land and historical preservation. We are a capacity builder. We also provide technical assistance and convene stakeholders. I have a lot of pride in our work, and I invite the critique of LAOB of our programming. Your thoughts, insights, and criticism are welcome.

Statutorily created in 1988 - “The dual goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting Vermont’s agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas, and recreational lands of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life in the State.”

Crossroads of housing and access to land. Crossroads of climate resilience.

Highlight (G) the development of capacity on the part of an eligible applicant to engage in eligible activities. Interpretation: we have needed to help build capacity to accomplish our statutorily defined goals. We see our work with and commitment to building the capacity of the LAOB as part of that.

Lived experience is statutorily defined as members of VHCB’s board. We have also asked the partners we fund to include communities who are impacted by their work on their board.

Allocation system is statutorily defined.

Required to provide annual report to Legislature. If >70% is spent on either housing or conservation, needs to be reported why to the Legislature.

No powers of condemnation.

Special federal funds and state surpluses have allowed for a significant increase in housing and other work over the last few years. Programming will be reduced to ~25% this year due to decrease in funding resources.

Jenny Hyslop - Housing Director

Administer 20 different state and federal funding sources for communities.

Equity and justice focused initiatives have included

- Recently, flexible state funding has allowed farmworker housing improvement.
- Solar and energy efficient modular homes
- Access modifications for people living in dignity in their own homes.
- Service supported housing such as Sash and covid safety.
  - VHCB's work around supported housing was really encouraged by the closing of the Brandon Training School.

In addition to affordable housing VHCB provides significant support for shelters.

Homeownership programs include Shared equity (1,300 shared equity homes funded), Habitat for humanity, energy efficient homes (CDS support for energy efficiency for low-mid income households).

Environmental Justice is embedded in VHCB's work in creating safe homes (lead and asbestos remediation), decommissioning homes in flood zones and rebuilding safer homes in safer territories.

Gus - Env Justice is also embedded in flood response. VHCB has supported flood buyouts to ensure that households are receiving 100% of the value of their home rather than 85% that FEMA provides.

Trey Martin- Conservation Director

Lots of our work touches implicitly on EJ principles that the state has adopted. Specifically, VHCB is a member of EJ Council. In conversation with Ornella and Jean to involve the LAOB in this work. Looking forward to working with LAOB to hear community voices around flood resilience, indoor air quality, etc.

Supporting ecological function on land and water quality, outdoor access, farmland conservation, conserve historical properties.

Protecting land where the community is leading a vision is what the VHCB board is most interested in.

Gus - Americorps Program: 25-30 volunteers who work for minimal compensation. Americorps have helped with programming at affordable housing, and creating summer camps for residents of affordable housing. Investing in young people and a sense of service to the community pays future dividends.

Liz Gleason- Farm and Forest Viability Director

Came from a recognition that despite the investments in farmland conservation, farming and forestry land based businesses still struggle significantly. FFV provides individualized coaching to support these land based farms and forestry operations succeed and thrive. The viability coaches are placed at organizations around the state, large focus on financial management skills. Also focus on Land Access and implementing Business Plans.

Jenny - VHCB is providing funding. The work is accomplished through a network of partner organizations.

Gus - we ask our network partners to do more and better with equity. We encourage our network partners to include people with lived experience on their boards.

**Question & Answer**

Brian - been in the legislature 8 years and never received such a comprehensive presentation of VHCB's work. Im impressed! Grateful for the statutory guidance the state has provided in making sure that VHCB's investments dont have bad unintended consequences, that gives me hope for more good work we can do together in partnership between VHCB and LAOB.

Samantha - from chat: My brain is very full today, so limited questions, but I really appreciate the presentation - it felt very thorough!

Ana - echo the appreciation for the presentation. A recommendation: would be interesting to see who you fund, especially with a heat map that shows where that funding is going geographically and organizationally. Would like to know if there are requirements for VHCB's funded projects to be affirmatively marketed as described by the LAOB statute for disadvantaged communities. Are there requirements in place to affirmatively market programs to disadvantaged populations? Would like to know how VHCB is going to Releaf and Every Town for information about farmers. Releaf and Every

Town can do a better job understanding the needs of Black and Brown farmers than an organization like VLT.

Gus - the average income across all tax credit units in VT is \$16K/year. The lens we have focused on is providing economic benefit to these people. The average homeowner we have in our home ownership programming is \$57k.

Mark - where did you get the data for the second to last slide? And echo the appreciation for the work that VHCB is doing and the presentation. Request to see the slide deck for future reference. Richard Kemp center has been working on farm justice work. Would like to connect with VHCB about resources to support this.

Jenny- Been humbling learning to collect this data. Data sources on the second to last slide comes from surveying all of the primary non-profit partners. Based on head of household, so it is likely undercounting some BIPOC. Interested in continuing to improve the data and welcome feedback.

Mark - from chat: Mark let's talk about the work of ISGOOD in Burlington! We are working towards establishing public garden ways of urban permaculture and starting a new partnership with a uvm class this year

Jean - How are project priorities set? How much influence does VHCB have in setting the stage for what projects are prioritized and funded.

Gus - Real estate means we have a lot of opportunistic projects. We rely on our board and the lived experience on our board to prioritize what projects are most important. We also talk with organizations, eg. Dev Disability Council to understand needs across the state in specific areas. Our approach is a balance between what the community advocates for and the priorities we have come to understand through our staff research.

Jean - how can our board support VHCB's board to ensure that the complex stories including failure are also being brought forward.

Gus - its not all a perfect picture and we need to learn together.

Ornella - really curious to hear more about the lessons learned. Helps all of us move our work forward.

<b>7. Board Announcements</b>	Calendar Updates 3/20 LAOB at VHCB Board meeting 4/15 Next LAOB meeting Equity Assesment Draft available for review - <a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JvkO1rvkOmd4iK47Vw2mZOUrSyDmaA8AZ9Rv0uAQYoc/edit?usp=sharing">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JvkO1rvkOmd4iK47Vw2mZOUrSyDmaA8AZ9Rv0uAQYoc/edit?usp=sharing</a>
<b>8. Meeting Adjourned 7:35pm</b>	

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