

## VERMONT HOUSING & CONSERVATION BOARD

### Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program Advisory Board Meeting MINUTES February 5, 2021

Advisory Board members present: Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Alyson Eastman (Chair), Colleen Goodridge, Dan Lerner, Sarah Isham, Michael Snyder, Gus Seelig, Joan Goldstein, Pete Johnson.

VHCB staff present: Ela Chapin, Liz Gleason, Mariah Noth, Aaron Guman, Karen Freeman, Jennifer Hollar.

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Alyson Eastman calls meeting to order at 10:00AM.

Committee thanks Ela Chapin for her years of service.

Committee approved Meeting Minutes from 06/19/2020 meeting. Gus Seelig moved to approve the minutes, Sarah Isham seconded. There was no discussion. The motion passed. Abstain: Michael Snyder, Joan Goldstein, Dan Lerner (all three not present for 06/19/2020 meeting).

The staff presented the annual report, program updates and a new promotional video about our business advising program. Ela presented the 18 years of Viability Program's work and impact, noting in particular outcomes around farmland access and succession. Program staff noted updates on grants programs, COVID response and recovery coaching.

Liz and Gus shared updates on leadership transition and hiring. February 15<sup>th</sup> Liz Gleason officially becomes the Viability Director and Ela departs in early March. Viability is hiring for multiple positions. Viability will be undertaking some strategic planning and program evaluation. Viability Program will be focusing over coming years on: covid recovery, climate change, racial justice and equity and land access; intersection between Viability and Conservation. Gus updated board on the Governor's budget address' impact on the VHCB budget for the coming fiscal year, with hope to make additional resource investment over the coming 2 years in the Viability program.

Colleen shared updates from the forestry producer sector during Covid and 2020. Pete shared updates from farm and food producer sector during Covid and 2020.

Ela gave an update on the Food Hub Collaborative project.

Gus Seelig made a motion to adjourn. Joan seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:01 AM.

There was no public comment.

Minutes submitted by Aaron Guman.