

Land Access and Opportunity Board Meeting

Dec 11, 2023 , 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Meeting Facilitator: Natanya Vanderlaan WholeHeart Inc., Jessica Laporte CROs

Attendee	Present	Not Present
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Susan Aranoff, Vermont DDC ● Dan Coutu, VT Commission on Native American Affairs ● Xusana Davis, Office of Racial Equity ● Samantha Langevin, VT RELEAF Collective ● Arnold Thomas, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance ● Ana Mejia, Vermont Every Town Project ● Brian Cina, National Association of Social Workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Britaney Watson, NAACP ● Pacifique Nsengiyumva, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) ● Raheemah Madany, Pride Center of Vermont ● <i>Vermont Psychiatric Survivors (no active board member)</i>
Board Alternates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kirsten Murphy, Vermont DDC ● Jennifer Morton-Dow, VT Releaf Collective ● Mark Hughes, VRJA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shingai Kagunda, Vermont Every Town Project* ● Rich Holschuh, VCNAA ● Ashley Devereaux, NASW
Guests & Public	<p><u>Public:</u> Katerine R, Buster Caswell, Rajnii Eddins, Christine Hughes, Wynston Longmore, Shane Rogers</p> <p><u>Guests:</u> Ornella Matta-Figueroa & Jean Hamilton, New LAOB Staff / Gus Seelig & Francis, VHCB</p> <p><u>Presenters:</u> Alex Farrell, Department of Housing</p>	

Agenda

<p>1. Natanya V. to convene the December 11th, 2023 virtual meeting of the LAOB at 5:30pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Welcome, Facilitator Team Introductions, and overview of meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Pause for General Strike b. Touchstones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	
<p>2. New Staff & Board Introductions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Board members and alternates to introduce themselves - Name, Identifiers, Organization you are representing

- Introduction/Welcome of Presenters
 - Alex Farrell, DHCD (he/him) - new to this position but former position brought him in contact with familiar faces on the call
- Introduction of VHCB staff
 - Gus Seelig (he/him)- excited to welcome new LAOB staff
 - Francis (he/him) -
- New Staff introduce themselves
 - Jean Myung Hamilton (she/her) - thank you for the warm welcome, I'm glad I came to this party!
 - So excited to work with Ornella and all of you
 - Ornella and I met within the past year on a land access project we were both working on
 - Feels like a transformative opportunity to work together
 - I come from a food systems career, which has really brought me through all the different sectors of VT
 - Has worked within farming and building systems around equitable food, including through policy channels
 - Watching this Board develop over the past few years has blown my mind. I think what's possible with this group of people and the network developing around it is huge, I didn't think to dream so big.
 - Ornella Matta-Figueroa (she/her)
 - great to be here, unstable connection tonight
 - I applied because when I read the job description I felt butterflies in my stomach and excitement in my body. I read the Sunrise Report and thought, "Wow, this is a bunch of folks really doing the work of social justice." That's what brought me to go through the process and am thrilled to have been selected.
 - Shared long, impressive list of education and background
- Dan's introduction of New Hires
 - Ended up with over 20 candidates for the positions
 - Now we have two co-directors who will be coming on board next month
 - Expressed willingness to be here
 - Hires
 - Jean is the Program Development Director
 - Ornella is the Advocacy & Engagement Director
 - They'll have separate but related responsibilities
 - In the coming months, they'll be reaching out for connection to Board members

<p>3. Onboarding Update & Board Introductions</p>	<p><u>Member Update:</u> (Samantha)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On-boarding days 1/8 Ornela & 1/22 ● On-boarding Committee meeting weekly to develop on-boarding materials, schedule, etc with VHCB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meetings 12/13 and 1/10/24 9:30-10:30am ● A. LAOB Support & Supervision - finalizing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outreach to individuals we think would be a good fit ○ Support - 1st contact for questions ○ Supervision - Regular check-ins ● B. Points of Contact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Will be reaching out after 12/13 meeting ○ Will act as Committee Chair/Representative to show them around and help them follow regular activities - share agendas, files, etc. ● C. Content Support People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ drafting needs and topics ○ <u>Suggestion:</u> Meetings with each Nominating Org reps in January/February ● Other information about on-boarding process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitator Hand-off ○ to make appeal for Shared File Management in the transition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Vote - Does the board agree that the LAOB needs a shared file management system that Board members and staff and edit and view documents (and members of the public can view)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 7 - In favor ■ We will look further into pricing
<p>4. Community Engagement Event Follow-up</p>	<p><u>Intro:</u> Mindy</p> <p><u>Review Notes & synthesis Document</u> https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ImwcyDUvFanh4mvxFmgn4QPeyble5x8RqOy9ohF8AFo/edit -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Will</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflect on the events and information gathered ○ Hear from boards members that participated and those who weren't able to attend ○ Share ideas for follow-up ● <i>Might</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note revisions and information to be added to help complete the document ○ Document ideas for staff

- *Won't*
 - We're not wordsmithing the document in this call
 - Make a follow-up or community engagement plan

Discussion

- Feedback on events and the information gathered in the Notes & Synthesis
 - For where were there
 - Make space for full board questions & feedback
- How do you want to use this moving forward?
- How do you want to stay in touch with people who attended or do more outreach?
- Feedback on the Synthesis & Notes
 - **Mark** - Grateful to the Facilitation team for the notes that capture both events. Seeing what people are thinking and what they want, etc.
 - This 101 Community Engagement and the data is valuable. It's one thing to want to do something, another thing to do it and another level to capture the information.
 - **Samantha** - I noticed it was different from other activities put on by state agencies trying to get public feedback. Not relive trauma or provide testimony in an impersonal way. Made people more open to questions around dreaming/vision.
 - Commend facilitators and remind us as a board that this kind of format is something that can set the LAOB apart and get good engagement in the future.
 - **Dan** - Lots of information here. Didn't know what to expect when Mindy suggested hosting these events. I've seen similar events to collect community voices that are flat and fizzle
 - Our challenge is to figure out, from this significant body of information, we can make a difference with. I can see some of these have opportunities for legislative action and others may be a tough nut to crack. I have no idea how that will happen, so we need to get creative.
 - Plan to read through a dozen times to pick-up on the nuances.
 - Gratitude for information and that it's in a digestible format
 - **Brian** - how do you want to use this moving forward? Put this information into any reports to the legislature and if we go in to testify. Review this information when we make recommendations. Compare our observations with testimony we get from providers/workers. People came on their time off to come and participate.
 - How do we want to stay in touch and follow up? We've heard from people that building community is very important, it's not just access to the Earth and the social environments that coincide with ecological environments. Anything we can do to improve the social environment and connection between people and environment is important.

- We should do more events, take care to reach out to people who have already attended events and have become invested
- Be creative about other ways to do outreach and public education, for instance partner with schools, or host an event at a school
- Faith community and spiritual settings, hair salons - be creative about how to go to people where they gather. We need to keep up building community.
- **Arnold:** I appreciate what Brian said about settings because I think it's crucial. I attended the event at North Branch Nature Center. I appreciated the casual nature. Food and refreshments were provided, which relaxed the settings. There was a diversity of perspectives, resources, and experiences. Addressing the nuts and bolts of challenges that people face when trying to acquire land and homes. I appreciate the network this Board has contact with.
- **Ana:** I appreciated that the invitations were provided in different languages. It expanded my ability to do more outreach.
 - Creating a mailing list for the LAOB would be great so that members don't need to do as much as intermediaries and make sure that everyone gets invited
 - Some of the things that I've been grappling with are addressed in this report. Now we have data, other people are reiterating these needs.
- **Samantha:** when I'm thinking about the follow-up, I think it would be important to provide this synthesis back to the participants. Participants often say it would be helpful to know more of what their peers are thinking about at events. It's not just being passed on to state agencies but can be used by community members
 - I want to see this information side by side. I think we could consider if there are other ways to present this information that could be accessible for more applications.
 - Gather feedback about who wanted to attend and couldn't - gathering data about barriers
- **Xusana:** Sharing back with participants feels important so they know they were heard and so that they know it wasn't just performative. Demonstrate that we are aiming to use their feedback. Helping people make connections about what they care about, what impacts them, and how that connects with other people.
 - I want to see more youth engagement and more people who don't speak English as a first language.
- **Jess:** this is a living document and a tool to pass along to the Board and to the new Co-Directors. Great to receive feedback from folks!

Next Steps

- Create a mailing list for LAOB
- Create Summary document putting the Solutions and Barriers next to each other

BREAK - 5 mins (6:32-6:37pm)

<p>5. LAOB Introduction</p>	<p>LAOB Presentation (11/5/23 Community Engagement Event Version) - https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1fUDWW_grTkaE1yLqf5edcsWUIEzINcf_/edit#slide=id.p1 <u>Board Members:</u> Xusana</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Slides presented● Questions for LAOB
<p>6. Advisory Powers Learning Journey: Department of Housing 6:45</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Introduction - Alex Farrel, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)● Presentation -<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>Slides to be shared after the meeting and circulated to the board notes taken here to supplement reading available on DHCD Website - https://acd.vermont.gov/housing and in presentation</i>○ Staff size: 40-45 people with large number of temp employees coming in seasonally○ Department structure = four divisions<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Division for Historic Preservation<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Staffs Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs. They are searching for a new Executive Director who will be under this decision but not supervised/guided by DHCD.■ Housing Division<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Despite what people might think there are only 3 permanent employees■ Division for Community Planning & Revitalization<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Example - focused on renewing communities to be less car dependent and build in city centers■ Department of Economic Development<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Board members have to meet Income Requirements - less than 80% of median income■ Department of Tourism○ Mission Statement - <i>discussed agenda over the past few years</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Focus in the last couple legislative session has been both on municipal level, zoning and bylaws, and state level land use■ Historic land use planning statutes have been exclusive and done to prevent VT from growing or changing■ What can we do to make it more accessible?<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Sen Ram-Hinsdale led the charge on the Home Act (DHCD Community Development division collaborated on that)● Asks state to unwind these exclusionary practices● VHFA - zoning reforms and socioeconomic impacts

- Bristol, VT example: Downtown Village and Town Tax Credit Programs. Areas and neighborhoods that have been blighted and neglected
- Highlight: Better Places Program
 - Started as a small effort
 - Numbers showed in slides are 1 year old
 - Community-driven
 - Place-making examples: Parks, murals, etc.
 - Pick project, set crowd-fund projects then state matches 2 to 1 (eg. \$5,000 raised = \$10,000 from the state = \$15,000 total)
 - Turns the state grant process on its head
 - 2-3 projects within a community (not just Burlington or Montpelier taking the cake)
- Highlight: Vermont Housing Improvement Program
 - Re-investing in structures that exists and re-house people experiencing homelessness
 - Bring vacant unit back online
 - Convert spaces into residential
 - Numbers shown in slides are 1 year old - last count was 525 units at relatively low cost per unit.

Question & Answer

- **Kirsten (in chat)**: This Better Places program makes me think about comments earlier that our work is not only about space but also making communities welcoming.
- **Brian**: What kind of work might be happening around considering housing for justice-involved individuals like the state is looking at housing for unhoused folks and experiencing homelessness?
 - **Alex**: As those folks who have been through the justice system often end up in homelessness situations, they sometimes benefit from those programs. No, we probably don't have specific programs specifically for folks coming out of the justice system.
 - **Jennifer (in chat)**: Barre CJC is one of the few CJC's that have several housing units.
- **Susan**:
 - Would like to set-up a meeting about housing opportunities for people with Developmental Disabilities.
 - Question about Housing Improvement Program - Is there funding available and ability to expand it to people who house people with disabilities to do ADA improvements?
 - **Alex** - Absolutely to all of that. We do still have funding. Its administered through 5 homeownership centers across the state. Accessibility modifications is a use for this program.
 - Welcome a conversation with Susan and Kirsten

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Samantha - Expanding VHIP program to other forms of housing. This group has heard testimony on deplorable housing for farmworkers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alex - this has come up a lot. Depending on the funding source, farmworker housing can be included but gets complicated because the state is seeking to create public access, which employer housing isn't necessarily. That doesn't mean we can't build a track for people who work in particular sectors down the line. ● Ana: What eagerness or interest are you seeing in your department to work alongside the LAOB on housing access? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alex - I'm sure there would be interest. ○ Ana - I think about all the advocacy we will be doing and knowing that your department does some advocacy, it would be great to lean on a department that has ○ state house experience. ● Alex - Yes. We also like to connect groups with other people, to make connections. Please be in touch. ● Gus in the chat - There is a program at the Champlain Housing Trust to fund repair and replacement of farmworker housing also funded by VHCB. Its budget this year is about \$2million. ● Mark (during public comment): I wanted to say that I appreciate Buster for being present and consistently involved advocating for farmworker housing. I also want to thank Katherine for being here. Alex, it's good to see you again. I want to comment on the impacts of Act 250. It's obvious to some of us and not to others. For the Commission to say, "look, this is what it is," is important. You can't grow the state without bringing diversity in the state. Two books that I'm looking at, one is the Color of Law. The bill that Kesha was bringing forth last year fell short by not getting at the demographics impacted by the housing policies. I'm glad that you're dialed in and am happy that you're at the table today. I want to thank the collective wisdom of the LAOB to bring you in as a collaborator. The Richard Kemp Center did work with the Better Places Program. ● Alex (in chat): Plug for the Vermont Futures Project. I hope the Board considers inviting Kevin Chu to present. <p><i>Alex's contact information shared with LAOB Alex.Farrell@vermont.gov</i></p>
<p>7. Public Comment & Board Responses - 15 mins 6:55</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Katherine Richardson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation regarding the unhoused community - wanted to highlight that here ○ Government agencies that have developed relationships with community-based organizations with relationships with unhoused communities, so if you want to implement an inside and outside strategy. Use Government resources to reach out so that they can be at the table when you are

	<p>strategizing on how to best serve that community. It's so important. Starting the work by developing relationship with LAOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Responses</u>: Susan - thank you for coming to our meeting and hanging out this evening. I didn't have anything to respond to about the content except that I agree with everything you said, and I want to thank you for sharing and being here tonight ● Buster (Earnest Caswell): Alex, good presentation. It almost sounds like the state is understaffed or under-resourced. Community development takes a lot of work. Farmworker housing is an important area for the state for resource. We have to develop this aspect of our rural communities so farmworkers aren't living in barns like animals. That's all I have to say.
<p>8. Review & Approve Meeting Notes from <u>November 27th</u>, 2023 meeting: misspelling of Brian, corrected. Approved.</p>	
<p>9. FY25 Budget Recommendation Follow-up - 5 mins 6:50</p>	<p><u>Updates to the budget</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Revised numbers in final budget and came in under \$2M ● Adjustments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ VHCB overhead and budget c ○ Admin and Overhead distinguished between VHCB and LAOB ○ Increased salary & benefits ● Final version of FY25 Budget Overview from 12/6/2023 attached with Agenda https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jhosiOPoMLZQ9Fc1vWzrQUSj3-PeUiPjOjtOgW3_sCM/edit?usp=sharing <p><u>Education and Outreach Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Met with Governor's Office - Adam Greshin, Commissioner of Finance (under Sec Kristen Clauser) develops Governor's budget → Shared Budget Overview via email ● Education & Testimony beginning in January & Feb <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appropriations Committees - Outreach happening and meetings TBD ● Kirsten: budget looks great, can we get more time discussing it during the next meeting?
<p>10. Board Announcements</p>	<p><i>Cut due to time</i></p>
<p>● Meeting Adjourned 7:30pm</p>	

ZOOM LINK - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86451326173>

Meeting ID: 864 5132 6173

DOCUMENTS

- Community Engagement Event Notes & Synthesis -
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ImwcyDUvFanh4mvxFmgn4QPeyble5x8RqOy9ohF8AFo/edit>
- Final version of FY25 Budget Overview -
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jhosjOPoMLZQ9Fc1vWzrQUSj3-PeUiPjOjtOgW3_sCM/edit
- LAOB Presentation (11/5/23 Community Engagement Event Version) -
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1fUDWW_grTkaE1yLqf5edcsWUIEzINcf_/edit#slide=id.p1