

Land Access and Opportunity Board Meeting
Mar. 20, 2023
Meeting Facilitator: Brian Cina

Meeting Notes Approved April 3, 2023

Facilitator Brian Cina convened the March 20, 2023 meeting of the LAOB at 5:30 pm: Board members introduced themselves on behalf of appointing authorities. The meeting adjourned at 7:08 pm.

Board Members Present:

Brian Cina, NASW; Kirsten Murphy, Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council; Xusana Davis, Office of Racial Equity; Jess Laporte, Vermont Every Town Project; Pasifique Nsengiyumva, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants; Samantha Langevin, Vermont RELEAF Collective; Pastor Arnold Thomas, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance; Rev. Mark Hughes, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance (*Alternate*); Ashley Devereaux NASW (*Alternate*)

Board Members Not Present:

Rich Holschuh, Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs; Naomi Moody, NAACP; Karim Chapman, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors; Raheemah Madany, Pride Center of Vermont;

VHCB Staff/ LAOB consultants present:

Trey Martin, Bonnie Woodford, Gus Seelig, Francis Sharpstene; Robert Appel, attorney to the Board

Members of the Public present

Malcolm Greene, Shane Rogers, Mindy Blank, Miha Longmore, Abbey Willard, Ana Mejia, Buster Caswell, Isaac Owolu, Jen Daniels

1. Review Meeting Notes from March 6, 2023 meeting – 5 minutes (Brian Cina and VHCB to facilitate)
2. Public Comment and Introduction of Guests – 10 minutes (Brian Cina to facilitate)

Ana Mejia expressed support for Jess Laporte & Natanya Vanderlaan's facilitator application.

Buster Caswell expressed the importance of farmworkers and farmworker housing.

Mindy Blank & Shane Rogers provided an update on the Action Circles advocacy training being offered to LAOB members next Monday, March 27. They also reminded

Board members about the Rural Vermont / NOFA advocacy day scheduled for Thursday, 3/23/23.

3. Legislative Process Updates – 30 minutes

a. The Legislative Advocacy Working group provided an update for the March 23 Testimony in Senate Economic Development

The opportunity to testify is Thursday the 23rd 10:00-10:45AM. Testimony in House Agriculture Food Resiliency & Forestry Committee is 10:45-12:00.

Jess Laporte, Pastor Thomas, Robert Appel, and Gus Seelig will be testifying. The goal of this testimony is to ask the committee for a letter in support of the LAOB to the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

Malcolm Greene asked: if the ask is for four years of funding in one ask, what are the safe guards that in a few years this work will fizzle?

Jess responded that this is a capacity building budget, the budget will change over the next few years as far as what is funded with this initial award. Jess gave an overview of the current budget. This ask doesn't mean that the Board won't be going back next year to request a program budget.

Jess noted it would be important to do some written testimony.

Robert stated that staff is really necessary to start design programming as the Board alone will not have the capacity.

Kirsten inquired about the procedure for communicating with the legislature for updates.

Gus shared that there is a lot of education that will need to be done in the Senate since the Board has not testified in the Senate yet.

Rev Mark expressed that it would be good to provide some background to senate members of what has happened over the past few years of the LAOB being created as there are new members.

Pacifique shared that he doesn't have a lot of time to testify but is open to give feedback on access to housing for refugees and immigrants.

Samantha reiterated the desire to have community testimony listening sessions or something similar.

b. Jess Laporte provided an invitation to the March 23 NOFA-VT/Rural VT Day

Jess, Pastor Thomas and Kirsten Murphy will be testifying in the Senate Agriculture committee also on Thursday morning. Jess also asked if others would be willing to join the Board members for this event.

- c. Bonnie Woodford (VHCB), Mindy Blank & Shane Rogers (Seeding Power) invited Board members and 1-2 folks from their appointing organizations to the March 27, 2023 Action Circles Training on testifying to the House and Senate.

4. Additional Public Comment

Shane Rogers provided these links to the Budget memoranda sent in support of the LAOB budget request by [House General](#) and [House Agriculture](#).

Brian Cina shared that one of his hopes for the Board will participate in bill review and legislative policy development.

Jen Daniels asked if the Board has testified or is aware on the House Bill 276 the rental registry bill.

Buster Caswell shared his appreciation for the Board listening to the public respectfully. He added how important it is to speak to those in power at the Statehouse, including opportunities for public participation

5. Board Facilitator Hiring Update

Jess Laporte recused herself from the Facilitator hiring executive session as she is an applicant for the position.

Kirsten Murphey made a motion to move into executive session for the purpose of the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee at 6:37

Board vote: Yes- 7; No – 0

The board came out of executive session at 7:07 p.m.

Brian Cina shared that the Board will be adopting a formal conflict of interest policy before making a final hiring decision. This will be brought to the April 3rd meeting to review and approve before moving forward.

6. Brian Cina adjourned the meeting at 7:08 p.m.