

Land Access and Opportunity Board Meeting
April 17, 2023, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Draft Meeting Notes

Meeting Facilitator: Pacifique Nsengiyumva

Pacifique Nsengiyumva convened the April 17, 2023 meeting of the LAOB at 5:30 pm: brief introductions and acknowledgement of who the active representative is from each appointing authority. The meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Board Members Present:

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

Board Members Not Present:

Rich Holschuh, Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs; Britaney Watson, NAACP; Vermont Psychiatric Survivors

VHCB Staff/ LAOB consultants present:

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

Members of the Public present

Buster Caswell, Malcolm Greene, Mindy Blank, Shane Rogers, Christine Hughes, Ana Mejia

Agenda

1. Public Comment

Christine Hughes, Director of Richard Kemp Center, introduced herself to the Board.

2. The Board reviewed the meeting notes from the April 3, 2023 meeting, no comments or corrections were made by the board and were accepted. Members of the Board are welcome to send Bonnie or Trey any recommended changes.

3. Legislative Process Updates and Opportunities

- a. Pacifique and Rev. Hughes gave an update on the meeting they had with Senate Appropriations committee and leadership. Pro Tem Baruth was supportive of the Board. Trey provided a reminder from Gus Seelig on the importance of continuing to advocate over the next few weeks and to reach out to Senators from the Senate

Economic Development and Senate Appropriations committees.

Robert Appel told the Board that he has a close relationship with Senate Appropriations Chair Senator Kitchell and offered to connect with her about the LAOB. He checked with the Board to see how they would feel about that as he is paid by the Board. Jess shared that it would be helpful for Robert connect Senator Kitchell to Board members. Kirsten Murphy also offered to reach out to Senator Kithcell.

Trey recommended that as Senator Ram-Hinsdale missed the testimony to reach out and ensure her committee continues to provide support for the LAOB.

Kirsten shared that another focus for her is the Health Equity Advisory Committee and will be circulating some information to Board members.

- b. Shane Rogers & Mindy Blank from Seeding Power gave an update to the Board on their testimony and outreach. They have collected and submitted over 60 individuals' testimony to Senator kitchell and Pro Tem Baruth.
- c. Farmworker housing and advocacy

Buster Caswell provided an appeal to the Board to consider options for how to move forward with advocacy related to farmworker housing, to build on successes of ongoing programs. Currently, there is no natural coalition or advocacy group that is explicitly focused on farmworker housing, even though there are many groups who are interested in the success of advocacy on this issue. Question from Buster: can the LAOB consider how to add their voices to farmworker housing advocacy. Samantha Langevin noted that there is an existing dialogue among groups working on this issue, but it is critical to make sure these important conversations continue.

Trey noted that he will follow up regarding opportunities related to the Urban and Community Forest Program and H.126 – the Biodiversity bill.

4. LAOB Conflict of Interest Policy

Samantha Langevin noted that there were still some open questions regarding the Board's COI policy. In particular, there were two errors in the document. Robert will correct and share that updated version.

The Board agreed that it has accepted, by unanimous consent, the COI, as of 4/17/23

5. Public Comment

Ana Mejia commented on the incredible work and testimony of Seeding Power, and asked whether and how the advocacy work can be better supported by State agencies like VHCB and VHFA. Ana noted that her experience providing testimony did not feel supported, nor did she feel heard by the Senate committee she testified before. Finally, she asked LAOB if they would help to better understand the money being administered by Vermont Land Trust for BIPOC Land Access.

Buster Caswell agreed and seconded the important points made by Ana Mejia.

Samantha Langevin noted that this discussion speaks to the important role of the LAOB, once the appropriations process has ended, to continue to be conduits of information for the constituencies LAOB members represent.

Ana also added how important it will be to hear and amplify the voices of those who are not normally able to participate in public processes.

Rep. Brian Cina also spoke to validate the important notes made by Ana. He agreed that there are important and unacceptable gaps in public process with both the General Assembly and Executive Branch.

6. Board Facilitator Hiring

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

Rev Hughes made a motion for the board to enter into executive session in order to discuss the Facilitator position hiring at 6:43 PM; Samantha seconded the motion.

The Board came out of executive session at 7:01 PM

Samantha Langevin made a motion to hire Community Resilience Organizations for the Facilitator position. Kirsten Murphy seconded

The board agreed by consensus to hire Community Resilience Organizations for the Facilitator position.

Meeting Adjourned by Pacifique Nsengiyumva at 7:03 PM