

# Land Access and Opportunity Board Meeting

**Nov 27, 2023 , 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.**

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

Attendee	Present	Not Present
<b>Board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Arnold Thomas, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance</li> <li>● Samantha Langevin, VT RELEAF Collective</li> <li>● Ana Mejia, Vermont Every Town Project</li> <li>● Dan Coutu, VT Commission on Native American Affairs</li> <li>● Susan Aranoff, Vermont DDC</li> <li>● Brian Cina, National Association of Social Workers</li> <li>● Britaney Watson, NAACP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pacifique Nsengiyumva, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)</li> <li>● Xusana Davis, Office of Racial Equity</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>● Kirsten Murphy, Vermont DDC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jennifer Morton-Dow, VT Releaf Collective</li> <li>● Mark Hughes, VRJA</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> Will Lambeck, Jen Daniels, Beverly Little Thunder, Buster Caswell,  <u>Guests:</u> Gus Seilig, VHCB; Trey Martin, VHCB  <u>Presenters:</u> Nicole Dubuque and Ari Rockland-Miller, Agency of Agriculture, Farm and Markets</p>	

## Agenda

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Natanya V. to convene the November 13th, 2023 virtual meeting of the LAOB at 5:30 pm</b> - 15 mins             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Welcome, Facilitator Team Introductions, and overview of meeting</li> <li>b. Touchstones</li> <li>c. Board members and alternates to introduce themselves - Name, Identifiers, Organization you are representing</li> <li>d. Introduction/Welcome of Presenters</li> </ol> </li> </ol> |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <b>Review &amp; Approve Meeting Notes from <a href="#">October 30th</a> and <a href="#">November 13th</a>, 2023 meeting</b> - 5 mins</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

<p>3. LAOB Introduction</p>	<p>LAOB Presentation (11/5/23 Community Engagement Event Version) - <a href="https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1fUDWW_grTkaE1yLqf5edcsWUIEzINcf_/edit#slide=id.p1">https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1fUDWW_grTkaE1yLqf5edcsWUIEzINcf_/edit#slide=id.p1</a></p> <p><u>Board Members:</u> Dan &amp; Brian</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Slides presented</li> <li>● Brian 3-4</li> <li>● Dan 5-10</li> <li>● Questions for LAOB - <i>None</i></li> </ul>
<p>4. Advisory Powers Learning Journey: Agency of Agriculture, Farm and Markets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jess Intro of Guests from VAAFAM</li> <li>● <b>Presentation for approx 20-30 mins</b> - <i>Presentation from VAAFAM will be available to Board Members via email. They were not circulated ahead of the meeting but shared with the board as the presentation was ending.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Question &amp; Answer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Brian</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 1) Mitigation Programs people who own land and are farmers can use to do an assessment related to their land use. If someone purchased a property with the vision of collective land use or farming, can they access this service? Are there fees?           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ari</b> - ANR Natural Resources Atlas, NRCS Websurvey - both are open to the public and available to use but does involve some learning curve. Can learn about soil rating or other land features.</li> <li>■ <b>Brian</b> - In the future LAOB could provide technical assistance</li> <li>■ <b>Ari</b> - I am a resource for that and work directly with farmers and developers (from consultants to members of the public) and we help people across the spectrum understand and use tools. Can reach out to <a href="mailto:Ari.Rockland-miller@vermont.gov">Ari.Rockland-miller@vermont.gov</a> and Ari does speak Spanish</li> <li>■ <b>Nicole</b> - Adding that UVM Extension also has</li> <li>■ <b>Brian</b> - a consistent barrier is not knowing how to access. It's great you offer support</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ 2) Is AAFM exploring year around production in Vermont?           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Nicole</b> - Grants for innovation and expanding capacity for indoor growing.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Samantha:</b> On-site Mitigation talks about high acreage of land considered. What is the definition of active production and what % of the land needs to meet that?       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Ari</b> - More of a VHCB question as they set policy on that.</li> <li>○ <b>Gus</b> - Funds come by district and need to be used in that district. Look for land that will be accessible and productive for someone. Spend to help support a variety of producers to grow and raise food. Vegetable may need a small acreage but land</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- **Samantha** - Curious, when you say high acreage, who is being left out? Does it favor large-scale farms?
- **Gus** - Goes more to the productivity of the soils. No reason why we couldn't help with conserving a small parcel that works for their scale of operation. We've done farms that are as little as 30 acres and may have done parcels smaller than that
- **Trey** - many pathways to participation in that - different backgrounds and people getting into farming. Size varies, not primary criteria. Important to spend \$\$ per acre wisely and quality of soils being protected. Quality of soils are in the forefront. Try to match other funds to this program as well to be more comprehensive - general funds or other programs like USDA. Also, look into if the person selling the farm is willing to lower the cost by offering lower than appraised value. Looking at vision and operating plan. 12-16 farm projects per year, different locations, small and large parcels, some where productive portion is small and surrounded by rivers, wetland, forests, etc.
- **Ana** - Agricultural Development Division - I see grantmaking and marketing. Knowing we're looking to stand up grant making programs. What data do you have related to the LAOB objectives around barriers or access? Do you have data? Is there disproportionate access? Can you see if/when you are perpetuating inequities.
  - Context - I work on home ownership and we seek to make grants stackable and aligning eligibility so people can access more funding through multiple sources.
  - **Nicole** - Yes, the division is collecting data. You'll see in one of our survey responses, in order to get more robust data around people applying and who receives. Personal information about the applicant is voluntary so it's . Welcome any tips folks have.
    - Context - this is something we've reached out to Xusana's office for support. Will go back to Abby and her team, particularly Drew Watson, to ask more and to put you in contact.
- **Ana** - In Housing there's a policy of 'affirmatively marketing fair housing' is there something similar with agriculture to reach out to historically marginalized communities. With Marketing, because of how it's structured is it only those who already own land and operate a farm? Or those starting a farm or currently a farmworker?
  - **Nicole** - Not sure, I believe they are working in a direction of making it more inclusive in terms of outreach or actual use.
    - Stackability is hard to answer and can get you in touch with someone. Most of our grants are so specific - eg. maple. But if you are not also doing something relevant to another grant, say produce, then no there aren't grants available.

- **Buster (public)** - Inspector comes to see the farm, check on animals and where they live but do not inspect farmworker housing. Needs to be a farmworker housing committee. There are 100s of farmworker housing across the state. There is a farmworker housing stakeholder meeting this week.
  - **Nicole** - Want to respond as this is close to my heart.
    - Information - Department of Labor is doing farmworker housing inspections and only specifically H2A housing
    - Will be at the 12/1 meeting of the coalition
- **Brian in the chat** - For the minutes, I heard two current strengths at AOA for us to remember while planning future programs, etc...
  - 1. Grants for diversification of land use (which can include year round production)
  - 2. Support from current AOA staff with navigation of processes to access services of the Agency
  - Ideas for future discussion: development of mentorship network with AOA to build community capacity and reduce workload on AOA staff, ways to tie grants together to encourage diverse use of agricultural and forest lands by groups historically marginalized from the opportunity
- **Prompt** - additional ideas/vision for collaboration coming from this
  - **Brian** - As we move into a phase of granting funds, how can we be in connection with VAAFMM to stack and support. If there's a VHFA down payment assistance, VHCB land conservation and VAAFMM has a farming investment grant to bring these together.
    - Can expand overtime what is offered for people who have been disenfranchised from home and land ownership?
    - Imagine if one day there were farms run by former migrant farmworkers cooperatively owned, with quality housing and offered community centers
  - **Ana** - Are there ways to leverage the power of the voices of state agencies to advocate for quality farmworker housing - not issuing permits or grants to farms without quality farmworker housing and wages. How can we leverage collective power? Limit capacity to sell products when in violation.
  - **Samantha** - Potential to explore ways to understand Act 250 mitigation. Larger disconnect between programs and services available and how we communicate to those who need them the most.
    - *Personal* - when purchasing land used the USGIS maps and when we talked to other farmers there were many who didn't know it existed.

**BREAK** - 5 mins from 6:45-6:50pm

## 5. Public Comment & Board Responses

- *Earnest in the Chat* shared an email from Champlain Housing Trust (See below)
- *Jen Daniels in the chat* - Many thanks for your time! I'd like to second what Samantha Langevin shared about her point that the presentation was strong but that it also highlights how access and legibility of the information could be a focus of the LAOB for those that need it the most. Thank you as always for your ongoing work. Take good care - Jen
- **Will Lambeck, Migrant Justice** - Following the conversation and have a lot to share about farmworker housing and lack of state regulation. Main issue shared thanks to recommendation from Brian. Joined by Marita C.
  - Working on the issue of access to housing for immigrant families in Vermont. Many undocumented Vermonters are living in employer provided housing as the population is focused on dairy work. AS migrant workers move into other sectors they are often restricted to finding work with housing. Can't get housing on open market - when applying for an apartment they are asking for SSN. There are states and municipalities who have limited this practice and we hop there will be a Senate bill related to this. Law would remove the landlord ability to ask for SSN and include immigration status in protected classes. This would allow migrants to seek employment in other sectors, help them find adequate housing and allow more job opportunities when employment isn't linked to housing can better advocate.
  - **Marita** - Thank you for giving us time to share. Many immigrants are moving to VT with their families. If they don't have someone to sign on the lease for SSN then people are living confined with their families in cramped conditions with many other people. Many are asylum seekers but don't have SSN yet it's difficult to get a place to rent. We cannot deny there are more immigrants in VT and a housing crisis. It's important for them to have better access to housing.
  - **Will** - has support of VT Human Rights Commission, CVOEO and others and would hope to have LAOB support as well.
    - **Samantha** - strongly see the connection to our work. Happy to also link into the VT REleaf Collective. Everyone on this board can see this as an example that we use our existing networks that have overlap with this issue and how to get them in the know about it as well.
    - **Brian** - second Samantha - invited you because I see the intersection.
- **Buster** - ACORN, Addison County Re-localization Network is having an event tomorrow. Could be helpful to have folks from that org to join these conversations as they are stakeholders as well.
  - *Samantha in the chat*
    - For our facilitators. can we flag this in the notes to discuss with the next onboarding committee meeting? Seems like something timely and important to put on the radar of our new staff
    - Will and Marita, if you need intros to ACORN, let me know, I can connect you

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Susan</b> - Is Addison Allies the same? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Samantha - Same county different organizations</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ <b>Brian</b> - seeing this live connection making. Can a sub-committee take on mapping grassroots organizations around the state that intersect with our work.</li> <li>○ <b>Brain in the chat</b> - You can submit a formal letter to the Board asking us to consider your policy changes when we make our recommendations</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. FY25 Budget Recommendation Follow-up</b></p>	<p><u>Education and Outreach follow-up</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1) Key Contacts for meetings before January <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A) Governor’s Office - Adam Greshin, Commissioner of Finance (under Sec Kristen Clauser) developes Governor’s budget - <b>contact made &amp; scheduling call</b></li> <li>○ B) Appropriations Committees - <b>Jennifer will send introduction and request for a meeting after 12/1</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>● 2) Education &amp; Testimony - beginning in January &amp; Feb <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ House General and Housing Affairs - Rep Tom Stevens</li> <li>○ Senate Economic Development - Rep Ram-Hinsdale</li> <li>○ House &amp; Senate Ag</li> <li>○ Other committees?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● 3) Other Updates: There are some revisions to the budget pending the Budget Template from VHCB and updates to the formulas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Coming in a bit under \$2M Due to budget corrections and Updates from VHCB</li> <li>○ Goals and purpose of funds in the Budget remain the same - Will follow up with some fine tuning of numbers</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <u>Questions &amp; Discussion</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gus - Testimonies taken in the housing community to recommend support of budget to some amount <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Chair Stevens and Romensdale and their respective committees will be integral connection</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Jess - Yes, let’s clarify those intros and connections</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Onboarding Update</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Member Update: Susan</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Susan</b> - Do we need to move into the Executive Session?</li> <li>○ <b>Brian</b> - if naming names, terms and negotiations then yes, but if we can do it without then we don’t need to.</li> <li>○ <b>Susan</b> - We’re mid process so in the interest of time, to say without naming names and terms, where we’re at. We have made offers to two candidates vote done by the board, we’ve received to</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

acceptances. Working through start times. Will extend offers to them to join existing LAOB meetings and committees advance of their full start dates

- **Jess** - Deferring to the board if they want more details and want to go into Executive Session. For context, can you share start dates de-identified for clarity
- **Susan** - January 8th and other one was later in January but they are trying to meet that so they can coalesce together.
- **Samantha** - Thanks for the general summary Susan. A part of the On-boarding committee is mapping out what they need to know and also who they need to know. Want to make sure they're set-up with good connections. This is for the LAOB members, VHCB folks and other collaborators.
- **Jess** - Any questions or comments from the board? Including Executive Session?
  - *No requests for Executive Session*
- **Ana** - what is the public announcement contingent upon? Is it when salaries are negotiated? Start date?
  - **Susan** - Over when it's over, once we have signed contracts. Inform them their position will be public.
  - **Kirsten in the chat** - Press release is common
  - **Brian** - We entrusted the on-boarding committee so don't need details. In terms of letting the public know, as soon as possible. Also plan and collaborate with new staff to plan public announcements.
- **Jess** - Thank you all and we can clarify with Francis from VHCB to know when we can make an announcement

#### Board Administration and Timelines

- **Jess** - Noting the start dates for candidates and gap, I want to invite the on-boarding committee to make a recommendation related to the Facilitation team
- **Susan** - Concerned about a gap between Facilitation team's requested end date of 12/15 and for Staff to have a strong start and overlap with Natanya and Jess based on their timelines. Want to ask Jess and Natanya to continue involvement in the on-boarding process past 12/15 as much as possible.
  - **Brian** - we also need to make a plan to get through the end of year holidays and get through on-boarding. Want to make sure new staff, board members and facilitators have time at the end of the year. *What would be needed and what is recommended?*
- **Jess** - Capacity and Availability to support the board beyond 12/15. We're experiencing and learning the gap alongside you all so we've been in conversation to know what we can offer to the board. What we've discussed was a more reasonable extension.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Original extension was “through ob-boarding” and then we came back to the board to make 12/15 the end date. Can be available through the 3rd week of Jan.</li> <li>■ What we’d like to provide is honing our role to facilitate the full board meetings. Pull back our involvement in external communications and coordination after 12/15. Focus on board meetings from then to the of the January (dates to be discussed). Also need to hone our support of sub-committees as well. Don’t want to stop any sub-committees but may not be able to drive projects, external communications.</li> <li>■ If we stay through the the 26th of January we would have around 3 weeks of overlap with the new staff beginning on 1/8</li> <li>■ Can jump into dates, but curious how that lands?</li> <li>○ <b>P. Arnold</b> - Appreciate you offer to stay to 1/26 and I think the end of January should be the cutoff time. I support the idea and overlap for new staff and become comfortable with support from the facilitator team. It’s important for them to know what has come before and where we’re doing. I’m very much in support of the idea.</li> <li>○ <b>Samantha</b> - Agree with Arnold. <i>What are the pieces that can be paused from the 15th through new staff ready to go? Versus what are the pieces that need to continue.</i> No one understands the fullness of what you do between meetings, so helpful to know that someone (baord member) will need to pay attention to or follow-up on so we can delegate those things out. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Jess</b> - Not going to answer in full, but thank you and one main thing we are going to practice is bringing some of that transparency particularly into the subcommittees. Something we’re trying to orient VHCB to is what group or who is working on the piece where you may have recommendations or information for you. We will continue to identify who is doing what and how to be in touch. Will work on that with sub-committees and we will work on consolidating that information as well.</li> <li>■ There are also a lot of emails - and while we will respond it may take some time.</li> <li>■ Apart of our capacity is that we each have new and different commitments and might not catch email at the end of the day for something the very next day.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Scheduling Check-in: Preparation for End of Year &amp; Start of 2024</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Sub-Committees:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Advisory Powers - suggested meeting times 12/5, 12/12 and 1/16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ will meet 3 times before I wrap up.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ On-boarding - 11/30, 12/6, 12/13, then 1/10 and 1/17</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <u>Suggested Meeting Dates:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 12/18 (1.5hrs) - recommended (Brian, Arnold, Susan, and Samantha affirm this date) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Temperature check on 12/18 meeting (Jess)</b>- All board members present are in agreement</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Will also check-in via email with board members not here <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jan 8th (1.5hrs) - Welcoming 1 maybe 2 new staff members</li> <li>○ Jan 22nd - last Facilitator meeting</li> <li>○ Only 2 full board meeting with new staff but in the weeks of overlap we would continue to be a part of on-boarding</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Susan</b> - Would be wonderful to have an in person meeting with new staff to meet us in January.</li> <li>● <b>Jess</b> - We could consider that. However, not sure Natanya and I will have capacity so it may depend on the boards' capacity to plan an in-person meeting.</li> </ul>
<p>9. <b>Board Announcements</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Susan</b> - please try to support the businesses that are in support of accessible events and services.</li> <li>● <b>Jess</b> - Community Engagement Event Report - Working Draft shared to be discussed 12/11</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Meeting Adjourned 7:35pm</b></li> </ul>	

## APPENDIX

Email shared by Buster Caswell in the Chat

*Hello all –*

*Please join the Champlain Housing Trust and University of Vermont for an update on the Farmworker Housing Repair Program on December 1st from 10 to 11:15 AM. A Teams invitation and agenda will be sent out shortly.*

*With funding from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the Champlain Housing Trust with assistance from the University of Vermont, has been implementing a farmworker housing repair program for the past two years. This program has just received a third round of funding to expand this initiative. At the meeting on December 1st we'll share progress on the program with stakeholders, outline plans for the third round of funding, and discuss changes being considered. We're also like to hear your questions, feedback and ideas and ideas as we move forward.*

*If there are additional participants who should be invited to attend, please let me know.*

*Daniel Baker, PhD*

*Community & International Development*

*Dept of Community Development & Applied Economics*

*UVM Extension AgBiz Pr*