

Land Access and Opportunity Board Meeting

Aug 28, 2023 , 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

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

Guests: Robert Appel, Attorney

Attendee	Present	Not Present
Board	<p>In-person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Susan Aranoff, Vermont DDC ● Samantha Langevin, VT RELEAF Collective ● Arnold Thomas, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance (VRJA) <p>Remote</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Xusana Davis, Office of Racial Equity ● Pacifique Nsengiyumva, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) ● Dan Coutu, VT Commission on Native American Affairs (VCNAA) ● Britaney Watson, NAACP ● Shingai Kagunda, Vermont Every Town Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brian Cina, National Association of Social Workers (NASW) ● Raheemah Madany, Pride Center of Vermont ● <i>Vermont Psychiatric Survivors (no active board member)</i>
Board Alternates	<p>In-person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <p>Remote</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jennifer Morton-Dow, VT Releaf Collective ● Kirsten Murphy, Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ana Mejia, NAACP ● Mark Hughes, VRJA ● Rich Holschuh, VCNAA ● Kenya Lazuli, Vermont Every Town Project ● Ashley Devereaux, NASW
Guests & Public	<p><u>Public</u>: Andrew Graham, Rebecca Sanborn-Stone</p> <p><u>Guests</u>: Gus Seelig & Trey Martin</p>	

Map Activity while participants are arriving and eating

- Map with push pins or sticky notes
- Question: What public lands are you familiar with in VT ? (initial pre-meeting ice breaker)

<p>1. Jessica L. to convene the August 28th, 2023 hybrid meeting of the LAOB at 5:30pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Welcome, Facilitator Team Introductions, and overview of meeting b. Board members and alternates to introduce themselves - Name, Identifiers, Organization you are representing c. Invite in-person guests and public to introduce themselves 	
<p>2. Review & Approve Meeting Notes from August 21st, 2023 meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No comment - approved
<p>3. Land Access Discussion</p>	<p>Intro</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jess - (Map activity) What is our awareness as a board around where public lands are? As a board how can we be promoting more equitable access to land and home ownership? What are big shake ups that will lead to more home and land ownership in our state? ● Break-up into in-person and online groups <p>Online conversation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Xusana - Real shakeups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1. Concept of who is a "real Vermonter" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Can redistribute something that wasn't ours from the beginning indigeneity ○ 2. Encouraging/allowing seniors to downsize <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Weird pressure for starter homes - pressure for appropriate housing could be alleviated if this were addressed ○ 3. Wage equity & generational adjustment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Real dollar value doesn't add up ● Jennifer - Getting rid of the need for "Good Credit". Credit History is relatively new, the '80s maybe? It really pushes large swaths of renters out of the market. ● Dan - Enormous amount required as a downpayment for property. People just starting now can't do that. ● Pacifique - Capstone - there's housing and lack of housing in VT. Seasonal and second homes that are not occupied and are not available to the public - how can we reduce the number of homes that are empty? ● Kirsten - Disability community - assumption of who can own things - complexity of navigating housing. VT doesn't have an entity to help people navigate the complex process of housing. With disabilities you often fork over social security as well as give your money to a caregiver with no prospect of building equity.

- **Trey** - Not to mention the need for more money for first time homeowner programs, job training, and navigators support within the housing and land access sectors. Increase and implement support like free income for housing and successful implementation of the child care bill. Rental subsidies need more state dollars on top of federal programs; parental and family leave is part of this; and support for loan forgiveness and funding to help Vermont children access higher education.
- **Pacifique** - Vermont needs to welcome new people - we want them to settle, work, etc., but we are not putting structures in place for these people to lead stable lives. If you want to motivate people to stay, you need to help them put roots down. Having a stable home is crucial to everything. Homes available are not reasonable for people just starting their lives in this country.
- **Shinghai** - Also invest in having systems in place for people of color moving into the state.
- **Pacifique** - to be considered - Muslim brothers and sisters have different perspectives on lending that can be a significant barrier.
- **Pacifique** - the interest rates are now way higher than ever and it's very unaffordable for many. What does subsidized housing look like for the long-term? Some people are in rental housing for 15+ years, but in the long-term there's no invested value being built for these families. What are we trying to develop and where is the equity for these cases?
- **Jennifer** - People that have farms that are aging but don't have people to take the farm over.
- **Dan** - I really like Rev Arnold's point. If the LAOB could craft a model for either ourselves or perhaps any non-profit, to acquire property and then effectively manage a program of property ownership where the non-profit has initial ownership of the property and then the individuals can obtain ownership without having to use the conventional mortgage process.
- **Xusana** - To Susan's point about the money following people living with disabilities, these systems are really interconnected. Several of the assistance programs for people living with disabilities are income-based, and so this community is constantly pitted against other people through conversations like getting rid of tipped wages because if your sub-minimum wage goes up, you won't qualify for your programs anymore (benefits cliff)... so now, economic justice and disability justice get unfairly pitted against each other and the only winners of that game are the corporations and the elected officials they buy.
- **Dan** - The benefits cliff also acts as a roadblock to continuous economic growth for individuals and families.

In-person - including guests and public

- What do we think of as public lands?
- **Arnold** - Forests, conserved land atlas, municipally-owned land that's open to the public

- **Gus** - About 1500 homes in the state owned in part by owner, part of land trust (public-private ownership)
- **Samantha** - Every town has a town green - is that considered public property? Access doesn't necessarily mean legally allowed to be there but there are other factors like whether or not you feel safe or welcome in a space.
- **Susan** - something people don't appreciate is that folks with disabilities may qualify for benefits. Private individuals can get money to house people with disabilities. The state ends up with temporary housing and folks with disabilities having their benefits absorbed. However, we don't pay family members to support their family - we should be redirecting benefits to families. I'd like to see more home ownership models, low down payments, benefits could go towards paying a mortgage.
- **Samantha** - Paying property tax on behalf of BIPOC is one mechanism to support BIPOC home/land ownership.
- **Pacifique** - a barrier is that many people can't take out loans. Instead, we need individuals and other mechanisms for lending them money and helping them build a house.
- **Jennifer** - requiring folks to have a high credit score is a massive barrier. You can rent and pay more than you would for a mortgage but don't qualify for loans. Taking over farms for farmers that are phasing out.
- **Rebecca** - faith communities giving an acre, sometimes more.
- **Mindy** - How might large entities with a lot of land partition off some of that for housing or land access needs? What if there are spaces that are common for community led development? Commons. Donations of land.
- **Arnold** - individual in southern VT who wanted to donate 60 acres to an entity like the LAOB. Can individuals bequeath their properties to the LAOB or other similar entities?
- **Susan** - how can folks with disabilities develop equity?
- **Pacifique** - long-term subsidized housing, in the long-term, what is the benefit to the family? How do they benefit from the money they're paying and how can that feed into building equity?
- **Jess** - what can we do to make more available land accessible? Interplay between conserving land for environmental benefits and intersecting benefits for humans. What does equitable access to programs toward home ownership look like? We're looking at fine-tuning and redesigning what's already accessible land. How do we make the end beneficiary of that more equitable? Piece of homework: in the advisory sub-committee, we were looking at the agencies we'll be reaching out to and asking questions of them. Look at notes from that sub-committee meeting (next meeting Sept 5, 11:00am).

<p>4. Public Comment & Board Responses - 15 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Andrew Graham - how can equity built stay in that community? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dan - utilizing land for growing food is really important. ○ Gus - "Arch of Justice" is a great film to watch. Shared appreciation in home ownership is a mechanism. The benefits cliff also acts as a roadblock to continuous economic growth of individuals and families. ○ How do we recycle the subsidy from one generation to the next and how do we maintain that benefit over time? ○ Samantha - How do we allow the town to build equity? Farmers don't want to conserve as it doesn't always add up. How do we show true or greater value for land that is conserved or agricultural? ○ Xusana - you can't eat your money when the land dries up. Tell that to California or land underwater. Why are we doing so much commodifying? I believe this will be a very different conversation in decades to come. No farms no food. It's amazing to me that we can be where we are climate wise and still debating the value of a parcel. ● Rebecca Sanborn-Stone - Designation 2050 (vtdesignation2050.org) - Vermont's State Designation Programs include nearly 260 municipalities and offer benefits like tax credits, grant funding, and regulatory relief. They help communities revitalize downtowns, build housing, restore historic buildings, create bikeable and walkable streets, and more. Far more benefits for municipalities than individuals, though we're in the thick of a redesign process. Statewide Design Summit on Sept 12.
<p>5. Hiring Process Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Member update - Samantha & Dan b. Discussion c. <u>Decision Points</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Involvement of Board in Hiring Committee process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jess - Hiring Process Update - Looking for input from the board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Documents: Job descriptions & Hiring Process ● Samantha - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Will: discuss the level of autonomy and ability Hiring Committee will have; discuss the points and ways that the LAOB wants to be informed and involved in some key steps in the hiring process, introduce the need for additional members of the Hiring Committee ○ Might: get commitments for additional members of hiring committee/process ○ Won't: wordsmith document or reframe VCHB's role as that has been discussed ● Samantha - What information do you want from the Hiring Committee? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do we have authority to discern what we share back to the board / building confidence with the board in what the committee is doing? Do people have specific methods in sharing communication they might like to propose ● Dan - mapping out next steps - good definitions of job descriptions, now looking at logistics of interviews and logistics of extending a hiring offer. (See pg 3 where it says First Interview.) Posting

	<p>internally then externally (with support from VHCB). Ideas still welcome to maximize broad coverage of posting job descriptions. Intent is to request a deadline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jess - <i>Pause for decision point</i> - Is the board comfortable with the Hiring Committee taking the decision point on continuing with the hiring process application submission or starting interviews, for example? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Britaney - Board approval should be made in relation to process, Hiring Committee should not have to circle back to the board. I worry that circling back to the board might delay the hiring committee process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ If we moved with the two applications and set up interviews, are we able to maintain the posting? ○ Samantha - There's a lot of flexibility as long as we maintain VHCB standards, we could for example maintain a rolling or fixed deadline. ○ Gus - I wouldn't recommend extending for one week and you may better benefit from a rolling process - I think we want to be as flexible as possible. I'm also a bit confused about two job descriptions for two candidates but you may get great responses for only one. Would suggest one posting. Applications preferred at — but will be opened till filled. ● Jess - <i>How autonomous can the hiring sub-committee be?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Samantha - Larger questions - does the board feel confident with giving the Hiring Committee autonomy to make some decisions without circling back to the Board at all decision points? ○ Susan - How many people are on the Hiring Committee? ○ Arnold - I approve the Hiring Committee having that autonomy and relaying communications to the board - let's entrust the Hiring Committee with autonomy to inform the board at large. ○ Jess - Any other comment? Any other members available? ○ Samantha - We really need Hiring Committee members for processing applications and conducting interviews. ○ Jess - We would be processing applications the third week in September. ○ Shinghai, Britney, Jennifer, and Susan are maybe willing to join the Hiring Committee. <p><u>Decision Point:</u> Does the board agree that the Hiring Committee will operate autonomously for the reviewing and hiring process while providing feedback and updates to the board?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vote (7): in favor - Shinghai, Britney, Xusana, Dan, Susan, Samantha, Arnold
<p>6. MOU Update a. Member update - Kirsten</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kirsten - Productive meeting, attorney present, I was only board member in attendance.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It's important to VHCB that there is a sense of the board looking for a relationship with VHCB that's long-standing (3-5 years). Looking to enter into a sustainably supportive relationship over time. Kirsten - I think it's a fair request from VHCB.2. I want the board to understand that when we are spending a dollar through VHCB there will be fees attached to that - that happens with being in a larger organization. Sticker shock is anticipated. I am aware that if we were an independent entity keeping in good standing, it would cost us a lot of money. Those of us that are looking at the details of this see this as an important investment in the long-term sustainability of LAOB becoming an independent entity.3. How might we express to our partners the intention to maintain long-standing sustainability?<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Gus - Fine with a shorter term relationship. Addressing capacity to terminate within the fiscal year and not immediately for practical reasons. Presenting longer arch to my board.● Jess - Thank you for the update. Reminder of MOU committee members - Kirsten, Brian and Xusana.
7. Facilitation Check-in	Jess - One thing we are noticing as facilitators is that in order to have the working time with sub committees and spend less time on scheduling, we need dedicated working sessions. The first one will be on Sep 13, 2023 4-6:00pm. We can be together and consolidate our time as facilitators - you can also make your own RDV at that time. This will be a space to discuss but also a place to review and draft documents, offer feedback, etc. We can have space for quiet co-working and discussion.
8. Meeting Adjourned at 7:00pm	