Land Access and Opportunity Board Meeting

December 16, 2024, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Meeting Facilitator: Ornella Matta-Figueroa & Jean Hamilton, LAOB Staff

Attendee	Present	Not Present
Board	● Mark Hughes, VRJA ● Xusana Davis, Office of Racial Equity ● Dan Coutu, VT Commission on Native American Affairs ● Brian Cina, National Association of Social Workers ● Susan Aranoff, Vermont DDC	● Samantha Langevin, Liberation Ecosystem ● ● ● Emily Carris, Vermont Every Town Project ● Pacifique Nsengiyumva, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) ● Mary Gerisch, NAACP ● *No active board member*, Pride Center of Vermont ● Walt Wade, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors
Board Alternates	● Jennifer Morton-Dow, Liberation Ecosystem ● Kirsten Murphy, Vermont DDC	● ● ● Rich Holschuh, VCNAA ● Ashley Devereaux, NASW
Guests & Public	Public: Guests:	

Agenda

1. **Ornella- Convene the December 16, 2024 virtual meeting of the LAOB at 5:36pm** (5 mins)
    a. Welcome, Facilitator Team Introductions, and overview of meeting
    b. Touchstones
        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
    c. LAOB Board Member & Staff Introductions: Name, Identifiers, Board seat and looking forward to over the holiday season: slowing down and experiencing the holiday season, didn't even realize that christmas is next week! See our family members who are visiting from afar. Doing nothing. Time off work for resting and restoring my body. Time to connect with my children. The reason for

the season - the longest nights and the hopes of returning lights and a new routine for the manifesting the world i want to see in the return of light. Looking forward to the return of light after this solstice. Nervous system reset. Seasoning a caldero in the oven.	
Review & Approve Meeting Notes from October 28, 2024 meeting (7 mins) https://vhcb.org/sites/default/files/meeting-agendas/2024/LAOB/10.28.24%20LAOB%20Minutes.pdf Dan - Need to update the placeholder for reviewing and approving the previous meeting minutes from 9.30.24 Brian - In the section about shelter for all, the last sentence at the word people, add comma and space, "many of whom are members of the group and even families impacted." **Review & Approve Meeting Notes from November 11, 2024 meeting** (5 mins) https://vhcb.org/sites/default/files/meeting-minutes/2024/LAOB/11.11.24%20LAOB%20Minutes.docx.pdf Mark - please note that it was Veterans Day, Mark abstaining Dan - please listen to the recording and add more context for his comment. NEXT STEPS - Staff relisten and connect with Dan on the suggested change to his comment on page 5 of the 11.11 board meeting notes. Board affirms that for editing a single members comments it is ok for staff to follow up with the individual and come to agreement on those notes. If the meeting record was adding additional content of adjusting a vote/action that the board took, we should bring those back to the full board for review before making the record official.	
2. Staff Updates – 10 mins	Ornella- Housing Conference- Shelter for All Workshop report back – samantha's request from last meeting for reflections on how the format landed Reflections on our participation: - Jennifer: the session LAOB facilitated was good. Appreciated the workshop being in a circle and centering the voices of those most impacted. It was great there was a BIPOC affinity space. - Brian: would like as Shelter for All committee to dive deeper into the plus deltas of that session. For today, reflecting on how our Shelter for All work is just beginning and how every step we go deeper, the work will become more complicated. The session was good and exposed major things that need to be addressed among oppressed communities and between oppressed communities and the systems. - Ornella: everything we do is a prototype, including this workshop. We are always learning and improving. The framework of this workshop included - We set up the room in concentric circles.

	- Everyone was welcomed into the space, handed a workbook with reflection packets, and offered clay as a creative fidget. - We started with a stepping into the circle exercise to identify the different relationships and identities that are held around housing and homelessness among the people in the room. - Those who were closest to the experience and impact of homelessness and living without shelter sat in the center and shared their experiences. Those on the outer circles were invited into deep listening. - The circle addressed a question offered by the youngest member of the circle, "what does housing mean to you." - References - Presentation from housing conference - Ornella: we have received all kinds of feedback. Much of it was very positive. - Jean & Ornella: positive feedback included the "realness" of the session. Appreciation for LAOB creating opportunities to move forward with real solutions based on being honest about what is happening now and centering the voices of those who are most impacted. The community members who came to the workshop specifically as unhoused/unsheltered individuals expressed robust gratitude for making this opportunity available, especially to share their stories and feel seen and related to in community. Negative feedback included workshop description didn't adequately describe what the session would entail, someone felt they weren't prepared for our challenging the conversations would be and that they weren't warned that the session would bring up so many stories of trauma and that there were feelings of defensiveness and reactivity to the high level of trauma and how this brings up issues of positional power, as in who has access comfort. there were other factors present as well. We were co-facilitating with a Black woman. Some of the critique we received about the facilitation feels as though it could be related to internal biases about taking cues from and following the facilitation of Black woman. Overall, the workshop felt as though it made waves, this was not your every day conference workshop. Some people walked away feeling enlivened and inspired. Some walked away feeling uncomfortable with these tactics. - Our lessons learned - Spend more time in workshops preparing people for what discomfort is, looks like, and how to do it. - Spend more time focusing on deep listening: what is it. How does it work. What does it feel like. - Create opportunities after workshops for reflection, and integration of those reflections.

	- Mark: what is the follow up? Do you have any concerns about the impact? - Ornella: perceive it as VHFA feeling some people will be happy and some people will not. Also looking for growthful dialogue and exploration with VHFA around what it looks like to stand up for justice and center the leadership of impacted communities - especially when institutional power holders become uncomfortable and stop listening when they dont like what impacted community members say. Jean- EPA Thriving Communities Grantmakers Grants, first deadline February 14 https://environmentaljusticenewengland.org/ Grants range from $75k-$350k for seed, assessment, planning, and implementation grants Jennifer - I am on the governance council. NEXT STEPS - Are there conflicts of interest we should be monitoring for? Other?
	BREAK - 5 mins from 6:30-6:35pm (cue 5 mins of music for break)

3. **Shelter for All Committee -** 20 mins	Jean- Staff update on Shelter for All Committee process and recommendations to date (5 mins)
	https://docs.google.com/document/d/1em3RZfPwtKLzqcxWFGIEj7pUg8GTpM3Z7dih85fb-sg/edit?usp=sharing
	
	We launched a committee that meets every week every other tuesday and then the every other friday.
	A sizeable amount of our community meeting time has been focused on public comment.
	
	Jean would like to give an overview- then Brian is going to share a proposal for sharing some financial resources to this work.
	- We identified right away that we want to center those who are most impacted. we have been working to make it easy for folks to participate
	  - we had 4 unhoused individuals participate in the housing conference and two that worked with Ornella to shape up the workshop - through cash stipends, advocating and supporting their conference registrations, and working hard to make the session welcoming.
	  - Recognizing that as people who are facing acute survival issues it is very challenging for people to participate, facing many complex issues of trauma, survival, etc.

	- We have financial resources and we can execute grants to support people's acute needs, while also building towards our higher changemaking goals around systemic change and seeding power. - As we face the grave danger and acute harm of lack of shelter, people are dying, it is essential that we stay connected to our bodies and our hearts. Encourage policy makers and community members to stay human. Continually recentering the conversation into the real people and the real feelings people are having. - We can write a position statement and continue to work through our advisory powers. - Many policy needs and systems change needs: What is happening with coordinated entry? Where is it working well? Who is it not working for? - Everyone sleeps!!!! This motto everyone deserves access to the dream time. Brian share budget of meaningful investments LAOB could make - A pilot project to test some ideas in Burlington and then expand out to other communities - 3 nights a week the people's kitchen goes out to share hygienic products and also food. Providing resources like coats, toiletries. In partnership with Free Her and Peoples Kitchen. There is lack of storage for gear. Brian has talked with Mayor's office and they are looking into developing a storage space for unsheltered people. People's kitchen- we buy in bulk survival kits. A pop up tent. Bedding an additional blankets. Tarps. Winter coats. Warm socks and underwear. And a good pair of boots. Camping safe portable heaters. - Pair people with a survival pack, with a storage locker, and that they do their best with the shelter committee, Second tier would be- everyone sleeps- survival program- we will work with them to help them speak out. For those who wish to advocate with us- they receive an advocacy stipend and support with organizing rides and food when they come to the statehouse. - We could tag them with Geo tracking to help secure the supplies. Make an investment that is not disposable. - Doen't need to be tagging - there are other ways to support people staying engaged, being empowered to take care of their gear, etc. - For those that want to advocate with the LAOB - we help resource through stipends, and other supports (transportation, meals, etc) to empower participation. - Clear that unhoused people have the least access to land. - Create a circle of support and love. Its an experiment, but we need to try everything because people are dying.

	ACTION STEP - LAOB officially reach out to the city of burlington and do an MOU that the LAOB will work with the city to make sure that folks have access to basic needs such as laundry, information, medical care. **Board discussion of next steps** Dan- For people that are unsheltered… they need a POBox! And can we have conversations with legislators at the state level and local level where we address the destruction of equipment of supplies needed for survival. Can we create ruling/legislation that says it is a human rights violation to destroy peoples survival supplies. Jennifer (in chat) - people can get mail at any of the programs in the state with case management. Xusana (in chat) - VT has the Safe At Home program for DV survivors that does sth similar w/ mail. This is a program we could replicate. Jennifer- happy to help out with all of this because of my prior work in this field. There are places to get mail but not all houseless people can access these spaces, for example if they are sober spaces. Would also like to brainstorm how to support the people providing services to the unhoused community members. Many of these people are living one paycheck away from homelessness. These are underpaid and very difficult jobs. Jean - we heard that one of the drivers to the state setting up the out of state contractor managed shelters is the lack of people able to work in shelters because of how hard and underpaid and under supported these roles are. Mark - Lots here. When would we sit down with the mayor, how do we find what they are going to do but not be held back or blocked by their timeline. How do we empower people who are directly impacted by the lack of shelter so they can help themselves….not us helping them but empowering and supporting self-advocacy. Jean - Xusana, do you see creative problem solving with the state, where should we plug in?

	Xusana - One approach is getting granular to the opportunities available to specific populations, e.g. teasing out older adults, children, people with disabilities - what opportunities are there to create innovate wrap arounds and resources that are available at these specific community levels. Also recognizing that one of the challenges is that it takes a lot of coordination across many agencies. Ornella: been asking - how much of the problem is that current models are underfunded vs the current models do not work. How much of our problem solving needs to be reformist vs transformist. Susan: Huge thanks to Brian for all of the detailed work. As a DDC staff person, I have a privileged relationship to AHS. I am a AHS employee, but am 100% federally funded. We have the ability, unlike any other state employee, to speak to things like Gov Budget, or advise into AHS' activities and what they need to do to serve our communities. State employees have to comeback to work. The State complex used to be totally full and now its a ghost town. So much is supposed to be happening in this building, but people are not there. In the meantime, people are dying. We know of three corrective action plans on AHS, but they are not required to disclose them. In other states agencies use their corrective action plans to get resources to improve their services, but we are seeing VT agencies hide these plans. Where is our workforce? Mark in chat: DAIL, VDH, MHD, DCF, Corrections Jennifer - a lot of the folks we see that are unhoused are having mental health crises and substance use disorders. If we dont help people heal, they will always be houseless because they wont be allowed in community spaces. With mental health resources getting shut down, the problem is going to get worse. The people who are able to get housed do relatively quickly. But people with underlying conditions are getting worse and worse, and it kills me because I know these guys who are unhoused downtown tonight, suffering, need support for their underlying conditions. Mark - we are talking about old problems. Many of the folks who are unhoused today were DCF & justice impacted youth. As were their parents. We need to not lose focus on the strategic need to tackle these issues across these systems - do the transformational work inside of state government. We need to be boots on the ground and focus on the strategic nature of the systems level impacts. Brian - summary: recommend approving Shelter for All committee and staff authority to spend some amount from our emergency grants budget to address the concerns brought up in this meeting. There is urgency to this issue because of the conditions on the ground. We could circulate a proposal back to the

	Board for oversight, but would recommend the committee has authority to move nimbly on these funds. I believe our approach should be harm reduction. Every day we stay alive is another day we can change and heal. Mark - Brian put forward a proposal and i would like to see the board take action on this today. Jean - recommend $15k as a starting allocation. Brian - grateful and feel we can do alot with this in a pilot situation. Seek matching. Etc. Mark - yes, lets also keep track of what our impacts are. Account for what is purchased, what is the current state, how many folks did we work with. Numerous ways to account for and measure this work. Would like to see Shelter for All committee keep track not so we can wave a flag, but so we can be accountable and help learn from and report out from our pilot. Brian - Motion: LAOB provide a grant up to $15k for the purchase of survival kits and for the coordination and collaboration with the private and public sector around those most impacted by homelessness in and around burlington. The intent is to test in Burlington and then share ideas/actions around the state. The $15k will be administered by the Shelter for All Committee. The Committee will measure quantitative and qualitative data points to track allocations and outcomes. Motion seconded by Mark. CONSENT ITEM: Unanimous consensus from our board.
4. Public Comment & Board Responses - 15 mins	No one here for public comment
5. Legislative Advocacy Planning –	Agenda item postponed for next meeting. Ornella - any reflections from Xusana on the meeting with the Administration's finance team. Xusana - we should connect to discuss in more detail. But did hear the staff say that they don't generally meet with entities they dont intend to include in the budget.

6. CONSENT ITEMS	• A motion for the Land Access and Opportunity Board for the LAOB to make a grant of, 15, 000 to prototype a shelter for all program. That the group shall document qualitative and quantitative data to assess outcomes and impact. Unanimous consensus from our board. • Board affirms that for editing a single members comments it is ok for staff to follow up with the individual and come to agreement on those notes. If the meeting record was adding additional content of adjusting a vote/action that the board took, we should bring those back to the full board for review before making the record official.
7. ACTION ITEMS	• Staff relisten and connect with Dan on the suggested change to his comment on page 5 of the 11.11 board meeting notes. Board affirms that for editing a single members comments it is ok for staff to follow up with the individual and come to agreement on those notes. If the meeting record was adding additional content of adjusting a vote/action that the board took, we should bring those back to the full board for review before making the record official. • Staff connect with Jennifer to research any necessary steps to address potential conflicts of interest between EPA thriving communities grantmakers governance council and anchor org. • ACTION STEP - LAOB officially reach out to the city of burlington and do an MOU that the LAOB will work with the city to make sure that folks have access to basic needs such as laundry, information, medical care.
8. Meeting Adjourned 7:30pm	

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86991181856
Meeting ID: 869 9118 1856