Land Access and Opportunity Board Meeting

February 10, 2025, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

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

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

Agenda

1. **Convene the February 10, 2025 virtual meeting of the LAOB at 5:30pm** (5 mins)
   a. Welcome, Facilitator Team Introductions, and overview of the 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 location (county) (prompt: on this week about love- how has love conquered hate in your world?	
2. Review & Approve Meeting Notes from January 13th 2025 meeting (5 mins) https://vhcb.org/sites/default/files/meeting-minutes/2025/LAOB/1.13.25%20LAOB%20Minutes.docx.pdf Brian amendments - where we say "house ops committee" it should say "house government ops committee"	
3. Federal Landscape, round robin - brief reflections – (10 mins)	Xusana - ORE is swamped. Feels like early covid: Types of inquiries, number of hours, level of panic and seeing how systems step up or dont, feeling surprised or not surprised. ORE will be organizing informational sessions in the next few weeks. Susan - surprised that the disabled community is being targeted. The University Center on Excellence for Disability and Community Inclusion at UVM is really important and is totally in the hot seat. The third leg of our stool. Mark - Part of the concern is not just if they accomplish what they set up to do, watching how courts will keep up. Jean - update about the EJ 4 NE grant. LAOB has a front row seat to how the EPA EJ grant is unfolding. Ornella - in an example of love conquers hate much of this grant's infrastructure and the projects that are being dreamed can still be funded even if not from this funding. Mary - we are seeing this too. We are seeing that organizations and partners are opening up their arms and resources to help however and whoever.
4. Public Comment & Board Responses (15 mins)	Laura Calvin Bailey - VCRD has been in conversation about the thriving communities grantmakers opportunity and support efforts that are underway in the state. We are here to listen, hope, and engage with the process as there are opportunities. Buster - Friday 2/14 Housing Conservation Board is having their legislative day at the Statehouse. If you are around state leaders, please request that VHCB get allocated funding to continue to

	support the farmworker housing program. That program could be in jeopardy if farmworker housing is not included in the budget. I recommend the Legislature and Administration allocate $10M. Our immigrants and migrants need a home and this farmworker housing program helps. We need to do better. I haven't gotten a response from one legislator this year. If we're going to eat food here in Vermont we have to do better. Please see this report - Feeding the Economy - Feeding the Economy Xusana - I can find out if it is in the Governor's recommend. Richarda - interested in hearing more about the LAOB advocacy days, whether it is in this meeting or another. Buster: https://feedingtheeconomy.com/ New York Agricultural https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-initiatives-strengthen-and-promote-new-yorks-agricultural-industry-0a nd Mental Health https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-96-million-provide-mental-health-support-rural-areas-new-york-state Vermont can do better https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-initiatives-strengthen-and-promote-new-yorks-agricultural-industry-0 VHCB farmworker housing success video!! https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=YhEOne72MwU VHCB leg day https://vlt.org/events/vhcc-legislative-day-2024/ **Ernest caswell buster** 6:48 PM My beginning letter to leaders found here.. https://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/document/2026/8/Date/2-5-2025#documents-section
BREAK - 5 mins from 6:30-6:35pm (cue 5 mins of music for break)	

5. LAOB Legislative (20 min)	Legislative Update- Jean: When we met with the administration we asked for 1.6 m for this year- which the governor included as one time funds in the budget. A lot to celebrate there. After that- the Cannabis control board reccomended in their study that LAOB gets 25% of cannabis exise tax. We have met with House Agriculture, house gov ops, and house housing. Re: Cannabis excise tax We are talking about down payment assistance grants-in partnership to augment those or expand them Also launching down payment assistance grants to support buying land. And also to support developers in our community. People's demands for just recovery- resources did not come close to meeting the needs. Coalition coming together in a grassroots- flood omnibus bill. They are pulling together into thinking about community resilience- how does that play into supporting building resilience and hubs that can be equipped and prepared to step in during an emergency? We are asking- what is the role the state needs to play and what is the community ecosystem needed to support communities during an emergency. Also- when we met with Birong he recommended we reach out to a committee of jurisdiction for our housekeeping bill. Which we understand is house housing. Susan - there is a bill re: mad advocates. Action item - staff look for that bill. As a matter of efficiency could that bill add Migrant Justice as well. H-0029 As Introduced.pdf Xusana - does our enabling statute say that any other members at large can be added? Depends on how quickly vs how in stone do we want it? Dan- I met with local legislators they were asking questions about mad freedom and he clarified that psychiatric survivors didn't exist anymore. Brian: Isn't there always a board and commissions bill? Action item - staff look for the misc boards and commissions bill.

	I am working on a housing bill. We created the LAOB to do our mission, but i didn't realize how significant our role could be in solving the housing crisis. This bill is an opportunity to for LAOB centered ideas on how to solve the housing crisis. Working with LAOB staff to review this language and discuss what is possible with our capacity. Brian walked through each section of the proposed bill starting with section 1: Sec. 1. PURPOSE 19 It is the intent of the Vermont General Assembly to support the human right of housing and to promote public health and community safety during recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the polysubstance pandemic, and climate 2 disasters by preserving affordable housing and creating new social and 3 economic opportunities for the development and maintenance of sustainable, resilient, and affordable housing infrastructure. It is the intent of this act to focus State, municipal, and private resources on assisting tenants recovering 6 from emergencies and on ensuring that, in the long term, Vermonters have an adequate supply of safe, affordable housing, including more opportunities for access and ownership of land and community resources. https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2026/Docs/BILLS/H-0445/H-0445%20As%20Introduced.pdf Jean - How much time is there for bills to be introduced. Brian - not a lot of time. asked leadership to make space for all of the ideas on housing to come forward and then move into a housing omnibus bill. Not expecting this bill to pass, but rather it serving as an opportunity to have a policy discussion. LAOB was created to encourage and empower these kinds of innovative policy discussions. Mary - there was a HUD resident advisory board program to give tenants a pathway to building ownership. ACTION ITEM: look for HUD resident advisory board tenant→ownership case study, maybe in NYC? Susan - H29 mad freedom bill is in healthcare not gov ops. Brian can you pick this up? Also great work, Brian. I feel encouraged by Marc Mihaly and his strong backgrou and hope we can work with him Pacifique in chat - the concept is amazing Brian Dan in chat - Brian that sounds very well thought out.

	Mary - there was a concept within HUD, a resident advisory board that then took over a building. Example may be from NY. Action item - please share with Brian. Susan - everything Brian is talking about is amazing. We're hoping for new creative strategies for people who need creative housing. Hoping to work with Rep Mihaly to get something created by this biennium. Excited to work with this chair. DD Council has a four part platform that includes - Housing: Optimistic that that there is money in the BAA to complete a Burlington pilot. Also working on coming up with a ongoing legislative ask to prioritize people with disabilities prioritized for VHCB and others to create housing. Really hard to compete with all the high levels of need, especially as people are dying in tents, so beyond the $2.8M we will likely not be looking at other appropriations, but there is other policy work. - Medicaid justice: rate adjustments to allow for designated agencies and other support staff to make reasonable wages so that these positions are filled. Pacifique - appreciate the level of detail Brian put into this proposal. Every year, and every new election, it feels like housing has always been a priority but is it going anywhere? Ist there a way to look at what has happened in the past and see the impact these have had on the community? Brian - is Pacfique's suggestion to look at examples of related concepts to look at successes and challenges? I can do that for DCF youth concept because it has existed in Finland. Pacifique - yes, and also would be nice to focus on examples in Vermont. And it would be helpful to see how much time we have put into having ideas vs how much time we have spent actually putting things into action. Brian - some of these items can be put into studies, which could be a good use of this part of the biennium. In chat: Buster: Vermont possibly? https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MIDARD/bulletins/2bd8a85 Mark - echo what Pacifique is saying, lets not recreate the wheel. Lets go in and take a look at policy initiatives that perhaps died. One example is the resubmission of the Economic Justice Bill and the

	Reparations Bill. Also the Constitutional and Accountable Policing Bill (Rep Cina and Rep Christie). Data collection Bill (H284). PR4 equal protections constitutional amendment is very important, its time to pick it back up. S2 → looks like it is going down the right path, office of health equity. Buster - put a report in the chat that was created by a taskforce. MDARD unveils finding of the 2021 Food and Ag Housing Task Force Report the only vermont study on farmworker housing that has been commissioned is the 2021 VHCB on-farm housing study. What would it take to get an updated publication that may possibly recommend non-profit, cooperative, or private sector for farmworkers to develop housing off the farms. Would like to see a farmworker housing committee or task force to generate these reports and recommendations. Want to move beyond the great ideas to how do we take the next steps. Four required steps - On farm housing - Housing repair - Technical support for farmers to create housing - Off farm housing Rep Cina, can you please consider adding this to your bill? Buster-in chat Coming soon https://equitablefood.org/farmworker-awareness-week-toolkit/ LAOB supports the community in the Statehouse
6. Words and Values (20 mins)	Postponed
7. Board Announcements (10 mins)	Susan - tomorrow is the HHAV meeting. Gratitudes for everyone here. All the great work. Since all of our human rights is interdependent, someone who does not have secure housing cannot function in the other ways of their life. Grieving the passing of Sandy Baird and her incredible work. Thoughts and prayers to her and her family.

	Another great meeting. Lots of great ideas. Feeling how our meetings continue to feel like our meetings are an example of how we want to work together. Grateful for a place to present ideas and receive constructive criticism while being heard and encouraged.
8. CONSENT ITEMS	
9. ACTION ITEMS	• Policy committee notes: migrant justice solidarity requests. Farmworker housing allocation. staff look for the bill that adds Mad Freedom to all boards including LAOB. As a matter of efficiency could that bill add Migrant Justice as well. • look for the misc boards and commissions bill→ hopefully House Gov Ops will take this up. • Staff convene a words and values special meeting. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u3t_hVqRmBLTCBc1tpJwWS6e1ZOaoXyxjHpaf_9F4RM/edit?usp=sharing • Dan and Brian connect. • look for HUD resident advisory board tenant→ownership case study, maybe in NYC?
10. Meeting Adjourned 7:30pm	

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