Land Access and Opportunity Board Meeting

September 30, 2024, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

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

Attendee	Present	Not Present
Board	• Dan Coutu, VT Commission on Native American Affairs • Xusana Davis, Office of Racial Equity • Susan Aranoff, Vermont DDC • Emily Carris, Vermont Every Town Project • Mark Hughes, VRJA • Samantha Langevin, Liberation Ecosystem • Mary Gerisch, NAACP • Brian Cina, National Association of Social Workers	• Pacifique Nsengiyumva, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) • *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: Emily Alger	

Agenda

1. **Convene the September 30, 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 location (county)	
2. Review & Approve Meeting Notes from September 6 2024 meeting (5 mins) https://vhcb.org/sites/default/files/meeting-minutes/2024/LAOB/9.6.24%20LAOB%20Minutes.docx.pdf Approved.	
3. **FY25 Budget Discussion & planning for FY26 Budgeting** (30 mins)	https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1P9Tx6tkLT-KlPb5dTfknFGS-hII6_U_F/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=101973395285110115197&rtpof=true&sd=true Mary - I'm thinking about how to monitor SP7b: "collaborate with VHCB etc. to recommend programs and related rules". going back to discussion at the last meeting, the loans that landlords are getting to rehab units for coordinated entry folks. Wish we could do something about helping folks in coordinated entry get into these units, waive credit scores and landlord references. Sue - looking at "come up with 10 year plan to become an independent entity". Haven't seen this before. Wow, lets use our money this year to do that. Xusana - good to remind ourselves what statute says we need to do. Looking at SP3. Haven't noticed the insular nature of this before. I think its great to share our skills within our communities and also I am cautious that broader powers will mean that we have what we need and will expect only that insular skill share. And not everyone who has technical expertise in ecological things is for the ecology. We have to be cautious because not all expertise is for the right. Ornella from chat - I was thinking- not all expertise is in the same value system... Mark - looking at SP4 and thinking about all those partners. When statute says "work with" it is not clear that the institutions named will make themselves available to our statutory charge. The problem is these institutions were not previously developing metrics, and prioritizing programs, etc. Goes straight to the heart of the challenge itself. Samantha - When the last time I looked at this was before we had staff. Now that I look at this I am realizing the staff we have is not enough to meet all these goals and mandates. There is a lot of work here that requires specialized knowledge and specialized relationships (because that is how VT works). This is a lot of work. We are being asked to fix the system. Lets not get too disheartened.

	Xusana - especially if we are supposed to be on the road to making recommendations, it really offloads that burden to us even more. A lot of statute asks groups to dream big dreams, but doesn't make the resources available. The Legislature needs to make funds available for the programming and funds available for the admin of that programming. Sue from chat - Performance art as policy - is a pattern of budget writers Dan from chat - Keep in mind that the word "Retain", which is used quite a bit, can mean as an employee. Brian - my concern is that when staff try to assert our power the institutions resist, it makes clear how implicit bias is built into the system. Do we need to change the statute of those other institutions? Have we been asked to weigh in on other entities' budgets? how do we insert ourselves. It would be great if we had a 30 year plan. In 10 years we are independent. In 20 years we have turned the corner. In 30 years the system is so transformed, we don't need to exist. The children today, their grandchildren will inherent a world that serves them equitably. **Looking at Budget** Emily - curious about homeownership coach program. How do we ensure that it is not too duplicative with other existing programs. Especially cautious about programs where people have to sit through a fixed education series and then the clients still don't get the home/home experience they want. The concept described here in which the coaches are more of a navigator/liaison sounds different and it sounds helpful. Mary in chat - I totally agree! I have been working with two families in Bennington who have had that same problem Ornella - the coaches provide a feedback loop into our advisory powers. Currently there is no feedback into the housing institutional system like banking. Brian - we have so many intersecting things we are "recovering" right now. Housing crisis = public health emergency. Climate crisis. Poly-substance crisis. Recovering from covid-19 pandemic. Racism is a public health crisis. Infrastructure crisis. We can promote all of these things as needing recovery, promote

	Intersectional Solutions that address all of these crises together. I will make the case later on the agenda about how centering the unhoused helps us look at all of these crises at once. If people think its bad now, wait until the oceans really start rising and everyone heads for the mountains. Mark - appreciate Brian's framing. When we created the LAOB, we had in mind that the housing institution is not serving a number of populations as well as it needs to. Looking at the homeownership coaching line item, $609k. Thinking about Richard Kemp Center's Growing Homes Program. Nov 16, house party. We want LAOB to be partners with this program. This whole idea of coach can go in a lot of directions. I like the idea of liaising. Right now we are trying to transform systems, while building programs. There are a lot of roles that a coach/navigator/liason can do. It's about capacity for our orgs. While we are fleshing out this program, what is the capacity, what is the full range of responsibilities this super hero has, there is a lot to flesh out here. Samantha - As we are thinking about homeownership coaching, directing funds, developing relationships. It is not enough to get people access to a house, tenureship is just as important. Can the coaches stick with people beyond the home purchase into other aspects of retaining homes. What falls under emergency preparedness toolkits and safety mini grants? Jean - we have been watching what is emergent, and realizing that emergency means so many things. The motel evictions have put a finer clarity on what emergency means. It is so many things, akin to what Brian said earlier. We know we want to increase our communities' ability to navigate emergencies. And through this RFP process that we are going to embark on asap with you all, we will start piloting this. Mary - I am supportive about this work with emergency preparedness. In Bennington we have been talking with the town emergency response plan, and trying to advise it in ways that better serves our vulnerable neighbors. Thinking especially about heating and cooling centers. Heat is so dangerous and many of our section 8 homes do not have a/c, leaving our vulnerable neighbors in dangerous conditions. It would be great to have the LAOB's support in validating the recommendations we are trying to make as individual community members. Ornella in chat - Can you say a little more about the types of things you would imagine a coach supporting a person after home ownership? or rather I am wondering what other coalitions or systems we should support such as a building or maintenance coalition?

	Samantha in chat - I could see lots of things, e.g. helping new homeowners navigate property tax reductions (like knowing about homestead declarations and how to file one), mediating property line disputes (or finding resources to do so), support in accessing refinancing or home improvement loans, navigating common use rules for ag land, etc. I also think there is less "technical" support that is often needed - resources for dealing with racists neighbors, finding funding for accessibility improvements, etc
BREAK - 5 mins from 6:40-6:45pm	
4. Public Comment & Board Responses - 15 mins	No comments.
5. Shelter for All 30 mins	Ornella - for the last 2-3 months we have been watching the countdown to the motel eviction. Watching and listening with community members for what does this mean. Also acknowledging that Homelessness is not specifically articulated in our statute. Looking at framing a conversation with the board. Here is a document that you can use to share ideas. https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1cf_M0wwreMDjfsrrubxmss4YnkjzmRpTK3JN-Hc8rdw/edit?usp=sharing Brian - I have worked with unhoused people since I first came to VT. Unhoused people have been one of my core populations that I serve for 26 years. The conditions are getting worse. If we do not take a shift in everything we do as humans, we take the change that there will be mass casualties. I am worried about the unhoused, but also recognize that the unhoused are uniquely resilient and have wisdom to offer and lead how we end the housing crisis and move into an era of housing for all. I think this board should center the experiences of unhoused people. When the LAOB was created, the legislature looked at the disparities in housing, and homelessness. Anecdotally, the unhoused are the majority people with disabilities. The street violence experienced by the unhoused causes mental health distress. We are seeing lateral violence among the unhoused, and preying from housed people with substance use disorders on unhoused people. And young people playing a cyber game of scoring points by harassing the unhoused. I see a lot of BIPOC people. A lot of queer people. I saw a data point that a transgender black person has 60x the likelihood of being unhoused. Being in the hotels was providing people basic stability. Kicking them out of motels is state violence. The numbers now are that normally 30-40 people are unsheltered in burlington. Right now its 300-400.

	This is a public health emergency for the unhoused and for the community as a whole. Its unsanitary, there is not basic sanitation services for the unhoused. And its creating deep community stress. Here is my ask 1. We consider convening a subcommittee meeting 1/week. We want to prioritize this for the next month to see what we can do. 2. Call an emergency meeting of the board in 2 weeks to consider proposals from the committee. Decide as a board, do we declare an emergency. 3. Find ways to support our unhoused community members in lifting their voices and helping to lead us to the solution for Shelter for All. I have more ideas to share with the committee! Samantha in chat - This sounds like a use for Emergency/Safety funds.....(I recognize that is a stop gap, and not longer term change) Mark in chat - https://vtdigger.org/2024/06/18/annual-count-shows-rise-in-homelessness-in-vermont-and-a-jump-in-those-living-without-shelter/#:~:text=Those%20are%20the%20results%20of,number%20tallied%20in%20January%202023. Ornella - one of our values is that when we take care of the most vulnerable people in our community, we will all be taken care of. Emily - what abilities and capacity does the LAOB have to do tangible work, building structures, etc. Ornella - we don't fully know, but we can do a lot in coalition. Jean - we have wide ranging possibilities in terms of what our statute allows us to do. The questions I have are about what's our capacity and what's the best way to plug into our coalitions → how do we best seed power. Xusana in chat - Re; scope of our limits: There's what the statute permits us to do, and then there's also the influence we're able to have in the right rooms. I think JH and OMF and MH and others have done a

	great job at building relationships in the State House on behalf of the LAOB, so that has helped with the latter Ornella - we are thinking lots about how do we make things happen in community →decentralized power. Our instinct is to empower community systems. Brian in chat - We need to provide the support and resources so they run them! Mary - any place we want to invite impacted communities to come, we need to make it safe and comfortable. For example: we have good attendance when we have meet ups at the local church. We did not have good attendance at the State Housing Authority event. Dan in chat - One idea that occurred to me is to assemble some urban survival tips so that people that are newly unhoused can be taught how to deal with the short term needs for survival. It's not intended to be a long-term need but might just be critical for getting people to not die from exposure to the elements. Xusana in chat - This could be helpful, but I worry about the message we send if government (or a government-adjacent body) puts out that kind of guidance. It will be met with "why don't you house people instead," even if we try to frame it as a "yes/and" approach Ornella in chat - sounds like a bit of a communication landmine for us could it come out of the disability council? Dan in chat - There might be an alternate channel for doing the teaching. Mark - thinking about multiple things being true at once. Its great intention to build something new, but to some people there is not enough time for that. Some people need immediate investments that don't have long term returns. - Navigating the existing systems - Transforming the existing system - Building a new system - Triaging the emergencies within the current system To what extent should we be working with the emergency protocols to navigate and transform those systems. There is something we ought to be doing on the LAOB, but also caution about scope-creep and rabbit hole syndrome. Lets not lose focus on the mid and long term, with the given capacity that we have.

	Samantha in chat - Its both - hospice out the old while you grow the new system Brian - I acknowledge there needs to be an immediate response that is not going to be a long term solution. Right now what people are asking for is a safe place to meet and figure out their next steps. How do we step in a different way, not charity, but centering the humanity of everyone. All we want is a place we can be where we're not in danger of having our tent set on fire. Mark - Something that is missing, we have a veterans community out there. Veterans have been out there. A significant portion of this emergency feels manufactured. Intersecting with mental health and recovery challenges. Dan - sounds to me like this is the right work for the LAOB. I support. Mark in chat - i will advise. Samantha in chat - I totally support this, and do not have the capacity to be on the committee regularly Mary - as of december 1, the 80 days is done away with and then there is a cold weather exemption will bring motels back in. but there is a limited number of motels available in each town. Members of HHAV and coordinated entry sent the letter and it sounds like there may be movement in the governor's office to declare a state of emergency. Mark - there are all kinds of other things happening at the same time. Section 8 vouchers are expiring because people can't find rentals. Hoping that this committee could bring in an interagency approach. Corrections, Mental health, DCF, Education etc. There are a lot of intersecting moving parts affecting this whole thing and how it is playing out. To be myopically focused on the hotel program misses the issue. Xusana - if we take an interagency approach, we should include agencies that are not just executive agencies, ideas are sometimes limited to what the executive branch will agree to. Dan - We need to figure out the cause of homelessness in the first place. People are unable to afford homes.

	Jean - interested in the idea of homelessness is a housing crisis and how this ties back to Brian's and Ornella's ideas around empowering more people to build their own housing. Ornella - really interested in this idea. What is the origin story of housing development? What is the origin story of homelessness. Thinking about housing that was driven by jobs, but now so much of work is remote. And what kind of housing do people in this state want? Can our housing adjust to reflect these desires.
6. Board Announcements - 10 mins	Xusana - ORE is hosting the second annual gathering. It is free. Food. gifts. Workshops and gathering fun! October 28-29. Mark you calendars and please come. Susan - DDC works with Green Mountain Self Advocates and Vermont Family Network to train people to be leaders and advocates. First weekend in November and first weekend in December - legislative advocacy training. Take place in Middlebury. Reach out to sue for more info. Looking to increase the diversity of participants. Mark - Richard Kemp Center Block Party this coming Saturday. Bouncy House! Mark in chat - A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand we are called to play the good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth…and say "This is not just." Dan - Saturday in Stowe, Indigenous Peoples Day Rocks event. Held at a place called The Current. Indigenous vendors, music (trad, rocks, and blues). Mark - all kinds of other events - check out the Richard Kemp Center calendar.
7. CONSENT ITEMS	• LAOB will form a Shelter for All Committee.
8. ACTION ITEMS	•

9. **Meeting Adjourned 7:30pm**

ZOOM LINK - https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86991181856