Land Access and Opportunity Board Meeting

April 7, 2025, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

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

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

Agenda

1. **Convene the April 7, 2025 virtual meeting of the LAOB at 5:30pm** (15 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 February 10 and March 10 2025 meetings** 10 mins

   Feb 10

   https://vhcb.org/sites/default/files/meeting-minutes/2025/LAOB/3.10.25%20LAOB%20Notes.docx

   - Fix the date in the name
   - Zack abstains, wasnt at the meeting
   - In Board Updates - correct Sandy Baird's name, this was mark's share

   March 10

   https://vhcb.org/sites/default/files/meeting-minutes/2025/LAOB/2.10.25%20LAOB%20Notes.docx

   - Fix the date in the name
   - Add emily comment

3. **Public Comment** 10 mins	Buster - Vermont housing in order to build homes, we need food water and a home. Vermont farm to plate report 2023 says there are 63,000 people working in agriculture, 9,000 working on farms. If you read the agricultural needs assessment, you will see that farmworkers and farmworker housing is missing. Housing for our farmworkers is the missing piece to our puzzle of how we will eat, have clean water, and homes. How do we acknowledge our agricultural community as part of fair housing month. Lets include farmworker housing in our every day lives. When state of vermont did its housing needs assessment it excluded our farmworkers. That needs to be fixed. Zack - what will it take for a committee to launch? Jean- What it will take is resources. it would help us if we get some support from our board members and continued encouragement from the board for us to move it forward. If there are any board committees that can take this up, please do.

	Mark - As we are the LAOB, and Buster has been with the LAOB since day 1, we should take a closer look at the reports, the needs assessment, who is doing what, how do we make some moves. How do we divide and conquer on the board to get some butts in chairs and move it forward. I want to make clear to Buster - no pushback from me on this. Completely down with the cause, and i dont have capacity right now for this committee. In chat: https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/Housing/Housing-Needs-Assessment/2025-2029/VT-HNA-2025.pdf?_gl=1*10nvc83*_ga*MTI1NzUxMDA0NC4xNzA1NjkwMzA1*_ga_V9WQH77KLW*MTc0NDA1MzcwMC41Ny4xLjE3NDQwNTQwNjIuMC4wLjA. Samantha - before creating a committee, lets figure out who is adjacent. Action Circles - FSRC, infrastructure, govt role in food security, they are gathering feedback right now on specific strategies. If this is something that a board committee works on, i am expressing support for having housing that is not tied to farm employment. Ornella - we have received feedback on how hard it can be to have housing tied to employment,. Mary - very supportive, my capacity is thin. Who else can we partner with? Migrant Justice? Ornella in chat: Farmworker Rural Research Brief Buster - i have information available from the 7 stakeholder meetings that were held with dan baker. We have had 7 meetings, we can keep that going. I have more time and can help you get this work to the place it needs to be. Its a matter of coming together and getting it done. Zack - no objections here, just a matter of getting the work going. From Buster in Chat: Information https://ruralhome.org/creating-a-better-understanding-of-farmworker-communities-and-their-housing-conditions/ Example https://www.manomaine.org/housing &https://yakimahousing.org/services/farmworker-housing/ https://housefarmworkers.org/what-we-do/ Resource Dan Baker

	https://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/document/2024/8/Date/4-10-2024#documents-sectionSee Dan Baker slide.. formation of this group has been the goal since the beginning ..#9 https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/farm-plate-annual-reports 2023 report has numbers My testimony March 26 both Agriculture committees with Rural Vermont advocacy day see it if interested My email buster05474@gmail.com
4. Shelter for All Committee 25 mins	Brian - our Shelter for All committee has been meeting and had $15k approved for emergency work to support unsheltered people. We have mostly spent the funds so far on tents, mostly on ice fishing shelters for community members in Burlington. There are other needs that we can address. We have emergency funds that should be spent prior to July 1. We have invited End Homelessness VT to share numbers on the work they are doing. What an investment in their work would yield in addressing this current emergency. I have asked them to share what various services cost? The board can then deliberate if we are willing to spend emergency funding on these services in addition to my request that spend more on tents, because there will be hundreds of households evicted from motels due to the governor's unconstitutional executive order. Brenda - End Homelessness VT is a lived experience led organization, with a hotline, we answer emergency calls about homelessness, eviction, other challenges related to housing. We work in an ongoing manner. Have answered 3000 calls in the last year. It used to be just me and now i have a wonderful small staff. We have 400 ongoing clients, and 196 clients who we help with voucher renewals. Many of the voucher renewals have extremely complicated situations. Most qualify under the governors current exec order, but the rules keep changing. Almost every day the rules are changing. The process rules keep changing which is making it very hard to support these renewals. This is target against me due to a dislike for the way i advocate, but it is hurting our clients. Its hurting our staff who feel like we are treated differently because we were on benefits recently, We had additional funding in the fall, so we were able to meet more needs. But today the rules changed so people cannot seek a renewal if they are currently in a room. If the "cap" is met and the governors exec order populations are included in the 1100 room cap as defined by act 113. While we dont see this as lawful, we are now asking for fair hearings for all of these clients. Legal aid and we with our current capacity cannot cover all the fair hearings.

	We are drowning. That is the point. That is why they are changing the rules, so that we will drown and not be able to care for everyone. But we arent going anywhere. Because they are exiting people out of the program, we are in constant need of tents and sleeping bags. Tents and sleeping bags are a big need. We spent $10k for tents and sleeping bags in the fall. Now we have $0 for tents and sleeping bags. On april 1 we had $1400 on motel room because we were not able to get everyone through the fair hearings. We are striving to keep people sheltered in their motel rooms while they are going through fair hearings. But we also need money for motel rooms for people who are in their hearing processes $80/motel $2500/month of housing We are about to send an email requesting a fair hearing for 98 of our clients, individually. Legal Aid will be overwhelmed. I need someone else to do the fair hearings so that people dont experience me as a target. I have found an attorney who can do this if we can work it out. I am not talking about a lawsuit, I am talking about fair hearings and getting part time support to help with this case load of fair hearings. We are drowning financially. We are drowning from being beat up. It is embarrassing for the state of vermont to be treating us this way. Shelby - I started with Brenda at End Homelessness VT less than 2 months after being in the motel program and then getting housed.. I was going to be evicted in my 3rd term pregnancy and then again with a new born baby. if not for the Brenda and the program that we are using now. I have been doing so much work to make it easier for ESD. Since the end of March, we have been treated like clients. We are given no information of changes. As providers we are told we cannot email. We must talk on recorded lines. All of our clients have very complex needs. The governor and ESD would have seen at least 20 deaths if we had not been able to care for our clients. The way Brenda is treated, is leaving us in shock. We just dont want our clients to suffer. Because they really need the most help. Any and all help we can get, we are very appreciative for.

	Brenda - thank you LAOB for the donation on Friday. Generally we have a process where we work with 3 ESD workers. The system is abusive to the workers as ESD as well. Three main needs - Tents - Sleeping bags - Motel rooms - Part time attorney - Better support for those who are going through fair hearings. Zoe - the one single most important thing I will say is that the clients suffer the most. Samantha - appreciate you coming tonight to speak with us, acknowledging that you are in a position of asking for help which is so hard when so many people are stretched thin. Supporting you in showing up here with all of the feelings you have. This is a space for this. Recognizing that the state continues to focus on the idea that taking care of our unhoused neighbors is wasting money. Appreciate you coming here and that the LAOB might be in a position to help. Dan: do you have someone in mind to provide the legal support? Brenda: yes we have identified a qualified lawyer who has expressed interest. Zack - emphasize support for Brenda and her team. Gov and AHS are indicating that through the choices for care program - if there is a bed in a nursing home bed available, someone in a motel room would be forced to take it. We at PS, VCIL and others are watching this closely. We are watching this closely. We do not believe that the intention of the Legislature to be forced into nursing care. Brenda - we've heard that if people refuse institutionalization in nursing care they will lose GA voucher access. Mark - Please repeat your asks, I am looking for clarity.

	Brenda - the motel rooms are very important and very expensive - $2500/month/person. The lawyer feels really important. Not sure how much it will cost, but right now talking about a part time attorney for next few months. Mark - you spoke to the disproportionate rates of people with disabilities, we see similar numbers at the VT Racial Justice Alliance. And we see disproportionate rates that are race based. Black folks are 5.6 times more likely than White Vermonters to be unhoused. And in chittenden co Black folks make up 2.9 % of population, they are at 18% of the unhoused population. In rutland county and washington county the numbers are also quite high with Black Vermonters just under 5 times more likely to be unhoused that White Vermonters. Do you know the rates of people with disabilities as their disproportionate rates. Brenda - we dont track, but AHS says 75% of people in motels have disabilities. We did research last fall and are looking at the numbers. From 200 people interviewed across 10 towns, and 5 counties: Over 90% reported a serious health condition. 85% reported living with a mental illness. All of those are qualifying conditions. Also many people reported learning disability, not being able to read or right. Also substance use disorder is considered a disability, but people typically do not report substance use disorder because they have co-existing conditions. That report is being analyzed by a public health researcher. In the next phase of the study we will compare with housed populations. Mark - appreciate you. Shout out to Shelby and the rest of your team. As long as im sitting here, my vote will be to try to do something help you all in the work you are doing. When deliberations show up I will be on your side. Especially to Shelby, you've been living it. ACTION STEP - get estimate from Brenda and team on the cost of these resource needs, esp the lawyer. ACTION STEP - get more details from Brenda and team on the systemic issues to inform LAOB's advisory powers. Ornella - request time with End Homelessness Vermont to discuss systemic issues so we can understand the breakdowns in the system and see if our advisory powers can help nudge the system. And look forward to working with EHVT to support the needs you are seeing and expressing right now. Brenda - thank you. After the report is out we will be especially empowered to do those advisory powers. At a separate time we can also talk about how to finish that research. I will also send the number that we need to emergency shelter fund for the next few months. I dont want to have to hand people a tent and a

	sleeping bag. I have been working so hard to hold it together for the agency people. And for communicating to legislators. The point is they are trying to wear me down. Thank you for being so supportive. Samantha - @Brenda - are you able to share EHVT's annual budget? Brenda - this is a more complicated ask because everything is changing. All of our staff are part time. Good Sam shares a staff person with us because we cant afford it. My position is currently unfunded. Mark - how are you handling immediate needs of folks. We are seeing some folk in our community who are not having their basic needs met. We are figuring out what to do, like put money in peoples hands? Brenda - right now we are putting money out as soon as it comes. We do an intake. We see if there is something we can do without funding, we try to guide people through the ESD process, but we are being constrained in what we can achieve there. We can take on a fair hearing. We are trying to keep people sheltered while they wait for the fair hearing. We dont think that the people who qualify for the Ex Order should count towards the 1100 rooms. The 1100 rooms should only be for people who dont qualify for the Ex Orders. If someone is do not rented at many locations, we can generally find help. Shelby - for our most complex client situations, the best situation is to keep people in their motel room. When people go outside, they struggle to get to food shelves with no help, providers cannot find them, everything falls apart. Mark - we have someone here looking for formula and insulin for family members. Do you have experience putting money in peoples hands. Brenda - we try not to do that because it opens up a whole other area of things we are doing- We do try to get people signed up for medicaid asap. In this situation we would get formula for the person tonight and then help connect them with services tomorrow. Or help sign them up for medicaid which is something we can do. @Rev Mark Hughes (VRJA) VT Professional of Color Network and Pride Center have had success with $ mutual aid Mary - are their clinics in chittenden county to support formula, etc?

	Brenda - yes, but often there are urgent needs that need to be addressed, while longer term solutions are worked out. Brenda in chat: This is for clients. 802 489 6534 is the hotline. or email endhomelessnessvt@gmail.com . Text or email is best.
BREAK - 5 mins from 6:30-6:35pm (cue 5 mins of music for break)	
Shelter for All continued	Brian - shelter for all was authorized to spend $15k. Asking the board to authorize more. And let the committee decide how to spend it relative to the various requests we are receiving from the org we just heard and other partners. We are intended to spend our money before july and it is meant to be spent for an emergency. We are in an emergency in terms of numbers of lives being lost. I would like authorization to spend $100k by May. I do not want to have our hands tied for a month Mary - I agree this is an urgent need and I agree this is an amazing way to spend our money. i am not comfortable authorizing something that is not tied to a budget/proposal. I am not trying to say we shouldn't do this. Can we schedule an email vote? Ornella - I heard Brian request $85k in addition to the $15k to be spent by the Shelter for All committee. And Mary asking for more details before authorizing. Mark - we set a precedent by pre-authorizing the $15k. If there was something that we had identified that exceeded the $15k, why wouldn't we come back to the board and ask for that? It sounds like Brian is asking for a pre-authorization to spend more money without board approval. I am in a bit of a quagmire because i respect Brian's proposal and the concern expressed by Mary. Ornella - $15k is below our procurement process. RFP procurement process kicks in at $25k. Xusana - staying under the procurement process threshold means we aren't putting something out for a bid, but we would still need to give a sole source justification, explaining why we aren't putting it out for a bid. For that, we would need to prove that the organization is uniquely capable of providing the service. Zack - is there a way to do that without doing all of that?

	Ornella - are you asking if we can do this without a procurement process? Is there a threshold we can operate under without a procurement process? Mary - I am not familiar with our procurement process, but ACTION ITEM I would like to read it before making a decision on this. I would like to understand the thresholds and the other stuff that goes along with the policy. Jean - Proposes that Shelter for All committee convene a meeting discuss next steps and come back to the board with a more concrete proposal. We could convene a special meeting of the board or set up an email vote, because it seems hard to get this money approved at todays meeting. Susan, uplifting what Brian put in the chat. Based on what Brenda's org proposed, I am comfortable lifting the Shelter for All committee budget to $100,000 from $15,000. We always have to navigate with the procurement policies, but i do not hear Brian's proposal as being related to that. This proposal is to increase the amount the shelter for all committee as to work with between this month and next month. I support Brian's point about not having to wait another month given this climate and what is happening. Brian in chat - I proposed that the committee be allowed to spend money but not that it go to any specific source or vendor. I would expect the committee to follow policies and procedures and laws etc in the spending of the money. Xusana in chat Here's a big one that's relevant here: Bulletin 3.5. ~ Procurement and Contracting Procedures | Agency of Administration Brian in chat: We should have an emergency meeting if this is really an emergency Xusana - acknowledge that time is of the essence. I support any action the board wants to take to move quickly while also uplifting what Mary said about action that is not only swift but is also fiscally responsible. Acting quickly does not have to be in conflict with acting fiscally responsibly. My priority is on acting swiftly, and then figuring out the paperwork. Ornella - sound like we have some movement towards consensus. Brian - propose we allocate an additional $85k for the shelter for all committee to be used for the emergency of unsheltered homelessness and that the committee follow procurement practices, procedures

	and laws and be accountable in our choices to the board. I am not asking that the money be given to one person. Mary - I appreciate that Brian, but some of the things that were talked about tonight, like paying an attorney, Being a retired attorney that amount can vary immensely from person to person. That is one of the things I feel cautious about. Pacifique - I want to suggest we get more details for what this money is going to be used for. Shelter committee - is this the last meeting we will have before awarding money to this organization? If so, i don't feel we have agreement of how and for what purpose the money is being used for. We would need more information to vote on this. To be transparent, and to know what the money is going to be used for, we need more information. It would also be helpful to have a report from the shelter committee on what the money has been used for so far. It would be helpful to look at the budget and what funds have been spent on. Samantha - there is a precedent we are setting here. Do we trust our subcommittee's to make decisions on our behalf? I encourage us to trust our subcommittees and the opportunity to expand our capacity by using the expertise we have in those committees. Do we trust the people on this subcommittee to make responsible decisions? Ornella - I think it would support us to have approval ahead of time, without having to have a special meeting. We use consensus to approve, so everyone would have to vote yay or stand aside. Brian - i withdrawal my proposal. Welcome others to make an alternative proposal Mark - please say more. Brian - it sounds like there are board members that do not trust the committee. because i dont want people to feel pressured to say yes or that they have to block this. My alternative proposal is that we schedule an emergency meeting for next week. Mark - not sure I feel that way. For me having heard everything that has been put forward, I am esp compelled by Xusana chiming in and saying she will do everything she can do as a cabinet member ensure this stays above board and to shepherd this through as necessary. Based on the quality of expertise

	on the committee, and what Xusana and others have said, I would be inclined to vote in the affirmative on this policy. Mary - Clarifying that this does not have to do with my trust of the committee and their decision making. I would not want any violation of the procurement policy to jeopardize the future of funding. I have seen other orgs get into this situation. Mary in chat - I think we should have an emergency meeting after we have more details. Samantha in chat - I think there also needs to be a strong commitment for attendance for an emergency meeting to vote, if that is the path we choose Samantha in chat - In some ways, this is not any different than trusting a hiring committee to move through a hiring process without asking board consent at each stage Xusana in chat - or a policy committee to be able to create a focus on certain topics/bills/etc Xusana - Discussion of decision making as the board. I was confused by the previous comment about blocking, unanimity, voting. Are we majority voting or five finger consensus. Jean - my recollection is that this board uses consensus, meaning that proposals move forward with all members either agreeing to the proposal or standing aside, noone blocking the proposal. Will check policy folders. Zack - when was the last time this was used and what was used? Jean - my recollection is we have used consensus, but there has not been much dissent and it felt like unanimous approval. ACTION ITEM Clarify and confirm LAOB's Consensus process. Xusana: Idea is to temp check now. The sense i heard was a yes/if: We would be willing to authorize as long as we have assurances like a trail of financial breadcrumbs.

	Proposal: authorize the subcommittee to consider a higher threshold of funding to be dispensed to any and all entities that may be appropriate, and that in so doing they come back to the full group with advanced notice of a breakdown of how those funds are to be used which entities to whom they are to be given, and any other relevant details, and that board members commit now to being available for making budget decisions if quick turn around needed, while we collectively adhere to open meeting laws meeting postings with quorum of members in discussion. Board approves.
5. Policy Committee 10 mins	Postponed
6. Board Announcements 10 mins	HHAV meeting tomorrow
7. **Midd College Senior Seminar –** Community Engagement/Ownership over public resources 25 mins	Postponed
Meeting Adjourned 7:45pm	
CONSENT ITEMS	• authorize the Shelter for All subcommittee to consider a higher threshold of $85,000 additional, $100,000 total in funding to be dispensed to any and all entities that may be appropriate, and that in so doing they come back to the full group with advanced notice of a breakdown of how those funds are to be used which entities to whom they are to be given, and any other relevant details, and that board members commit now to being available for making budget decisions if quick turn

	around needed, while we collectively adhere to open meeting laws meeting postings with quorum of members in discussion.
ACTION ITEMS	● Staff send board procurement policy. ● confirm board's voting/consensus process ● get estimate from Brenda and team on the cost of these resource needs, esp the lawyer. ● get more details from Brenda and team on the systemic issues to inform LAOB's advisory powers.

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