Land Access and Opportunity Board: Policy Committee

November 11, 2025, 2:00PM-3:30PM

Meeting Facilitator: Jean Hamilton, Ornella Matta-Figueroa

Notetaker: Arealles Ortiz

Attendees	**Not Present:**
Board ● Dan Coutu, VT Commission on Native American Affairs, VT Council on Native American Affairs ● Jaada Longmore, Vermont Racial Justice ● Brian Cina, VT National Association of Social Workers ● Mark Hughes, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance **Staff** Jean Hamilton, Ornella Matta-Figueroa	● Alyssa Beauchamp, Liberation Ecosystem, Inc. ● Susan Aranoff, Vermont Developmental Disability Council ● Kirsten Murphy, Vermont Developmental Disability Council ● Xusana Davis, Office of Racial Equity
Guests & Public: Grey Berreda	

Meeting Convened by Facilitator at 2PM	
1. Introductions & Check-in	Name, Nominating Organization Check-in: How are we arriving today? Agenda Building: Approve 11.4.25 Minutes (5mins) Policy Framework Policy Planning for 2026 Session Public Comment

2. Discussion/ Updates	Wanted to check in with Dan, any updates on support to Vermont Abenaki Folks in contacting with their legislators? So far, we've been supporting different allied voices. The commission has put together analysis and data. Things are getting presented to a number of media outlets. In our next meeting, we will have strategic messaging out to legislators. <u>Reviewing 11.4.25 Minutes</u> *Amendments: Add Brian to Policy Committee Attendance* Dan Coutu Makes a Motion to approve Minutes Presented All in Favor Brian Cina Abstains from Approving Minutes Presented Mark Hughes Abstains from Approving Minutes Presented ***Note for Arealles:*** *Check out VHCB website, click on minutes to see how they are appearing.* **At Next Board Meeting** could we define who are the core committed members of each committee? What does commitment look like? This gives us an opportunity to invite people to join committees and hear a little bit about what each committee is doing. Shows where board members are committing themselves or not. It gives us the ability to see gaps. Check in on Policy Framework: At the meeting last week, I heard we can think about our policy initiatives to be set up like a rubric for policy initiatives and strategies. And then a multiyear timeline. When I think about policy framework, I think about the SEC in how they used to try to figure out what they are supporting and what they are not. What are the policies organic to what we are doing? What is the framework that we use as a tool from conception to move through the process for enactment? How do we support other organizations' policies? There should be some kind of opposition framework as well. When harmful policies come out, what is the process we need to engage to ensure we are speaking on behalf of the board to intercept it?

	This reminds me, this policy committee did pass a LAOB Board policy on how to give guidance on what staff and board can speak on. It described what would need to come back to the policy committee for further approval & what would need to come back to the Board for signing on letters of support, etc. **Note to Arealles: Add the document described above to Share Folder for Policy Committee to view.** My understanding is that this committee would recommend to the board a policy platform for the session on issues and policy initiatives that were in the LAOB statute and scope. Two pieces to the policy framework 1. How do we create a unified voice? 2. How do we protect ourselves from a misstep. Next step would be a process. How do we bring policy ideas forward, hear policy ideas from community, and then evaluate if we support. My challenges have been this runaway train nature. Like which polices gain traction and have momentum? In addition, is there values alignment? Also, there's a real question of is this a strategic way for us to lean in? How do we manage all this information and decision making? Wanting to ground this conversation with the information we are working with. Sharing DRAFT of Policy Platform. Look at this with how do manage vectors of data processing that a policy platform asks of us. A contribution: If there's a wide net of things I'm working on, I ask where I can put energy next? Some of these items on the policy platform draft have people from other organizations. There may be cases where another group of people that are doing a strong push for an item on our list can lead that charge. We might not have to put so much energy into those and let others lead. An exception is sometimes we need all hands-on deck. Committing resources to certain issues. Might have to make a judgement call. Staff to let us know to invite people for processes, public comment.

	We can look at how we can distribute our energy without creating redundancy with consent and encouragement. Still confused about stated limitations and guardrails around advocacy as lobbying. What are the technical lobbying guardrails? How do quasi-entities show up? Theres a fine line between a body of government receiving taxpayer money advising its opinion based on open public process and a group of individuals or organizations coming together to advocate for something using private money. Talk with other governmental bodies on how they manage it and keep learning. When we have asked, what people say is you can say anything as long as committees invite you in for testimony. And you're just sharing information. That seems like the guardrail stated. We should avoid electoral based activities like call your legislator and say x,y,z to a community group or ask for a particular vote. We should be inviting people into processes, public opportunities for engagement and input. It's okay for us to have a position. Here are the details, implications. We can inform people. We might say, here is the board's position and here is how you can share your position. Ask public to weigh in. When we have a position, we give people opportunity to weigh in. Inviting people into the process. Can we roll back to talk about…What we were talking a couple of minutes ago about made me think of, maybe we could put out a survey and request from our board/collaborators to find out: What policy issues are you working on this session? How should LAOB be informed? Coalition support to solicit initiatives? And then we can generate the long list. While also identifying opportunities we see as a strategic investment in our resources. If we are looking for a way forward, we could narrow in on what we know. Start with the Draft. Would it be helpful to engage with the Draft for more context?

	Agreement with spending time looking at the Draft. **Action Item:** Ask Board members, to fill out a google form with guiding questions. Get peer support. If successful, we can share the form more broadly. There could be a Preliminary Draft on how we deal with policy. Concerned we might miss policy on the wall right now. Hard to not see what's happening right now such as healthcare and food costs increasing, homelessness and civil rights. There is policy emerging related to issues wouldn't want to miss. What are we defining as short sighted? LAOB is speaking to a change strategy. We are to advise and speak into the system. Unlock the power of community members. Discussed case study in shelter last year. Could that be an example of what you meant by LAOB being short-sighted? Main point was missing something we should've caught. Discussed Civil rights at the federal level. Focus on our policy work that is important to our constituencies versus what is popular. How do I prioritize policy strategies that have an action plan v. civil rights that's in freefall? I don't know what action to take. Where to begin? Emerging issues means to be flexible and shift. *There is a campaign at VRJA and emerging policy draft coming out on how to address civil rights (Is this accurate Mark?)* From the chat: Review all bureaucracy related to housing and recommend consolidation combined with increased public engagement and direct democracy to reinvest funding and power. We have so many boards and commissions related to land use. They use up resources. If we map it out, we can recommend consolidations of government bodies. Pair it with direct democracy. Wiser investment to pay everyday people and give wisdom than investing in bureaucracy. Spectrum of community engagement to ownership tool. Community buying in is good because it leads to efficient policies and programs.

	We need to innovate a governance tool that invites in more civic engagement that is accessible. We are facing a critical gap of capacities. Public Comment: Feel deeply about community engagement. Sharing survey from the OPC. At a conference, heard language about compensation and inclusion. As a person who wants to participate in the conversation representing unhoused community members, there was pushback. Want to talk more about how community engagement can be nurtured. Connect with keynote speakers. Seeing at racial equity gatherings, people are building solidarity by othering people. https://movementstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/The-Spectrum-of-Community-Engagement-to-Ownership.pdf Response to Public Comment: There are challenges in various communities. Many internal challenges. Intentional Pressure. I hear you and listening.
3. Process Check-in, Next Steps	**ACTION ITEM:** Take a closer look at the draft, what should go on, come off? **ACTION ITEM**: Board Development to look at the Board's expectations and guidance on what to do when a board member doesn't agree with a decision that the board has taken. **Action Item:** Ask Board members, to fill out a google form with guiding questions such as what policy issues are you working on this session? How should LAOB be informed? Coalition support to solicit initiatives? Get peer support. If successful, we can share the form more broadly. **At Next Board Meeting** could we define who are the core committed members of each committee. What does commitment look like? An opportunity to invite people to join committees and hear a little bit about what each committee is doing. Shows where board members are committing themselves or not. Able to see gaps. ● Gratitudes
Meeting Adjourned at 3:32 PM	

Submitted By: Arealles Ortiz