# Land Access and Opportunity Board Meeting
**January 12, 2026, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.**

Meeting Facilitator: Jean Hamilton, Ornella Matta-Figueroa

Notetaker: Arealles Ortiz

| Attendee | Present | Not Present |
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| **Board** | ● Mark Hughes, VRJA<br>● Susan Aranoff, Vermont DDC<br>● Mary Gerisch, NAACP<br>● Xusana Davis, Office of Racial Equity<br>● Alyssa Beauchamp, Liberation Ecosystem<br>● Zack Hughes, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors<br>● Brian Cina, National Association of Social Workers<br>● Dan Coutu, VT Commission on Native American Affairs<br>● Emily Carris-Duncan, Vermont Every Town Project | ● Sonali Samarasinghe, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)<br>● *No active board member*, Pride Center of Vermont<br>● Abel Luna, Migrant Justice |
| **Board Alternates** | • Caitlin Scott, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors<br>• Kirsten Murphy, Vermont DDC<br>• Jaada Longmore, VRJA | ● Samantha Langevin, Liberation Ecosystem<br>● Rich Holschuh, VCNAA<br>● Kenneth Martel, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) |

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| | • Marita Canedo, Migrant Justice | |
| **Guests & Public** | Staff: Tay Margison, Kiah Morris<br>Public: Ernest Caswell Buster | |

# Agenda

1. **Check In**: Name, Organization, how are you arriving?
2. **Convene the January 12, 2026, virtual meeting of the LAOB at 5:30pm**
   a. Welcome, Overview
   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, Seat and Location (county)

**2. Review & Approve Meeting Minutes from December 15, 2025**

Amendments:
"In house-housing" to "In HOUSE, GENERAL & HOUSING COMMITTEE"
"Prohibiting public accommodation" to "prohibiting discrimination in housing and public accommodation"
Suggestion to Remove naming members for anonymity

Mark Hughes makes a motion to approve the minutes as presented
Mary Gerisch seconds that motion
Alyssa Beauchamp abstains
All in Favor

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| **3. Shelter Grants 2026 Q1** | We put together an RFP, simple application process, for folks who are running what we would consider shelter services. We had a combination of folks who applied. Our goal is to try to help move some resources to fill in needed gaps happening in emergency shelters this winter season. |

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| | Shelter for All Committee looked at proposals, provided comments, and guidance as how we would go about funding these awards.<br><br>We were able to fund 8 out of the 9 programs at $25K each. The remaining program was looking for a different grant opportunity which we will invite them into later.<br><br>Question: Does the board give a final approval tonight?<br>Response: Yes, we will vote on that as a board<br><br>Board is reviewing the 9 grant applications and 8 recommended awards from Shelter For All committee to the LAOB.<br><br>https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1rHA42wdmChWlWloXRjBQBrUwwphVFBw93WkzOYEt2wk/edit?usp=sharing<br><br>Question: I have a question about guidance for the organization receiving grants. The amount of money is less than what they applied for, wondering about guidance around allowable costs, and the timeframe that they have to spend it down.<br><br>Response: We discussed at SFA the possibility of other funding opportunities that may be available to get applicants the full amount requested.<br>We also discussed another round of grants that may give applicants another opportunity to re-apply.<br><br>Response: Timeline to spend down the funds is before July 1st, 2026. Applicants will have to re-submit a new budget on how they plan to spend the funds awarded.<br><br>Question: How does the emergency shelter grants connect to our mission?<br><br>Response: The work of the LAOB is expansive and one of the most cross-sectional entities that touch on many areas of what it means for people to have a sense of place.<br><br>Response: Shelter for All developed these guidelines around shelter that leads to land access and opportunity LAOB Emergency Shelter Guidelines - Google Docs<br>Temperature check on how we feel about supporting the recommendations from the Shelter For All Committee? |

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| | Susan Aranoff makes a motion to approve shelter grants as presented<br>Alyssa Beauchamp seconds that motion<br>All in favor |
| **4. Public Comment & Board Responses:** | Public Comment: Advocacy. Keep doing the great work you folks do. Write your work, share it, keep a smile on your face.<br><br>Response: Thank you for your appreciation and participation. |
| **BREAK:** 6:30-6:35pm | |
| **5. LAOB Bill** | Overview of LAOB Bill origins. We reviewed this year's priorities; we worked on this bill together and made some changes.<br><br>We landed at, an act related to land, access, and opportunity. The purpose of the Bill is to create a fund administered by the board; it also proposes to require an affordable housing tax report from the Department of Taxes and create a land security working group.<br><br>We took out references to emergencies (such as flooding, climate crisis, pandemic, poly substance use, housing crisis) and the bill became one about the future of housing in Vermont.<br><br>We added a findings section to support the board's work.<br><br>Overviewed what we may use the funds for.<br><br>Identified who we shall work with, but we can include others.<br><br>Annually, we shall submit a report of our activities related to this work to the governor and the legislature.<br><br>Actions of the Working Group:<br>-Shall provide an assessment and recommendations regarding economics and environmental justice impacts of Vermont land use and conservation policies.<br>-Identification and protection of agricultural land for community food security purposes. |

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| | We're hoping to gather the impacts of the many different populations.<br><br><u>Comments or Thoughts:</u><br><br>Comment: I'm impressed with how thorough this is. Good structure, good thoughts around guardrails, purpose and focus.<br><br>Question: Who is responsible for submitting a report of our activities related to this work to the governor and the legislature?<br><br>Response: Great question ; will add this into the action items.<br><br>Comment: Once the board approves this final draft then we can get our legislative sponsors.<br><br>Comment: Propose to change language that there is a third way to receive stipend, where people do not receive stipends as individuals, but the organization still can.<br><br>Comment: I feel like this is an awkward vote. Could the board indicate any objections to the policy committee and staff continue to work with co-sponsors on this bill?<br><br>Response: This is not a drafting request. We need to approve this so it can be introduced. We can still add in edits.<br><br>Comment: I propose that the board moves forward with a vote.<br><br>Mark Hughes makes a motion to approve the LAOB going forward with this Bill as presented<br>Mary Gerisch seconds that motion<br>All in favor<br>Susan Aranoff abstains due to a work policy |
| **6. 2026 Legislative Updates** | Focus on the $1M Reverted<br><br>We are working on getting the funds reinstated. The governor is recommending we get the $1M returned to the LAOB through that Budget Adjustment Act Process. |

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| | $1M would reinstate FY26 grant programs:<br>750K Homes for All Grant Fund<br>250K Community Resilience Hub Grants<br><br>It would be helpful to have community testimony in support of our BAA.<br><br>https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Press-Releases/2026-HAC-BAA-Public-Hearing-Press-Release.pdf<br><br>The deadline to sign up is 1/13 or submit a written statement.<br><br>If you have any interest in providing testimony, will you let us know? |
| **7. Board Announcements:** | -ORE Hired two new staff<br>-Fingers Crossed on launching Beginning Developers Program<br>-Link shared: https://vtracialjusticealliance.org/2025/07/raise-up-justice. Raise up Justice Campaign on Thursday and individual/organizational sign offs.<br>-LAOB staff will be in general house tomorrow to talk about what we have learned about land use, planning, Act 250, permitting, and what to do next. |
| **8. CONSENT ITEMS** | |
| **9. ACTION ITEMS** | • Who is responsible for submitting a report (LAOB Bill working group) of our activities related to this work to the governor and the legislature? |
| **10. Meeting Adjourned: 7:36PM** | |

***Submitted by: Arealles Ortiz***