Land Access and Opportunity Board: Shelter for All

March 19th, 2026, 12:00PM-1:00PM

Meeting Facilitator: Jean Hamilton/ Kiah Morris

Notetaker: Arealles Ortiz

Attendance:
Zack Hughes, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors
Mary Gerisch, NAACP
Brian Cina, National Association of Social Workers

Guests: None

Not Present:
Mark Hughes, VRJA
Jaada Longmore, VRJA
Susan Aranoff, Vermont DDC
Sonali Samarasinghe, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

Agenda:

- Check Ins: Name, Pronouns, Organization
- Previous Meetings Minutes Review 3.5.26
- Truth and Reconciliation Listening with Unhoused Vermonters
- Community Resilience Grants Review Process
- Public Comment

Minutes:

Review Draft 3.5.26:

Mary Gerisch makes a motion to approve minutes as presented
Zach Hughes seconds that motion
No amendments/clarification
All in favor

Truth and Reconciliation Listening with Unhoused Vermonters:

LAOB has been working with Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to plan Truth Telling Sessions for unhoused community members in the last two weeks of April. We are hoping this committee could provide community outreach.

TRC is looking to run these private sessions with at least 8 people present. We brainstormed hosting at public libraries in Montpelier or Barre.

If committee members feel there is an opportunity to host a truth telling session in their community, please let staff members know.

The role TRC wants us to play is to get folks registered and post flyers in the area.

TRC would provide snacks, their care team, and host the session. If LAOB is invited by a community member or asked to come for support, we would be welcome, but it wouldn't be a space for staff/committee members to just witness because they are private sessions.

Question: What is this space for?

Response: The space is to tell your story honestly and make suggestions on you feel your story could be eased in the future. Everything you say is confidential, but it will be recorded for TRCs purposes. The recording gets redacted for anonymity then it goes into the state archives so people can hear what community members were going through as well as make recommendations to the state.

Question: How will we do outreach so we are pretty confident that 8 people will attend? We would like to temperature check personal outreach.

Response: Would love to have a truth telling session in Bennington because we have a large, unhoused population.

Comment: Appreciate us thinking about our geographic spread and wanting to support Bennington. Also recognizing there may be folks in Bennington utilizing services who are currently unhoused that may be problematic to have. Would want us to be thoughtful of our staff and folks from TRC.

Comment: Not sure what we can offer and do not have capacity to recruit people in Montpelier.

Comment: Generally, resource-wise it would be good to host one session in Montpelier or Barre.

Comment: We would need a link to sign folks up and something to pass around. Also, if folks would like to do participate, what's going to happen next?

Link shared: https://vtrc.vermont.gov/truth-telling

Comment: The point of TRC and telling your story is to suggest a change that could be helpful to someone else experiencing a similar circumstance. Stories remain anonymous and also get submitted to state. TRC will then ask the state to take certain action steps.

Community Resilience Grants Review Process:

No one has submitted their applications yet. We had some interviews and consultations with folks who do want to apply. Applications will be due March 31st. We will be putting out a FAQ. Kiah will be available to help folks through the application process. We are hoping to direct folks

to the authors of the toolkit and provide applicants guidance on how to incorporate the toolkit into their projects.

Shared Review Proposal Document & Timeline

- 4/3: Review materials with review team
- 4/4-4/9: Reviewers will read and score grants; approximately 15 hours
- 4/10 & 4/15: 2 x 2.5-hour reviewer meetings
- 4/20: Staff prepare committee grant awards proposal for Board vote at May meeting.
-5/4 Board approval of grants

Planning to review 30 applications. We have awards available for 8 grants at $50K.

Reviewers will be 3 board members and 2 community members. There are many Conflicts of Interest for reviewers to be careful of.

The time commitment for reviewers will be approximately 20 hours. We will need board approval to provide additional stipends to Board Members/Community Members who are reviewers.

Mary Gerisch makes a motion to adopt the proposal presented

Zach Hughes seconded that motion

All in favor of approving the proposal presented

Question: What would be a fair stipend for reviewers?

Response: We will have to think about that.

Public Comment: No members of the public were present

Action Steps:

-Marketing materials from TRC, confirm the date of the private truth telling session, and provide motivation for unhoused community members to attend.

-Updates on stipends for reviewers

Meeting Adjourned at 12:00PM

Submitted By: Arealles Ortiz