Land Access and Opportunity Board: Policy Committee

June 8, 2026, 11:00 AM-12:00 PM

Meeting Facilitator: Ornella Matta-Figueroa

Notetaker: Arealles Ortiz

Attendees	**Not Present:**
Board • Mary Gerisch, NAACP Rutland • Zack Hughes, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors • Mark Hughes, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance • Brian Cina, National Association of Social Workers • Susan Aranoff, Vermont Developmental Disability Council • Dan Coutu, VT Commission on Native American Affairs **Staff:** Ornella Matta-Figueroa, Arealles Ortiz	● Alyssa Beauchamp, Liberation Ecosystem Inc. ● Jaada Longmore, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance *Tentative:* - Kirsten Murphy, Vermont Developmental Disability Council - Emily Carris-Duncan, Vermont Every Town Project - Andre Comandon, Office of Racial Equity - Sonali Samarasinghe, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
Guests & Public: No members of the public were present.	

Meeting Convened by Facilitator at 11AM	
1. Introductions & Check-in	Agenda: - Check-in: Name, Nominating Organization -Prompt: What is one word/phrase that describes how you feel about LAOB Policy engagement right now? - Review Draft Minutes: 5/4/26, 5/6/26 - Planning for Policy Engagements 2027 - Public Comment

2. Discussion/ Updates	Prompt: What is one word/phrase that described how you feel about LAOB Policy engagement right now? -Excited -Motivated, we are engaged. -Curious and interested in understanding where we're going to go from here because there is a lot of opportunities for us. -Wondering where we go from here because there is so much tee'd up in different places. -Confused about what exactly is happening at this point and what we're going to do. -Incomplete -Also felt confused with exhaustion and despair. -Exhausted. There are so many different places our efforts are connected to. <u>Review Draft Minutes: 5/4/26, 5/6/26:</u> Dan Coutu makes a motion to approve 5/4/26 minutes as presented. Susan Aranoff seconds that motion. Zach Hughes abstains due to absence. Mary Gerisch abstains due to absence. All were in favor. Susan Aranoff makes motion to approve 5/6/26 minutes as presented. Dan Coutu seconds that motion. Comment: When comments are coming from community members can we name it in the minutes as 'Community Member Comment', especially in meetings with many members of the public present. Mary Gerisch abstains due to absence. Zach Hughes abstains due to absence. All were in favor.

	Planning for Policy Engagement 2027: - Overview of Stockdale paradox. Want us to be approaching our policy initiatives with gritty honesty, where do want to move forward, where is there risk, and where is there opportunity. -This year's policy engagement have been centered on Land Use, Community Development, direct engagement with S.325, Coalition Work, written memos for a number of legislation pieces. -LAOBs Policy Engagement has been: Technical input on legislation, working groups, rulemaking, coalitions, listening to community members, and redressing disparities for populations who have been marginalized from land/homeownership. -We are seeing significant turnover in the legislature this year. Next year is looking like a lot of starting from square one so people in the legislature know who the LAOB is and the work we do. -This past session has surfaced a lot of internal field level tension and questions around coalition alignment, roles, what is advocacy, and what is lobbying? -Another big question that came up in this committee is whether the co-directors can facilitate and advocate at the same time? What does neutrality look like in practice? -We are also exploring how do we keep our work non-partisan. Reflections, Questions, Thoughts, What's missing: -Seeing an exodus of legislators happening, and it's not normal. But it's an opportunity to connect with the new folks running for office. -At the state level, many legislators this year have found it to be very stressful especially with education and the response to Act 181. Link shared in the chat: https://vtdigger.org/2026/06/05/musical-chairs-many-vermont-house-and-senate-leaders-wont-seek-reelection/ We saw a lack of credible leadership that emboldened fiscal conservatism, public safety, and protecting certain interests. We're not going to get progressive ideas by people on the rise. -In agreement, this is a very unusual time. We've got a national civil rights crisis and moved from a democracy to an autocracy. There has been a massive

	backlash as a nation racially. Haven't seen any leadership on a state level that will take us out of this. -We all need to come up with a post-approach to S.193. Concerned that the facility will be located in a prison. Advocacy is not being heard right now.
3. Process Check-in, Next Steps	● Reflections ● Next Steps: -Review: 5/11, 5/27, 6/8 DRAFT -Check in with Ornella about next steps. ● Gratitudes
Meeting Adjourned at 12PM	

Submitted by: Arealles Ortiz