Land Access and Opportunity Board: Shelter for All

May 28th 2026 12:00-1:00PM

Meeting Facilitator: Kiah Morris

Notetaker: Arealles Ortiz

Attendance:

Mary Gerisch, NAACP Rutland

Jaada Longmore, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance

Zack Hughes, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors

Mark Hughes, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance

Guests & Public:

Not Present:

Brian Cina, National Association of Social Workers

Tentative:

Susan Aranoff, Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

Sonali Samarasinghe, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

Agenda:

-Check ins: Name, Nominating Organization

-Review 4.16.26 Draft Minutes

-Bill updates:

- S.193: An act relating to establishing a forensic facility for certain criminal justice-involved persons.

- H.772: An act relating to residential rental agreements, eviction procedures, and the creation of the positive rental payment credit reporting pilot program.

- H.938: An act relating to establishing the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum.

-Update on Emergency Shelter Grants & discussion on end of grant meeting.

-Public Comment

Minutes:

Check Ins: Name, Nominating Organization

Prompt: How are you doing today?

Review 4.16.26 Draft Minutes:

Mary Gerisch makes a motion to approve the minutes as presented.

Mark Hughes seconds that motion.

Zach Hughes abstains due to absence.

All were in favor.

Bill updates:

H.722: Has died in the senate. This policy is tied to homelessness in terms of streamlined evictions.

S.193: Might get passed. Vermont Psychiatric Survivors (VPS) is talking about what happens if the Bill does pass and how can we prepare for that possibility. We feel like we're not being listened to by policy makers on this Bill.

Comment: In agreement and this bill feels like an Orwellian idea.

Comment: Was talking to VPS and there is tremendous pressure coming from family members of victims. But we're not willing to take the tremendous loss.

Link in Chat:
https://vtdigger.org/2026/05/26/lawmakers-last-minute-scramble-for-a-facility-for-those-incompetent-to-stand-trial/

Update on S.193: https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2026/S.193

Comment: It looks like Developmental Disabilities Council reported on this Bill in their newsletter.

Comment: Feels like there is a lack of time, capacity, and connectivity to communities in Vermont while these bills are being created. It speaks to people who feel that they are not being heard.

Comment: Heard there were concerns addressed about the facility being held with corrections. There are already forensic capabilities in the state, and we should be unearthing what is already in play.

Comment: We can bring our voice and collective power to make policy change as well as create safety. What can we do as an LAOB to ease the burden for those who are most impacted? What other pieces can we bring to support others who might have innovative solutions?

Update on Emergency Shelter Grants:

As we go through the report, we are looking at electronic mechanisms to be more effective and efficient to support with redistribution funds.

$64,726 dollars have been invoiced out of the $198,350 in awarded and contracted funds.

All 7 awards have been successfully contracted:
-2 grantees have fully expensed their grants and submitted final reports.
-1 grantee have successfully invoiced for some of all of their grant funds.
-1 grantee has indicated lack of certainty of ability to use their funds.
-1 grantee is scheduled to meet and discuss a spend down plan for their grant.
-2 grantees have not communicated spend down plans, will reach out to check on them.

Overall, administrative tasks have been clunky with this first LAOB grant program. There is room for improvement, which we are hoping to integrate into the resilience hub grants and future grants infrastructure process.

Grantees are submitting written reports with the final disbursement request including answers to the following questions:

o How are you incorporating LAOB's Emergency Access to Land and Opportunity Guidelines into your shelter?
o What stands in your way of incorporating more of these guidelines into your shelter?
o What will support your shelter providing access to land and opportunity?
o How do you measure the success of your shelter?

Grantees shall participate in at least one meeting with LAOB staff to discuss:
- Lessons learned as a result of this grant award and associated activities.
- How can Vermont's shelter system be better prepared for next winter?
- How do we embed land access, opportunity, and resilience into our emergency shelters?

Question: Does this committee recommend we host this meeting as a focus group or as one-on-one meetings? How would Shelter for All committee like to participate?

Comment: I think it's better not to do it in a group. It may enhance any acrimony. Grantees might be more comfortable discussing difficulties with the staff.

Question: Is there going to be an issue with grantees receiving funds during the blackout period?

Response: Everyone is in their grant agreements and is prepared to process payments by May 31st. Whatever funding we don't award will be reallocated for further shelter or resilience hub granting.

Comment: Grantees should be made aware of these things. We will extend timelines as far as we possibly can.

Does anyone have anything on H.938:

Link shared in the chat: https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2026/Docs/BILLS/H-0938/H-0938%20Senate%20proposal%20of%20amendment%20Official.pdf

This bill would be most squarely related to the work of this committee. It appears that the House has concurred with the amendments from the Senate. Then it will be headed to the governor's desk.

Comment: Continuum of Care (CoC) is established by HUD. This bill wants to merge Chittenden County Continuum of Care and the Balance of State Continuum of Care. The state legislature can't mandate these 2 organizations funded by the federal government to merge. That responsibility would need to go to the Federal Government. Both CoCs have already said that they operate differently.

Also, federal funding to many CoC's are being cut from 80 to 60%.

Comment: The state doesn't have the authority to say what HUD is going to do.

Comment: Maybe Legislative Council has a summary of this Bill. Would like to figure out how the LAOB could get on top of this, and we weren't even taken into consideration.

Next Steps:

- Create an intention action with H.938

PIN: Where is the LAOB/Sheler for All Committee at with homelessness and affordable housing to effect change?

Submitted by: Arealles Ortiz