

**Land Access and Opportunity Board**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**November 7, 2022, 5:00 – 7:30 p.m.**  
**Bethany Church, N. Main St., Randolph, VT**

**Agenda**

The first in-person meeting of the Land Access and Opportunity Board was convened by Pastor Thomas, acting as meeting facilitator, at 6:00 p.m. on Nov. 7, 2022. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

**Board members present:** Xusana Davis, Vermont Office of Racial Equity; Rev. Mark Hughes, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance; Samantha Langevin, RELEAF Collective; Jess Laporte, Every Town Project; Pastor Thomas, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance; Kirsten Murphy, Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council; Lynn Stanley, National Association of Social Workers, Vermont; Pacifique Nsengiyumva, U.S. Committee on Refugees and Immigrants, Vermont; Rich Holschuh, Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs; Raheemah Madany, Pride Center

**Board members not present:** Naomi Moody, Vermont chapters of the NAACP; Karim Chapman Vermont Psychiatric Survivors

**VHCB staff present:** Gustave Seelig; Trey Martin; Bill Dell’Isola

**Members of the public present:** Malcolm Greene; Liz Mills; Liz Mackey; Buster Caswell; Miha Longmore; Isaac Owusu

1. The Board took up a recommendation from the Legal Services RFP Working Group regarding hiring. The working group comprised Samantha Langevin, Pacifique Nsengiyumva and Rev. Mark Hughes, with administrative support from Trey Martin at VHCB.

Samantha Langevin presented the working group’s recommendation to hire two Vermont-based attorneys, Robert Appel and Anthony Iarrapino. As documented by Samantha, this recommendation was based on a thorough process, including review, scoring (qualitative and quantitative), discussion of all four responses over two working meetings, and finally interviews with the two selected candidates.

Samantha summarized the working group’s conclusion that both are very strong candidates, with passion for the Board’s work, a commitment to imagining options outside the presumptive legal “box”, and a willingness to step over the line, speak truth to power, and fight for change. Moreover, the two attorneys have complementary skills and experience and will form a strong team. This is important because of the imminent Sunrise Report deadline and the broad scope of work ahead of the LAOB to deliver that report. Trey Martin spoke to both candidates ahead of the Board’s meeting, and he reported that they were not only amenable to a “team” approach, but look forward to working together with the LAOB.

Board members had several questions for the working group, including whether there were other strong candidates not selected, and if not, why not. With regard to that point, the working group unanimously agreed that the two candidates selected represented, in their view, the best counselors to support the Board's objectives. However, the working group acknowledged that the other proposals received, from a large private law firm in Vermont, as well as a Washington D.C.-based DEIJ consultant, were strong. Nonetheless, those proposals didn't represent the combination of local practice and deep experience working on the set of issues facing the LAOB.

The Board discussed the following additional points with regard to this decision.

- The role for the attorneys should include multiple roles, including legal research, interviews and scoping for Sunrise Report development; advocacy on behalf of the LAOB before the Vermont General Assembly; and an ongoing advisory role to the LAOB within the parameters of the statutory mission.
- Trey Martin will act as project manager and supervise the development of contracts, work plans and interface with LAOB working group members and the full Board.
- Next steps include establishing contracts with the attorneys, which Board members stipulated should be at identical rates; developing work plans for each attorney and report development more generally; establishing an LAOB working group as well as schedule for regular meetings with the Board.

The LAOB voted unanimously to offer contracts to both Robert Appel and Anthony Iarrapino.

2. Meeting Notes from October 17 were reviewed. One edit was suggested, to change Kirsten Murphy's last name from Stanley.
3. The Board reviewed the Draft Priorities and Objectives Document prepared by Pastor Thomas. Proposed revisions to the document will be prepared by Trey Martin, based on the discussion, and circulated to the full Board for discussion at the Nov. 21 meeting.
4. Public Comment:
  - Malcolm Green – barriers to access must be acknowledged, confronted and overcome. There are laws and precedents that hold capitalist ownership and systems of oppression in place. There was a system here before 1776. We must step out of the constraints that the law uses to hold us in place.
  - Buster Caswell – Farmers bring a lot to clean water and safe food. We all need to understand where our food comes from. Need to challenge suggestions that farmers are not land stewards. Need to look at how we're going to protect the folks who grow our food and clean our water. Not farmworkers, but farmers working for farmers. Need to recognize those who are working on our land, including migrant workers and

members of the Latinx community. Farmers need access to affordable housing. Need to learn about resources at national and local level. New program created in Vermont – Farmworker housing repair program. Needs to be built up, and built upon.

- Miha Longmore, from the VRJA, underscored the need for help beyond just *access* to home and land, but ongoing support for BIPOC people to *stay and flourish* in Vermont. Board discussion about the viability of access really resonated and Miha encouraged the Board to continue to think about how to support the long-term implementation of this effort.
- Isaac Owusu, VRJA, commented to the Board that this work is much needed! Statistics tell the story. Levels of home, farm, and land security for BIPOC Vermonters are too low to support strong and welcoming communities.

5. Review/preview:

- a. The Board has three more meetings in 2022: Nov. 21, Dec. 5 and Dec. 19, and LAOB members are encouraged to volunteer as meeting facilitators.
- b. A Board working group to support the management of attorneys Appel and Iarrapino is needed, and Board members are encouraged to volunteer by contacting Trey about their willingness to serve on this group. All working group meetings are eligible for per diem reimbursement, as well as any associated costs.