

**Land Access and Opportunity Board**  
**July 25, 2022, 4 p.m. – 5 p.m.**  
**Virtual Meeting**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

1. The first meeting of the Land Access and Opportunity Board (“LAOB” or “Board”) was called to order by Xusana Davis, Director of the Office for Racial Equity, at 4:10 p.m. on July 25, 2022. The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m.

The meeting was recorded, and it can be viewed on VHCB’s website.

2. Board members present or appointing authorities represented:
  - Xusana Davis, Director, Office of Racial Equity
  - Steffen Gillom, President, Windham County Chapter of the NAACP and Mia Shultz, Executive Director, Rutland Area of NAACP
  - Lynn Stanley, Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers
  - Kristen Murphy, Executive Director, Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council
  - Rev. Mark Hughes, Executive Director, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance
  - Laurie Stavrand, Community Partnership Coordinator, U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants, Vermont
  - Olivia Peña, Community Organizer, Vermont Releaf Collective
  - Karim Chapman, Executive Director, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors
3. Board members / appointing authorities not present:
  - Raheemah Madany, Pride Center
  - Kenya Lazuli, Vermont Every Town Project
  - Vermont Commission on Native America Affairs
4. VHCB staff present:
  - Gus Seelig, Executive Director
  - Trey Martin, Director of Policy, Planning and Program Development
5. Members of the public present:
  - Pastor Arnold Thomas
  - Miha Longmore
  - Shalini Suryanarayana
  - Roy Hill II
  - Rep. Brian Cina
  - Boreas \_\_\_\_\_
  - Mindy Blank
  - Malcolm \_\_\_\_\_

6. The main item of business on the agenda was a discussion of Board structure and Board member roles. Because not all appointing authorities have designated permanent representatives to the Board, decisions about Board structure, leadership model and roles were deferred to subsequent meetings. The role of note taker and preparation of meeting minutes was designated to VHCB with the support of Board members and appointing authority representatives.

Xusana Davis asked all of the representatives from appointing authorities to make every effort to appoint Board representatives before the next meeting, and to come prepared to discuss Board structure, leadership model and roles.

It was noted in discussion that the enabling Statute, Act 182, does not require the Board to appoint a chair. Likewise, the Act does not provide any requirements for quorum or governance, so the Board will have to establish these rules for itself based on guidance from the Vermont Secretary of State's [Guide for Open Meetings](#) and other sources.

7. Gus Seelig and Trey Martin from VHCB introduced themselves to the Board to provide a brief overview of VHCB's work and the role VHCB will play for the Board. Trey Martin then provided an overview of deliverables that the Board will need to consider at future meetings, including an MOU/Charter, RFPs for the consultants who will work with the Board to prepare the Act 182 Sunrise Report, a Budget and webpage content. He reminded the Board that all email communications, documents, and other written records are public records, and discoverable under Vermont law.

VHCB will prepare a draft MOU/Charter and draft consultant RFPs before the next meeting.

8. Xusana Davis asked Board members to share reflections and hopes regarding the work of the Board to address housing equity and land access in Vermont. Board members and guests had a brief discussion regarding the critical need for equitable access to housing, better outreach to vulnerable communities, and a stronger pipeline for affordable options, especially in the current economic situation. Gus Seelig offered that VHCB has never seen a more difficult housing market since its inception in the late 1980s.

9. Public Comments were offered by guests in the virtual chat room and in discussion:
  - Pastor Thomas addressed future Board leadership options with a recommendation that the Board's chair represent a BIPOC organization, as that was the original focus of the legislative advocacy by Seeding Power.
  - Rep. Cina asked if there requirements in Vermont's public meeting laws that would require a Board to have a quorum in order to make an official decision as a Board? Should he ask Legislative Council, or would Director Davis ask a lawyer? Trey Martin of VHCB offered to provide initial research and address this in the draft MOU/Charter document.

- Malcom asked: What are the board's expectations of itself? Many of us are looking at the Homestead Act of 1862 and expecting similar here. The Homestead Act, enacted during the Civil War in 1862, provided that any adult citizen, or intended citizen, who had never borne arms against the U.S. government, could claim 160 acres of surveyed government land. Claimants were required to live on and “improve” their plot by cultivating the land. After five years on the land, the original filer was entitled to the property, free and clear, except for a small registration fee. Title could also be acquired after only a six-month residency and trivial improvements, provided the claimant paid the government \$1.25 per acre.
  - Pastor Thomas asked: will the same zoom link be available for future meetings? What can we learn from other states? Will we be depending on local government entities (Selectboards and city councils) to carry out actions recommended by the Board?
10. Before concluding the meeting, Xusana Davis asked Board members and appointing authority representatives when, how often and for how long the Board should meet in the future.
- It was decided that meetings should be bi-weekly until the Board is fully formed and decides otherwise. Meetings will begin at 5:30 p.m. and run for 90 minutes.
11. The next two meetings were scheduled for Monday Aug. 8 and Monday, Aug. 22.\
12. The Aug. 8 and Aug. 22 meetings will be virtual and can be accessed at:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7762892697>

Meeting ID: 776 289 2697

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