

Land Access and Opportunity Board
Meeting Minutes: 8/8/2022, 5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m. Virtual Meeting

1. The second 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 5:44 p.m. on August 8, 2022. The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

This meeting was considered to be an informal meeting due to the lack of a “quorum”. Xusana Davis did however acknowledge the Board members and members of the public that were in attendance. In so doing, she indicated that the parties present should be afforded the opportunity to discuss issues of concern in regards to the LAOB.

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
 - Rev. Mark Hughes, Executive Director, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance
 - Laurie Stavrand, Community Partnership Coordinator, U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants, Vermont
 - Raheemah Madany, Pride Center
 - Pastor Arnold Thomas, Racial Justice Alliance
3. Board members / appointing authorities not present:
 - Kenya Lazuli, Vermont Every Town Project
 - 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
 - Olivia Peña, Community Organizer, Vermont Releaf Collective
 - Karim Chapman, Executive Director, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors
 - Vermont Commission on Native America Affairs
4. VHCB staff present:
 - Gus Seelig, Executive Director
 - Elizabeth Egan, VHCB General Counsel
5. Members of the public present:
 - Shalini Suryanarayana – briefly attended
 - Malcolm
 - Corali Cotrina
 - Al Wakefield

6. Public Comments were offered by guests in the virtual chat room and in discussion:
 - There was a considerable amount of discussion regarding the Board, its representation, the lack of attendance by the appointees, and the need for community outreach/representation.
 - VHCB's role was discussed, acknowledging that VHCB's function is to serve as an administrative agent, that the LAOB is independent of the VHCB Board.
 - There was discussion regarding how to determine the needs of the community. Suggestions regarding surveys and/or focus groups were discussed with the emphasis on the need for addressing language barriers, education and the varied interests of the communities.
 - There was discussion regarding the need for institutional change (i.e. – lenders not requiring interest payments; opportunity to “truly farm” not “sharecropping”).
 - There was a significant discussion regarding the concept of a “quorum” and the question as to what happens if a “traditional quorum” is never achieved. VHCB acknowledged that it had suggested to the LAOB to follow guidelines offered by the VT Secretary of State's Office in the interim until the governance of the LAOB was established. Some members of the LAOB felt this was systemic racism and were displeased with the VT SOS's definition of a quorum. Gus Seelig indicated that the reference to the VT SOS might not have been appropriate. All present agreed that there was important work to be done. Xusana stated that she did not want to make decisions at this present meeting without the appointees' input, as the more input that the LAOB has the more powerful its message will be.
 - Following the discussion on the concept of a quorum, the discussion focused on ways to make attendance at these meetings easier.
 - Discussion regarding the appropriation of the funding for the LAOB. Gus reassured those present that the funds were still available, and other than payment to the appointees for attendance at Board meetings, no funds would be spent until the LAOB took action on the RFP.

7. Near the end of the meeting, there was a recap of this informal meeting:
 - VHCB would work to make the link to the Board meeting more visible and easier to find on the website; VHCB would continue its work as an Administrative Agent.
 - Consensus of Board appointees present was that they would make a concerted effort to reach out to all appointees/agencies imploring all to attend the next meeting scheduled for August 22, 2022. However, if all did not attend the next meeting, those present at this meeting would begin the work that they need to do with or without full attendance of all Board members.

8. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday Aug. 22 at 5:30 pm.