

Working Lands Enterprise Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 21, 2024 9:00 AM-10:30 AM

Microsoft Teams & 116 State

Voting Board Members Present: Alyson Eastman (Deputy Secretary, Agency of Agriculture – designee for Anson Tebbetts, Secretary), Chair; Elisabeth Nance (designee for Lindsay Kurrle, Secretary, Agency of Commerce and Community Development); Oliver Pierson (designee for Danielle Fitzko, Commissioner, Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation); Alisha Utter (Vice Chair, arrives 9:44); Bob Lesnikoski; Alex Barrett; Donna Young; Tyler Miller (arrives 9:15); Megan Camp (arrives 9:53); Kathy Murphy-Moriarty; Alison Low; Will Belongia; Jon Ramsay

Voting Board Members not Present: David Hubbard; Alan Calfee; Chris Castano

Non-Voting Board Members Present: Liz Gleason (designee for Gus Seelig, Executive Director, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board; arrives 9:16); Sarah Isham (Vermont Economic Development Authority; designee for Cassie Polhemus, CEO); Ellen Kahler (Executive Director, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund)

Non-Voting Board Members not Present:

Staff: Clare Salerno, Elizabeth Sipple, Trevor Lowell, Lily Bradburn (Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets); Katharine Servidio (Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation)

Guests: None

Members of the Public: None

Alyson Eastman calls the meeting to order at 9:06 AM.

MOTION to approve minutes from the December 17, 2024 board meeting – Elisabeth Nance motions, Alison Low seconds

MOTION passes by unanimous voice vote. Will Belongia abstains.

Award Decisions for Service Provider and Producer Association Grant

MOTION to approve the following slate in the total amount of \$369,310:

Clemmons Family Farm, Inc.	Piloting the African Diaspora Foodways Institute of Vermont	\$25,000.00
Connecticut River Watershed Farmers Alliance	A Farmer-led Ag Plastics Recycling Pilot for the Connecticut River Watershed	\$20,000.00
Northeast Forests, LLC dba The Vermont Forest Business School	Vermont Forest Business School - Training and Business Coaching Program	\$40,000.00
Parish Hill Creamery	Science & Craft of Artisan Cheese Conference	\$25,000.00
Paul Frank + Collins P.C.	Human Resources & Employment Law Skills for Working Lands Businesses	\$18,150.00
Vermont Community Loan Fund	Vermont Community Loan Fund's SPROUT Loan Program	\$72,000.00

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board	Planning for Adaptation & Resilience - Business Development Services through the Farm & Forest Viability Program	\$75,000.00
Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund	VSJF Forest Products Development Program	\$55,000.00
Vermont Woodlands Association	Building a Resilient Future for Vermont's Working Woodlands: Merging VT LEAP with VWA to Secure Logger Education	\$39,160.00

– Alison Low motions, Elisabeth Nance seconds

MOTION passes with unanimous voice vote. Will Belongia abstains.

Elizabeth Sipple notes that future vote on the award slate, the advance meeting packet will include the full list of the slate, project title, and award amounts.

Update on the Working Lands Coalition – Ellen Kahler

Ellen Kahler provided an overview of the history and context of the Working Lands Coalition and how it relates to WLEB.

Alyson Eastman reminded WLEB that it is very important that any WLEB members are part of the Coalition should clarify who they are representing during any advocacy or testimony. WLEB itself does not advocate, so anyone needs to state that they are not advocating on behalf of the board.

Strengthening WLEB Decision Making Process – Elizabeth Sipple

Elizabeth provided an overview of proposed shifts to WLEB’s decision-making process during meetings. WLEB members asked questions and provided input about the types of information needed prior to and during meetings, as well as changes to meeting flow and facilitation to support decision making.

Administration Updates

- Agriculture, Food & Markets – Alyson Eastman
- Agency of Commerce & Community Development – Elisabeth Nance
- Forest, Parks & Recreation – Oliver Pierson

Other Announcements

- Ellen Kahler announced that Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (VSJF) and Farm to Plate have been in communication with ag committee chairs to provide high level overviews about the food system because so many legislators are new and don’t know the history of VT Farm to Plate and how it connects to other plans and state agencies.
- Alyson Eastman provided an overview on how to navigate to committee testimony and watch live or recordings.

Public Comment – none

MOTION to adjourn – Alex Barrett motions, Alison Low seconds
MOTION passes by unanimous voice vote.

Meeting is adjourned by Alyson Eastman at 10:33 PM.

Meeting Materials

- *Working Lands Enterprise Board Meeting Minutes Draft 12/17/24*
- *Working Lands Enterprise Board Meeting Agenda 1/21/24*

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