

# Working Lands Enterprise Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 19, 2024 PM, 1:00 PM-4:00 PM

Microsoft Teams

**Voting Board Members Present:** Alyson Eastman (Deputy Secretary, Agency of Agriculture – designee for Anson Tebbetts, Secretary), Chair; Oliver Pierson (designee for Danielle Fitzko, Commissioner, Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation); Tayt Brooks (designee for Lindsay Kurrle, Secretary, Agency of Commerce and Community Development) (departs 2:02 PM); Charlie Hancock, Vice Chair (arrives 1:10 PM); Donna Young; Bob Lesnikoski; Chris Castano; Jon Ramsay (departs 3:48 PM); Tyler Miller; Alisha Utter; Will Belongia (arrives 1:12 PM)

**Voting Board Members not Present:** David Hubbard; Megan Camp; Alison Low; Alan Calfee; Marisa Mauro; Brooke Gladstone

**Non-Voting Board Members Present:** Liz Gleason (designee for Gus Seelig, Executive Director, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board), Sarah Isham (Vermont Economic Development Authority; designee for Cassandra Polhemus, CEO)

**Non-Voting Board Members not Present:** Ellen Kahler (Executive Director, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund)

**Staff:** Elizabeth Sipple, Clare Salerno, Laura Ginsburg (departs 2:20 PM); Abbey Willard; Diana Ferguson (departs 2:20 PM) (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 1:05 PM.

**MOTION** to approve minutes from the February 13, 2024 Board meeting – Jon Ramsay motions, Alisha Utter seconds

**MOTION** passes by unanimous voice vote

- Friendly amendment – adjust spelling of David Hubbard’s name at bottom of page 1
- Tayt Brooks abstains

**State of Dairy Industry Presentation** – Laura Ginsburg, Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Laura Ginsburg provided an overview of the economic state of the dairy industry in VT.

DISCUSSION

**Dairy Business Innovation Center Presentation** – Laura Ginsburg

Laura Ginsburg provided an overview of the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center structure, programs, and recent outcomes.

**Updates on FY22 Impact Grants** – Jon Ramsay, Clare Salerno, and Elizabeth Sipple

Elizabeth Sipple, Jon Ramsay, and Clare Salerno provided an overview on the FY22 Market Level Infrastructure Impact Grants: Center for an Agricultural Economy, Buffalo Mountain Coop, Cellars at Jasper Hill, Gevry Firewood, Global Village Foods, VT Natural Forest Products, PK Wood Pellet, VT Refrigerated Storage, White Rock Sawmill, Lyndon Woodworking, Vermont State University Randolph. Clare Salerno provided an update DCI, Inc., an FY20 Supply Chain Impact Grant.

## **Program Updates – Elizabeth Sipple**

Elizabeth Sipple updated the board that the Small Farm Diversification & Transition Grant received 178 applications when it closed on March 4. Total request was \$2.4 million for \$150,000 in available funds.

Elizabeth reminded board members that FY24 Impact Grant Final Applications are due on Monday, March 25. Twenty-seven businesses were invited to participate. Review of the final applications will begin March 29. Lawrence Miller will be reviewing all the financial documents and business plans. There will be no applicant pitches.

Elizabeth alerted the board that she will be on maternity leave beginning June 17<sup>th</sup>.

Elizabeth asked WLEB members will be asked to sign up for 1-2 site visits in the summer.

Elizabeth asked Service Provider Strategy Committee members to support the Agriculture Development Assistant Director that be hired mid to late April in following up with service provider contractors.

Elizabeth asked 3-4 WLEB members to join a symposium planning committee. Charlie Hancock, Liz Gleason, and Chris Castano volunteered.

Elizabeth asked 1-2 board members who have in their organizations engaged in DEI work to review the RFP for a DEI consultant to work with the board and participate in the interview process of potential candidates. Liz Gleason offered to weigh in but not be on interview team. Jon Ramsay volunteered to support the process.

Elizabeth asked WLEB members to re-engage around a renewed strategic plan for the program. Donna Young and Tyler Miller volunteered. Alisha Utter volunteered to review things after hours but not participate in meetings.

## **Administration Updates**

Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets - Alyson Eastman

Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation – Oliver Pierson

## **Other Announcements – none**

## **Public Comment – none**

Meeting is adjourned by Alyson Eastman at 4:05 PM.

- Charlie Hancock motions, Donna Young seconds

## Meeting Materials

- *Working Lands Enterprise Board Minutes Draft 2/13/2024*
- *Working Lands Enterprise Board Meeting Agenda 3/19/2024*
- *Working Lands FY23 Impact Report*