

Northern Vermont Economic Development District

Board Meeting

Tuesday December 3rd, 2024 1:15 PM

Yellow Barn Hardwick, VT

1. Welcome/Introductions/Check In - Tasha Wallis opened the meeting at 1:04.
2. Food Venture Center (agenda addition) - The food venture center is a shared-use food hub in Hardwick operated by the Center for an Agricultural Economy. They support 50 farm and food producers and maintain their own fleet of trucks for local food distribution. They offer technical assistance to farm and food producers, food safety training, label training, and other business services. They source raw produce from 20 different growers around the state and process it for schools, hospitals, and colleges. CAE also operates an RLF program for small businesses and provides locally grown produce to food pantries across the state. The Yellow Barn project will help support their work by offering additional produce storage to allow the Venture Center to operate more efficiently.
3. Approve Minutes of October 1st, 2024 meeting - Christine McGowan moved to approve the minutes from October 4th. Jim Lovinsky seconded. Motion carried.
4. NVEDD Board Appointment/Vacancies - Dave Snedeker hopes to appoint Newport Mayor Linda Joy Sullivan to fill NVDA's vacancy on the board, however she hasn't been able to attend a meeting yet so that will be tabled for now. Tim mentioned that each region has at least one spot to fill.
5. EDA Disaster Resilience Grant Update - Tasha Wallis provided an update on the EDA Disaster Resilience Grant. \$500,000 was received from the EDA for modeling of the Lamoille River Watershed and business recovery efforts. SLR was selected as the engineering firm to do the hydrological modeling which will provide data to inform flood mitigation efforts. Marty Feltus mentioned that SLR did similar work in Lyndon and was very

thorough. Tasha will send out information from a presentation by SLR, and it was suggested that they potentially present at the next meeting.

6. Federal Delegation Updates to include appointment impacts i.e. USDA, NBRC

a Senator Sander's Office – James Paradissio was unable to attend

b Senator Welch's Office – Fauna Hurley and Ryan McLaren provided an update. Both mentioned there will be a lot of uncertainty going forward, but Senator Welch will continue to do his best to navigate the coming changes. Chris Saunders will be NBRC co-chair for the next two years but after that there is uncertainty regarding who will hold the position. It is also unclear when there will be an appointment by the new administration for the USDA position. Ryan mentioned that reduced hours for border control will be a concern and something that Senator Welch's office is working on gathering more information on. As part of the Judiciary Committee, Senator Welch has worked to confirm judges and will continue to do so over the next few weeks before there are changes at the federal level. Ryan also mentioned that the USDA is working to get money out the door as fast as possible, as is the EPA and other federal agencies. Christine McGowan asked if allocated federal money is safe come next year. Ryan said that it isn't guaranteed and there is a difference between allocated and obligated funds. The overall sentiment is that now there is a lot of uncertainty and it's unclear what/when changes should be expected.

c Congresswomen's Balint Office - Morgan Nichols provided an update. She plans to reach out to all RDCs again to get a sense of their top priorities for 2025 and how things are expected to change as a result of the new administration. Morgan reiterated that there is a lot of uncertainty but encouraged board members to reach out with questions and concerns as we work through the next few months. Christine McGowan voiced concerns about NBRC being eliminated over the next few years. Ryan responded that many view NBRC as a good model and that it has been replicated nationally, which may indicate that it will be safe despite forthcoming changes. Ryan also mentioned

that during the previous Trump administration work with the USDA also had some degree of continuity despite a new appointment.

7. Priority Project Updates from the Region - RDCs provided an update on the priority project selection process. Each RDC conducts outreach and provides a list of ten priority projects annually or semi-annually. RPCs are incorporated into this decision-making process as well. It was mentioned that there is more buy-in for this process recently as potential projects have recognized the value of being included on these lists.
8. Northern Border Regional Commission update – Elisabeth Nance provided an update. Scoring for the fall round has been completed and recommendations have been sent to the Governor’s office with hope that they will all be approved. There was \$4.5 million available in the fall but the 9 selected applications resulted in the program being undersubscribed by about \$1.7 million. These funds will be available in the spring and thus more applications are expected. All projects funded in the spring were on RPP lists. All unspent funds are considered obligated so there isn’t concern that they will be taken away.
9. NVEDD Partner Updates from the Region -
 - a. Jim Lovinsky - The Lamoille Housing Partnership was unable to find a new director since Jim stepped down in December. Membership voted to merge with the housing nonprofit Downstreet and relinquish Hardwick properties to RuralEdge.
10. New Business - No new business
11. Old Business - No old business
12. Upcoming meetings:
 - a. Tuesday, February 4th, 2025 – Details TBA - SLR hydrology presentation at the Lamoille Planning Commission offices was suggested for the next board meeting
 - b. Tuesday, April 1st, 2025
 - c. Tuesday, June 3rd, 2025 - Please share thoughts for April and June meetings with Tim
 - i. Always looking for presentations/visit suggestions
13. Adjourn - Meeting adjourned for the Yellow Barn tour at 2:00

Attendance

Andy Julow, Morgan Nichols, Jim Lovinsky, Christine McGowen, Annie McLean, Pat Ripley, Elizabeth Nance, Tim Smith, Fauna Hurley, Ryan McLaren, Jon Ramsay, Kyle Dwyer, Scott Johnstone, Bill Sheets, Joe Kasprzak, Richard Amore, Marty Feltus, Dave Snedeker, Tasha Wallis, Bob Buermann, David Scherr, Ann Nygard