

**VLITE Board of Directors Meeting
DRM Conference Room and on Zoom, 52 State St., Montpelier, VT
Minutes of December 13, 2023
Approved on March 19, 2024**

Meeting called to order at 12:45 PM

In attendance:

Board members: Tony Klein, Richard Rubin, Larry Lackey, Sarah Hofmann, Hal Cohen, Amy Shollenberger, and Peter Walke (attending sporadically as he was available).

Others: Gabrielle Malina; Grant applicants - Steve Maier, Melanie Paskevich, Amanda Carlson, Chris Cole, Sue Minter, Paul Zabriskie

Executive Session

- A motion was made at 12:50 PM to enter Executive Session for the purpose of conducting interviews to select a new VELCO board member nominee and discuss sensitive personnel issues.
 - 1st – Sarah Hofmann, 2nd – Larry Lackey
 - All present in favor
- A motion was made to exit Executive Session at 2:30 pm.
 - 1st – Richard Rubin, 2nd – Hal Cohen
 - All present in favor

Nomination of New VELCO Director

- A motion was made to nominate Karin Chamberlain as a VLITE designee to the VELCO board starting in March of 2024.
 - 1st – Richard Rubin, 2nd – Sarah Hofmann
 - All present in favor

Approve Minutes of September 12, 2023 and October 9, 2023

- A motion was made to approve the minutes of September 12, 2023 Board of Directors meeting and October 9, 2023 Special Board Meeting.
 - 1st – Larry Lackey, 2nd – Hal Cohen
 - All present in favor

Treasurer's Report

Sarah Hofmann reviewed recent banking changes. We now have insured cash sweep which protects deposits overnight that are over the federal limit. The operating account will be kept at around \$250,000 as a checking account. Sarah is looking at local bank CDs with interest rates around 5% for 9 months. As of November 30, 2023 there was a total of \$1,432,596 in VLITE's operating account, money market and CD accounts.

A motion was made to accept the treasurer's report

- 1st – Richard Rubin, 2nd – Larry Lackey
- All in favor.

2024 VLITE Board Meeting Schedule

Gabrielle announced that the board meeting schedule for 2024 will be: March 19; June 13; September 19, and December 12.

Review Draft 2024 Budget and DRM Contract

The board reviewed the draft 2024 VLITE Operating Budget which details VLITE’s non-grant expenditures and demonstrates the funds available for grants as well as anticipated VELCO dividends. Gabrielle noted that there is more interest income than in year’s past due to the switch of banks to Northfield Savings Bank but interest income was not included in the draft budget.

- A motion was made to accept the draft budget
 - 1st – Tony Klein, 2nd – Richard Rubin
 - All present in favor

The board reviewed the 2024 Contract between VLITE and DRM to retain Gabrielle Malina as Executive Director. The contract includes a 3 percent increase over the prior two years.

- A motion was made to authorize Tony Klein to sign the contract with DRM for Gabrielle Malina to serve as Executive Director of VLITE.
 - 1st – Larry Lackey, 2nd – Richard Rubin
 - All present in favor

Succession Planning

Hal Cohen and Richard Rubin discussed possible candidates for succeeding them on the VLITE board as they will each “term out” in June 2024. Gabrielle will follow up with Hal and Richard to determine next steps, and the board can discuss further at its March meeting.

Informal Reports and Grant Extensions

Gabrielle reviewed the Available and Committed Funds reports demonstrating VLITE’s continued ability to pay for its existing grant commitments and continue to receive new grant applications.

Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County Energy Navigator Grant Application

Steve Maier, Chair of Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County (CEAC) summarized the grant. CEAC requests \$60,000 from VLITE towards the creation of an “Energy Navigator” program that will help households in Addison County to access programs that would help them reduce energy usage. Although programs with incentives and subsidies for energy improvements exist across many different income levels, uptake is slow, and CEAC’s surveys indicate that most people do not know those programs exist.

The Navigator program will help connect households with programs that match particular need and income levels. The intention is to amplify the work of already-existing programs e.g. CVOEO, Neighborworks HEAT Squad and Efficiency Vermont. The Navigator Program will conduct outreach, offer one-to-one peer support, provide small financial incentives, and follow up over time. Navigators will be a trusted source of information. The program will have a special emphasis on assisting low and moderate income households.

CEAC hopes the project will be scalable and adaptable for other parts of the state. CEAC stated a goal of helping 200 households per year with around half of those being low and moderate income. CEAC board member Jean Terwilliger will lead the Navigator program but they will be hiring for the position of Navigator.

Neighborworks of Western Vermont HEATSquad Grant Application

Melanie Paskevich, HEATSquad Director and Interim Executive Director of Neighborworks of Western Vermont presented the grant. Neighborworks is requesting \$305,000 for a two-year grant that would provide 100 comprehensive energy audits and 60 completed Weatherization projects for low and moderate income households in Bennington County and the Northeast Kingdom with 15 of those projects also completing electrification readiness measures.

HEATSquad provides a full suite of support throughout their interactions with households undergoing energy improvements. From fully explaining a household's options, to connecting them with a trusted network of contractors and then checking the quality of the work done. This intensive approach has been proven to help low and moderate income households get from a spot of overwhelm to having the confidence and wherewithal to go through these projects. Braiding together, rebates from Efficiency VT and the VLITE funds, almost 100% of the average weatherization costs are covered.

When asked by a board member of NWWVT has been looking for new funding sources, Melanie replied that she is always looking.

Community Rides Vermont Grant Application

Amanda Carlson, General Manager of Community Rides Vermont (CRVT), Chris Cole, Executive Director, Sue Minter, Executive Director for Capstone Community Action, and Paul Zabriskie, Director of Weatherization and Climate Impact for Capstone, all presented the grant. Zabriskie and Minter re-told the history of this project. In 2020 VLITE was the first funder for what was then a vision that Sue Minter had that transportation is a social justice issue. She wanted to create an electric vehicle car share, ride service for "to-the-last-mile" rural locales serving low income customers, many of whom do not own cars or have reliable transport to work, medical appointments, and the grocery store. Although the pandemic slowed down the effort for a year, an independent nonprofit, Community Rides Vermont was formed to see the project through. Chris Cole and other consultants were hired to start putting together the program and piece together funding streams that would give the program reliable income.

Community Rides VT is asking VLITE for \$200,000 to fully launch its program. \$65,000 of that will go towards a 20% match on the state-funded (VTrans) Mobility for All pilot. CRVT needs

to build out its software and marketing.

Amanda Carlson showed data that CRVT is providing more rides each week over the last and that is all by word of mouth, so far. Market rate rides will eventually subsidize the low and moderate income portion. CRVT is meant to fill a gap that public transportation cannot fill. E.g. 30% of Capstone's Headstart kids are homeless and CRVT is contracting with schools to transport homeless kids.

Board discussion and vote on grant applications

Some board members were concerned with the size of Neighborwork's grant request on a cost per project basis. The board asked Gabrielle to work with Neighborworks to pare down the request and to ask them to come back in with an amended proposal in March. The board noted that although NWWVT serves its population well, without an overarching state system for weatherization VLITE is propping up a very labor intensive model.

A motion was made to approve CEAC's grant request plus an additional \$5,000 to be used towards mileage expenses for the Navigators , for a total grant of \$65,000. The VLITE funds are conditioned on CEAC getting the remainder of their funding of around \$45,000, as in their proposed budget.

- 1st – Sarah Hofmann, 2nd – Larry Lackey
- All in favor

A motion was made to approve the Community Rides VT Grant for \$200,000.

- 1st – Sarah Hofmann, 2nd – Hal Cohen
- All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm.

Addendum to Minutes

An agenda item to approve grant extensions for three grants was overlooked. Gabrielle sent an email immediately following the meeting asking for votes by email from the board to approve the extensions. The board voted unanimously via email to approve extensions for the Department of Buildings and General Service to 6/30/24; to Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to 4/30/24; and, Washington Electric Coop to December 31, 2025.

Respectfully submitted by Gabrielle Malina, December 2023

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