

**VLITE Board of Directors Special Meeting
DRM Conference Room and on Zoom, 52 State St., Montpelier, VT
Minutes of March 16, 2026
Approved on June 17, 2026**

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 PM.

In Attendance

Board members: Tony Klein, Larry Lackey, Sarah Hofmann, Paul Dragon, Amy Shollenberger, Jean Hamilton (remote), and Peter Walke (remote).

Others in attendance

Gabrielle Malina, Executive Director, VLITE; Nathan Goldman, Cooperative Development Institute; Hannah Schwarz and River Parker, Riverflow; Virginie Diambou, Shiferaw Gameda, and Pacifique Nsengiyumva, CVOEO Office of Racial Equity and Community Inclusion; Melanie Paskevich, Cornerstone HEAT Squad; Jon Ramsay, Center for an Agricultural Economy.

Approval of Minutes – December 12, 2025

A motion was made by Larry Lackey, seconded by Sarah Hofmann, and unanimously approved to adopt the minutes of December 12, 2025.

Treasurer's Report

Sarah Hofmann reviewed VLITE's current financial position. The current cash balance is \$925,256, compared to \$1,365,498 at this time last year. Grants payable currently total \$493,312 (excluding the pending \$100,000 Veterans Place grant for which a grant agreement has not yet been signed due to project delays). Gabrielle noted that if all March grants were fully funded, it would add \$711,535 to grants payable. The next grant cycle is in six months in September which will allow two more VELCO dividend payments, at the end of March and the end of June, to re-charge VLITE's available funds.

Cooperative Development Institute Grant Application

Nathan Goldman, Water Infrastructure Support Program Associate for the Cooperative Development Institute, presented a \$213,785 grant request. VLITE funding would close a small but critical gap in a \$4.4 million project to upgrade electrical infrastructure at the Breezy Acres and Hillcrest manufactured home communities in Colchester. These resident-owned communities house over 600 low- and moderate-income Vermonters, many earning below 50% of area median income. The request is intended to avoid rent increases or use of limited reserve funds while keeping the project on schedule.

The project replaces outdated and unsafe electrical systems—including undersized 60-amp service and direct-buried wiring—with modern, code-compliant 150-amp service to each home.

Improvements include new transformers, wiring, meter infrastructure, and energy-efficient street lighting, while enabling future broadband upgrades.

The upgrades address significant fire and safety risks and are required under prior state housing funding agreements. They also enable residents to adopt heat pumps, electric vehicles, and newer manufactured homes, supporting long-term affordability, energy savings, and community stability.

Riverflow Community Grant Application

Hannah Schwartz, Executive Director, and River Parker, Associate Director presented the application. Riverflow Community requested \$150,000 in VLITE funding to support construction of its second therapeutic home in Monkton, expanding housing for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)—a population with more than 600 Vermonters currently lacking appropriate placements. Riverflow uses a lifesharing model: small-scale, relationship-centered housing where residents and staff live together in a supportive community. The new home will serve eight residents—four individuals with IDD and four live-in staff—building on the first home opened in 2024.

The request focuses on high-efficiency building components, including windows, doors, and heat pump systems, creating an all-electric, energy-efficient home with lower long-term costs. The project reflects Riverflow’s emphasis that disability housing is more than shelter—it is about belonging, dignity, and a meaningful life within a stable community.

Riverflow noted that a \$1.3 million VHCB grant is pending for May and that operations are funded through DAIL and Medicaid, though those sources cannot support capital costs. In response to board questions, they stated the project will proceed regardless of VLITE funding, but timing may be impacted and additional private fundraising may be required.

CVOEO Office of Racial Equity and Community Inclusion (ORECI) Grant Application

Shiferaw Gameda, Associate Director, Pacifique Nsengiyumva, ORECI Coordinator, and Virginie Diambou, Program Director presented the application. CVOEO’s Office of Racial Equity and Community Inclusion requested \$100,000 to implement an “Energy Equity Through Community Ambassadors” program serving New American communities in Chittenden County. The project addresses barriers faced by immigrant and refugee households—including unfamiliarity with U.S. utility systems, tenant rights, and available energy programs—which can lead to higher energy costs and unsafe housing conditions. It builds on prior federally funded Environmental Justice and energy education work that trained ambassadors, but that funding was canceled in April, creating a gap for implementation at scale. When asked about the absence of VLITE funding, presenters noted the difficulty of securing grants for equity-focused work.

The model trains and compensates eight trusted, multilingual Community Ambassadors who each recruit participants from their networks, reaching approximately 56 participants. Participants engage in workshops delivered with partners including Burlington Electric, Vermont Gas, and Energy Action Network, covering energy systems, billing, clean heating, and tenant rights. Outreach occurs through culturally relevant channels such as WhatsApp groups and community gatherings, helping address gaps in energy literacy and access to resources that can lead to high energy costs and unsafe housing conditions.

Funding supports ambassador compensation, translation, workshops, stipends, childcare, transportation, and energy-saving kits. The program aims to reduce energy burden and improve housing stability and is designed for replication within CVOEO's broader service region, with potential to scale statewide.

Cornerstone HEAT Squad Grant Application

Melanie Paskevich, Chief Program Officer, presented the grant. Cornerstone Housing Partners requested \$197,750 in VLITE funding to support the HEAT Squad program, delivering 80 energy and healthy homes assessments and completing 45 weatherization projects for low- to moderate-income households (primarily at or below 120% AMI) in Bennington County, Rutland County, and the Northeast Kingdom (Essex, Caledonia, and Orleans Counties)—among Vermont's highest energy-burden regions. HEAT Squad, launched in 2010, addresses the gap between audits and completed projects and operates as a “boots on the ground,” comprehensive (“soup to nuts”) support model.

The program provides hands-on coordination from outreach through project completion, helping households navigate audits, contractors, and layered financing. Efficiency Vermont typically covers about 65% of project costs; HEAT Squad proposes adding an average of \$2,200 per project to raise total coverage to roughly 85%, improving project feasibility. Customers pay a \$50 audit fee and, depending on scope, contribute an average of about \$1,600 per project.

The program removes financial and logistical barriers that prevent projects from moving forward and has demonstrated broader economic impact, with some contractors reportedly tripling revenue and staffing. HEAT Squad emphasized that VLITE funding is the catalytic piece that converts audits into completed projects.

Center for an Agricultural Economy Grant Application

Jon Ramsay, Executive Director for the Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE), requested \$50,000 in VLITE funding to offset the cost of a rooftop solar array installed on its new Food Hub facility in Hardwick. The half-acre, 218 kW array is as large as possible for the site and is designed to generate roughly 80% of the building's electricity needs. The Food Hub was built to be as close to net zero as possible—fully fossil-fuel free with efficient refrigeration, heat recovery systems, and a near-carbon-neutral footprint.

Although the solar installation is complete, CAE is seeking funding because a key federal Environmental Justice grant was terminated, leaving a financing gap. To meet construction and federal tax credit deadlines, CAE took on its first-ever debt to complete the project, and VLITE funds would help reduce that burden.

CAE emphasized its focus on serving low-income Vermonters, including supporting over 10,000 food pantry recipients annually, providing free food distribution and storage, and hosting community meals and programs. Lowering energy and debt costs allows more resources to be directed toward these services. CAE also supports more than 200 Vermont farms and food businesses annually through distribution, storage, financing, and market access services. They noted that electric costs for the all-electric facility are higher than anticipated—estimated at roughly \$8,500–\$8,900 per month (before solar compensation)—and that distribution costs are

expected to rise alongside gas prices. In response to a board question, CAE stated that if the grant is not awarded, they will proceed but will carry additional debt, increasing long-term financial pressure.

Discussion and Votes on Grant Applications

1. A motion was made by Sarah Hofmann and seconded by Jean Hamilton to approve the Cooperative Development Institute grant for \$213,785. The motion was unanimously approved.
2. A motion was made by Peter Walke and seconded by Larry Lackey to conditionally approve a grant to Riverflow Community in an amount not to exceed \$150,000, contingent upon Riverflow first securing its pending Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) award of \$1.3 million, or securing an equivalent amount of funding from other sources acceptable to VLITE within two (2) years. If the funding condition is not satisfied within that timeframe, the VLITE grant commitment shall lapse. The motion was unanimously approved.
3. A motion was made by Sarah Hofmann and seconded by Larry Lackey to approve Cornerstone HEAT Squad's grant for \$197,750. The motion was unanimously approved.
4. Sarah Hofmann moved, and Jean Hamilton seconded that the board approve Center for an Agricultural Economy's grant of \$50,000. The motion was unanimously approved.
5. A motion was made by Sarah Hofmann and seconded by Peter Walke to approve CVOEO ORECI's grant for \$100,000. The motion carried 4-1-2 with Amy Shollenberger and Paul Dragon abstaining from the vote.

VLITE-nominated VELCO board members

A motion was made by Peter Walke and seconded by Larry Lackey to recommend re-appointment of Maura Collins, Deb Markowitz, and Karin Chamberlain as VLITE's designees to the VELCO board.

Board Discussion of Preliminary Applications

The board reviewed preliminary grant materials from several prospective applicants and decided to invite in Wood4Good and Washington Electric Coop to present full applications in September.

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Gabrielle Malina
March 20, 2026