

Healthy Roots Collaborative Advisory Committee Meeting
September 22, 2022 – 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm
NRPC Office 75 Fairfield St, St. Albans, VT 05478

Call-In Information:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89084739401?pwd=OFgzQm9ER1liaEpVMjZqRStma2k4QT09>

Phone number: 1-646-931-3860

Meeting ID: 890 8473 9401

Passcode: 581245

Attendance: Emily Alger, Jess Graff, Lauren West, Lynn Douglas, Rachel Huff, Peter Jenkins, Christine Porcaro

Goals:

- Start discussion of future goals and strategic planning for Healthy Roots and decide next steps
- Decide on potential topic for DEI training for HRC staff/advisory committee.

Times	Agenda Item	Action
1:00 to 1:20	Org updates	
Notes: Franklin/Grand Isle Community Action- Jess shared that they are developing a mobile food market that will visit motels in the region. They are currently doing a donation drive to support the mobile market. They are right now in the middle of a match campaign with a private donor. They have not yet reached the \$15,000 goal. Jess also reported that the daily number of people visiting the food shelf are going up. Rachel Huff- Rachel shared that she had a meeting with the Tech Center, which currently has the flexibility and human power to support farm to school. She added that it would be fun to create connections between their students and farms. Rachel added that she is coordinating a FTS Vision Grant with Fairfield Community Center & Fairfield Library that will hopefully give more capacity to work with schools. Rachel also shared that she is coaching in Alburgh and that they are doing well. Franklin County Natural Resources Conservation District- Lauren shared about various events that FC NRCD is putting on throughout the region. The conservation districts have also hired a lobbyist to talk with VT legislators about pushing for funding non-funded mandates. SHLT- Emily shared that SHLT wrapped up summer programming, and will hopefully offer an after-school program at Folsom (farm to school and environment-based). SHLT has been reaching out to connect with BIPOC to develop new curriculum. That piece has been difficult because		

many BIPOC don't currently have the time/bandwidth to do that work. Their back-up plan has been to develop the new curriculum internally with a DEI lens.

Peter- Peter shared that he is currently working on a contingency plan for when he is on leave in October. The focus is on trying to keep the EE meals, healthcare CSA and Migrant Household Food Boxes going. Peter shared that HRC has awesome volunteers stepping up to support this effort. He also shared that his leave is happening during prime field trip season but that we are making it work. Peter added that there is also squash at the HRC donation plot in Alburgh that we are working to harvest during October.

1:20 to 2:30

**Healthy Roots Current Work,
Goals & Strategic Planning
Discussion**

Notes:

Emily stated that it has been 5 years since the last Strategic Planning (which was fundraising focused). Emily asked the questions: Is HRC doing its work in a strategic way? How should HRC be growing and developing staff skills and doing the work that we want to be doing.? Emily shared that the meeting today is to get the committee to discuss their thoughts on strategic planning.

Emily explained that the gleaning program is in a good place. She shared that staff capacity becomes one of the biggest sticking points for the program. She added that HRC wants to be feeding people but also play a role in having people feed themselves. She added the question, how should HRC be engaging in Food Sovereignty and looking at other state-wide programs and their efforts. Farm to school is a program that the committee agreed that they wanted to see continue. Emily added that HRC does not currently have funding to support this programming and has limited capacity for staff to engage. Emily asked the questions, what are HRC's current goals and what type of work do we want to be doing in that space. In regards to Farm Viability, Emily highlighted that HRC will be wrapping up with EDA funding at the end of FY'23 and that limited staff time has limited our ability to spend all that money down. Emily added that this was our first year to be a complimentary service provider through VHCB (Vermont Housing and Conservation Board). Emily asked the questions, what are HRC's goals for this programming, what is our staff capacity now, what does it need to be and how does HRC want to move forward. Emily also shared in regards to staff capacity that so far HRC has been unable to fill an AmeriCorps VISTA position. Lauren asked why that was. Emily shared that that there has been a lack of applicants nationally and that housing has become large barrier to bringing in applicants.

Rachel asked what other community partners are doing the work we want to be doing and how essential is it for us to do that direct work. Lauren added that in small organizations, there is normally one person whose role is 80% admin and that there needs to be other staff to do the direct work. Emily shared that SHLT has seen the same thing. The Executive Director becomes a lot more of an admin position and less of a direct service role. Lynn added that it would be great

to have a visual of all the programming that HRC does with all of the partners and activities. Jess asked how long are people envisioning the strategic planning process to be. Emily shared that she is envisioning it as a longer process engaging new members, old members and also members outside of the community. Initially it was thought to engage VCF (VT Community Foundation) to get funding to hire someone to facilitate the strategic planning. Jess shared that a yearlong strategic plan is difficult and that there are a lot of organizations in the community already doing this work. She added that perhaps we can source input from these other organizations, and she gave the example of NMC's Community Health Needs Assessment. Emily added that South Hero did a survey on how to use ARPA funding. Perhaps other towns have done the same and we could use that data.

Peter asked what partners did people have in mind to engage with. Emily shared that it is open for suggestions but some initial thoughts are Jake Claro of Farm to Plate, Sam Smith of the Intervale, Shelburne Farms for Farm to School, VT Foodbank.

Jess had to leave for another meeting. There was no longer a quorum present at 2:00pm.

Rachel shared that she does not have a real idea of what NRPC is doing. Lynn shared that there are misconceptions around food access among the commissioners and that there is education that could go both ways in terms of what NRPC does and what HRC does. Peter added that there is sometimes a perception that HRC is used as a poster child for DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) work.

Lauren asked about HRC being housed under NRPC. Emily shared that NRPC took over (out of the goodness of their hearts) after NMC was no longer able to house HRC. NRPC plays a really big role in terms of administrative support and that should not be minimized. Peter asked about the numbers being run on HRC being a standalone non-profit. Christine shared that at the end of EDA funding (end of FY23), HRC will have the possibility of running under the Northwest VT Foundation at NRPC. This would potentially alleviate some of the heavy lift of the indirect rate that HRC currently has to use. Lynn shared her experience with the Jump program and Cathedral Square and the challenges they had when Cathedral Square pulled their admin/fiscal sponsor support.

Lauren asked what the priority is in the region. She shared that no one else is doing gleaning or farm to school but there are other organizations doing farm viability. Emily stressed the importance of having regional orgs doing farm viability work because those relationships can bring trust and knowledge. She has seen the impact of those relationships with farms in her work at SHLT.

Lynn shared that when others were discussing gleaning and food sovereignty, it made her think about when she lived in Lancaster County and people there gleaned for themselves. Farms would tell people what time and location and people would pick food for themselves. Peter added that in terms of staff capacity and turnover for the gleaning program, HRC could always look toward the VT Gleaning Collective for support. Lynn asked if HRC was doing something with seeds. Peter mentioned The Huertas Project (a UVM Extension project), the Migrant Household Food Boxes

and the Land Link Project. Peter also shared that the gleaning program has been really stretching its reach over the past couple of years and that it would be great to continue to buy food for some of these sites to help save time as it sometimes feels that HRC and our farms don't necessarily have more capacity to glean.

Lauren asked what is the staff's vision for strategic planning. Peter shared that he would love another HRC staff person. In an ideal world it would be great to have a staff person that is more directly connected to gleaning and farm to school. Peter shared that right now he is just stretched too thin. Emily added that in an ideal world there would be full-time Farm Viability, Gleaning, and Farm to School people. Lauren said that if HRC was going to do that she would argue that all those staff members should be able to perform and speak about all of those roles. Christine added that she worried about there being a staff of generalists instead of a staff of specialists. Emily asked if there are any final thoughts. Rachel added that she wants to continue to discuss the collaborative nature of HRC and what direct work that it should/needs to do (and what other organizations might already be doing). Lynn asked about the continued strategic planning discussion. Emily shared that HRC should get in touch with VCF to see what funding would look like and how much time a facilitator would want to spend. Lauren cautioned that consultants are great but they also don't "get it". Lauren wondered if it would be time better spent if we all got together and just had the discussion ourselves. Emily added that she feels better about the strategic planning process especially with new members who are energized and ready to talk about strategic planning and also wanted to echo Lauren's point about getting staff perspective. Advisory Committee and staff will move forward with robust conversation about strategic planning and develop a plan for a strategic plan and how to move forward with alternatives.

2:30 to 3:00	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Cont. Discussion & Potential training opportunity	
NOT DISCUSSED		

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