

Healthy Roots Collaborative Advisory Committee Meeting

April 15, 2020 - 1pm to 3pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88476507958?pwd=OVlyOFRFNFNSmdyWVN1Nk51VWd2Zz09>

Attendance: Brad Docheff, Emily Alger, Catherine Dimitruk, Rachel Huff, Robert Ostermeyer, Tim Smith, Nina Hansen, Bethany Remmers, Christine Porcaro, Koi Boynton, Peter Jenkins

Goals:

- Review amended FY'21 HRC budget
- Review progress on business plan

Times	Agenda Item	Action
1:00 to 1:15	Org updates	Robert will send some mileage tracking app suggestions.
<p>Notes:</p> <p><i>Board of Commissioners</i> – Brad will be moving out of state and will no longer be the NRPC board of commissioners’ representative. Big thanks to Brad. Catherine will work with board to appoint a new representative.</p> <p><i>FGI Office of Economic Opportunity</i> – Robert has been exploring app-based GPS to track mileage for the shared van and save on administrative time. Brad has experience with apps like this and agrees they are a good option for HRC to consider for the gleaning program. With the continuation of increased funding for federal nutrition programs into the summer – Robert is thinking more about decentralized food distribution – how we get food to where people are. What would this look like and how does it align with organizational missions?</p> <p><i>Farm to School</i> – Rachel supported Richford in a \$10,000 Agency of Ag, Farm to School grant that was awarded. The HRC Farm to School team is working on an Agency of Ag, Farm to School Vision grant. Outreach to educators is happening for the last 2 farm to school trainings.</p> <p><i>Gleaning</i> – Peter has been supporting food shelves in the distribution of food between sites. Sheldon has a great volume to share. Abenaki Land Link will be launching at West Farm. The donation plot will produce vegetables/seeds for Land Link, Bridges to Health and other food shelf foods.</p> <p><i>South Hero Land Trust</i> – SHLT will also be taking part in Land Link at the Health Hero Farm donation plot with a small subplot at Folsom School for the students. They are currently applying for an AmeriCorps who will support farm to school work in South Hero amongst other projects. Gearing up for farmers’ market season and will continue to support the Champlain Islands Farmers Market will need this year.</p> <p><i>NRPC</i> – Has been considering bringing on a new AmeriCorps position to support Healthy Roots programming and free up staff time for fundraising.</p>		

1:15 to 2:00	Amended budget presentation from Catherine	
<p>Notes: Catherine discussed the amended FY'21 budget. The overall picture is that HRC will end the fiscal year in the red by \$25,000. The Vermont Community Development Program grant will help with this deficit. This is a manageable deficit. We did have a surplus of \$50,000 at the beginning of the fiscal year. We lost the \$80,000 investment from the hospital FY'21 and the foreseeable future. FY'22 will be more challenging; we will need to raise an additional \$80,000 to \$100,000 to fill the FY'22 gap. We do need to consider long-term funding and adding an AmeriCorps to the team could help with taking time off staff's plate to focus on funding. The EDA grant will continue into FY'22 but we can't anticipate hospital funding. We need to consider healthcare's contribution differently and perhaps look to the accountable care organization or UVMMC for Grand Isle services. We did receive a \$5,000 grant from RiseVT. NRPC did have a shift in budgeting, as a government organization. The indirect rate follows federal rules and regulations and it is a rate that is attached to all expenses. The indirect captures all expenses related to building, utilities, administration time, personal leave. This was charged to HRC in FY'21 and ate up the surplus. It resulted in \$11,000 more charged to the program. NRPC can provide a detailed breakdown of those costs.</p> <p><i>Discussion:</i> Tim thanked Catherine for taking on the financial and grant management and administration of the program.</p> <p>Robert asked if the shortfall is over and above the \$80,000 to \$100,000 that needs to be raised in FY'22. Catherine agreed that it is and that we need to consider other options for funding. A letter of intent was sent in to Northern Borders. American Rescue Plan funding that is going to municipalities might help or other funding from Agency of Commerce or Agency of Ag should be considered. In order to secure American Rescue Plan funding that will be going to municipalities to be an option, we need to show regional benefit. There is flexibility for how the municipal funding is spent and in VT there is a gap for funding project at the county level funding. NRPC will be talking with municipalities about this flexibility. Tim believes it will be difficult to get municipalities past their list of project ideas that they can now fund and believes town administrators would need help with buy-in.</p>		
2:00 to 3:00	Review Infrastructure Process & Business plan elements	
<p>Notes: Christine did a power point presentation on the original intent of the infrastructure work, review of work done over the last few months, and next steps. The presentation included 4 models being explored, staff time to support each, review of feedback from focus groups and surveys, and spaces of consideration.</p> <p><i>Discussion:</i> Tim suggested including distance businesses are willing to travel in future discussions.</p> <p>Regional CSA was discussed and emphasized that it doesn't necessarily have to be HRC implementing a regional CSA. It is of interest from the community (as is a commercial kitchen) and therefore it makes sense for HRC to explore these options. HRC could be the liaison to support business to business sales for a CSA and it would provide a new market channel for participating farms. A centralized facility could help in aggregating the product for whoever is implementing. As demonstrated in the presentation, coordination of a CSA is another staff person but more time during growing season.</p>		

Robert questioned if a central location is what is needed or if more transportation is needed. What could we do with another vehicle and driver? It was pointed out that the original EDA grant did include a truck and driver. Christine reported that the NEK distribution feasibility study pointed out that a vehicle without a storage site is hard to maintain.

The logistics of both charitable and commercial food distribution seems challenging. Distribution is logistically challenging regardless and we would need to narrow down on logistics more and more as feasibility becomes clearer. While central location would help distributors save time – what would the impact on HRC be? Other regions are asking the same questions and working collaboratively with them as they address this will be helpful.

Rachel asked about other spaces – such as the vacant retail spaces along Rt. 7 between St. Albans and Swanton. Tim said that we did consider retail space but it is more expensive - \$13 to \$15/sq. ft. and is often difficult to switch retail space to other business models. Older industrial is \$4-\$4.50/sq. ft. but the size that HRC needs is also a challenge because sizes are typically very large. The staff also explored shared space but the businesses in industrial space that did have extra space previously have now expanded. Other larger facilities that are downsizing could be an option but would likely be a short-term solution.

Staff acknowledges that the presentation is a growth plan and we want to ensure that Healthy Roots is serving the role in the community that the advisory committee sees as the right role. Robert states that if HRC did the same it would be ok and even if we did a little less that would be ok. Nina points out that this work is also a response to a tough year of working to build storage and distribution capacity and that needs to be acknowledged. Rachel wants to ensure that HRC continues to be a farmer support program and also questioned what office space is available for staff. Bethany points out that HRC has not been part of the NRPC space discussion but she doesn't believe that we will ever return to a 5 day, in-office model. That might create space for HRC staff to work from the NRPC office. Those discussions are just happening now. Bethany also points out that the current budget would not support a warehouse space with offices.

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