

2025-2029 Consolidated Plan Community Outreach

Arlington on February 4, 2025, from 4:30-6:00 pm

Meeting Notes

Presenters & Staff Support: Patrick Scheld, DHCD, Ann Kroll, DHCD, Lily Sojourner, OEO, Ari Kisler, OEO, Ronald Rupp, VCHB, Jayme Bauer, DHCD (staff support)

In-Person Attendees:

Thelma Bullock, McCullough Free Library
Jennie Rozycki, McCullough Free Library
Cynthia Gubb, Vermont Community Development Program
Tom Donahue, BROCC Community Action
Bebe Bullock, Arlington Commons
Christine (Last name unknown), resident
Nick Zaiac, Arlington Town Administrator

Online-Attendees:

Tina Cook, resident
Elizabeth Eddy, BROCC Community Action
Heather Davis, OEO
Venders in Taylor Park, resident
Elizabeth Bridgewater, Windham Windsor Housing Trust

Power Point Presentation by Patrick Scheld, Ann Kroll, and Lily Sojourner.

Discussion:

Tina Cook asked how meetings were advertised and suggested that flyers at banks and marketing through BIPOC organizations could help reach marginalized Vermonters. She added that funds were being wasted rather than providing thousands of needed housing units. Ann Kroll stated that DHCD works with the Office of Economic Opportunity for community outreach, as well as libraries, social media, etc.

Tina Cook said that her home was sold by a predatory lender and that Vermont needs to be creative about preventing predation. She added that funds were being denied to low-income Vermonters and that participation should be compensated to help bring more people to the table. Patrick Scheld said that HUD funds are used to build housing, along with economic development and infrastructure. Ann Kroll added that there isn't enough funding to build the housing units that are needed.

Elizabeth Eddy said that BROCC is working with other nonprofits to try to address the housing shortage but agreed that there just aren't enough funds.

Tina Cook said there was a red-lining problem in Vermont. Ann Kroll asked her to elaborate. Tina said she had notified the Human Rights Commission, Attorney General's office, Vermont Legal Aid and she felt ignored. She added it was related to tax liens in Bennington. She added that people are in desperate need of supportive housing and that the systemic processes in Vermont were not working. And, funding was not being used as intended that the Human Rights Commission should not be turning away discrimination cases.

Ann Kroll acknowledged there were big issues to tackle but many of the items being discussed were not related to the Consolidated Plan.

Tina Cook asked who was on the advisory board from Southern Vermont. Patrick answered that the advisory board is made up of approximately 25 individuals representing different stakeholder groups from across the State, including but not limited to other State Agencies, funding partners, RDC's, and RPC's, as well as project partners, developers, non-profits and beneficiary groups that carryout the projects .From this area it would be Bill Colvin, Bennington County Regional Commission.

Tina Cook expressed concern that NeighborWorks of Western Vermont's office in Bennington was almost always closed. Patrick replied that the office was used for appointments but does not have dedicated staff. The goal is to staff the office after the merger with Shires Housing and the Housing Trust of Rutland County. Tina asked if NWWVT was audited annually. Ann Kroll said that DHCD staff conducts annual audits of projects that were funded. Elizabeth Bridgewater added that there were audits of each organization before merging to become Cornerstone Housing Partners.

Ann Kroll said that the 4 priorities for HUD funding haven't been revisited for several years, and the state may want to elevate decreasing homelessness. The priorities are below:

1. Increase Supply and Quality of Affordable Housing
2. Create and Retain Jobs
3. Decrease the Number Experiencing Homelessness
4. Strengthen Communities and Improve Quality of Life

Elizabeth Bridgewater suggested that the state use a "Housing First" model. Ann Kroll agreed that people need stability in order to take care of their mental health needs, recover from addiction, find gainful employment, etc.

Tina Cook said that people were falling through the cracks. Patrick Scheld responded that DHCD can only fund applications they receive and the state receives fewer economic development proposals. He added that 30-40 applications are received every year for approximately \$7M of CDBG funding and that 12-15 applications are awarded funds. Tina asked if funds could be allocated for projects benefiting the BIPOC community. Ann Kroll encouraged Tina to work with her community to put together an application that would do so.

Patrick Scheld clarified that the state only funds municipalities, but they can subgrant to nonprofits.

The meeting adjourned at 6pm.