

2025-2029 Consolidated Plan Community Outreach

St. Johnsbury on January 14, 2025, from 4:00-5:30 pm

Meeting Notes

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

Attendees:

Casey Winterson, Northeast Kingdom Community Action, cwinterson@nekca.org
David Snedeker, Northeastern VT Development Association, dsnedeker@nvda.net
Joe Kasprzak, Town of St. Johnsbury, jkasprzak@stjvt.com
Ken Linsley, Northern Vermont Development Association, kenlinsley@charter.net
Kyle Dwyer, Northeastern VT Development Association, kdwyer@nvda.net
Leah Sare, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, leah@vhcb.org
Lily Sojourner, AHS-DCF-OEO, lily.sojourner@vermont.gov
Shannon Trainor, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, shannon@vhcb.org
Killian Brooks, guest from Akron, OH

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

Discussion:

Shannon Trainor stated that Housing Trust Fund (HTF) grants are for housing for low and extremely low-income households i.e., 50% of AMI or below. HTF projects are paired with housing choice vouchers in most cases.

Lily Sojourner said Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds were used to support Vermont's Homeless Management System (HMIS), 1 shelter and technical systems training.

Patrick Scheld highlighted several projects that were funded through the Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG) that focused on job creation, public facilities including daycares, low interest loans for home repairs and planning grants.

David Snedeker asked if the CDBG formula was consistent for all states. Ann Kroll replied that it is by statute, however, the formula hasn't been updated since 1992. She provided the following details:

- The Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) receives competitive Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS program (HOPWA) for operational support to nonprofits that serve Vermonters with HIV or AIDS.
- 70% of CDBG funds go to Entitlement Communities and 30% go to states. Burlington is Vermont's only Entitlement Community; communities must have populations of 50,000 or more.
- Public Housing Authorities (PHA) receive federal funding and report both to HUD and the State of Vermont.

Joe Kasprzak asked about the housing cost burden for renters in Vermont and how rising construction costs were impacting the cost burden. Shannon Trainor replied that there is an impact and VHCB has to be creative to make units affordable for their low-moderate income tenants.

Joe Kasprzak then asked if the 4 priorities the state has for HUD funding could be shifted through community input. The 4 priorities currently are:

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

Ann Kroll replied yes, and asked if the state should reorder the priorities to put a higher priority on decreasing/eliminating homelessness.

Killian Brooks asked if out of state landlords negatively impacted the quality of life for renters. Ann Kroll responded that the state has a good handle on HUD funded projects, and most are based in Vermont. She added that CDBG funded units were inspected annually. Lily Sojourner added that annual inspections are not required for privately funded rental units and could be in deteriorated conditions. Ann Kroll said the state needs a rental registry for tracking out of state landlords for private rentals.

Patrick Scheld reinforced that the private sector units are not regularly inspected but people can call their representatives about poor housing conditions, and that RuralEdge, the Homeownership Center that serves Northeast Kingdom, provides low interest loans for landlords for rental repairs.

Ken Linsley inquired about the impact of short-term rentals on affordability and supply. Ann said that communities were looking at this issue and as an example Stowe is limiting the number of short-term rentals in their community. Joe Kasprzak added that short-term rentals were needed for tourism, and there is a tough balance with the need for long-term housing.

David Snedeker stated that CDBG was critically important for smaller communities and cited the Jasper Hill project. The Jasper Hill Creamery received funds to increase their operations in Caledonia County.

Kyle Dwyer noted that homelessness was on the rise in Caledonia County and that the annual Point in Time Count* revealed there were over 100 “street homeless” in St. Johnsbury and 65 in Newport. More shelters and services are desperately needed. **The Point in Time Count (PIT) is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January across the country and is mandated by HUD.*

An audience member said that there could be a higher base tax for short term rentals and communities could use those funds to help subsidize new affordable housing.

Kyle Dwyer said that Accessory Dwelling Units could also be part of the solution.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30pm