

just pick an instrument it might be cello but um yeah music for me

0:08

thank you um Sue hi everyone i'm Sue Saglowski i'm the

0:15

executive director for the Vermont School Boards Association and ever since I was very young my favorite sound has

0:23

been the spring peeper frogs that make all that wonderful sound in the spring that lets us know that spring is coming

0:30

and summer is coming okay I agree i Well I like both of your

0:35

favorite sounds um Andy yeah uh Andy Hooper Middlebury Select Board many

0:43

other boards um 30 years working in tech uh my favorite sound is uh running water

0:50

i was complaining about the rain but the sound of the rain on the roof in the morning or evening is lovely uh being

0:58

near a stream any of that just a great sound i agree

1:05

megan good morning meganor i work at CCTV

1:11

Center for Media Democracy and we are um involved in supporting our

1:18

municipalities and other community members in maintaining access to the

1:24

workings of democracy through technology and I um have been entranced by the

1:33

sound of a Carolina Ren that has been living in my neighborhood

1:38

and he hadn't it was very like startling it's been here for a couple of years now

1:44

and there it's a little outside the range and my least favorite sound is that noise of the um

1:52

phone dinging which I just heard as I was talking you probably didn't hear it

1:58

we didn't hear it but I I understand it because I have to do that one my work

2:03

phone sometimes I I don't know how but it gets on vibrate every time I get an email and it's like I I it creates a

2:10

sense of doom because I know that there's just a lot there so

2:16

it's nice prompt oh thanks i I didn't think of it i have a I I love doing this in the beginning

2:23

of meetings it will always happen if I'm at leading a meeting and I have a lot of um different tools to help me so thank

2:31

you um Susan

2:37

Susan Clark um I live in Middle Sex i'm a facilitator uh and um and uh author

2:44

about local democracy and I'm representing uh Vermont cities and towns and um uh which Andy is just making

2:52

facial gestures that he forgot to say um he most of us knew most of us knew

2:58

exactly yeah and uh let's see boy it's so hard i am I am a big um lover of

3:06

harmony of all kinds um so that would definitely be a top one but I kind of do

3:12

I have to say the sound of geese flying overhead uh either spring or fall and when you can hear them honking but also

3:19

sometimes at night you can just hear their wings it's quite quite a magical sound

3:24

i agree Cynthia

3:31

hi um I love that we're all thinking about birds because immediately what popped into my head was hermit thrush

3:37

singing in the sort of the back of the woods early in the morning at the end of the day that's my favorite sound um I'm

3:44

in Thatford Vermont and I am a self-appointed um advocate of democracy

3:49

guardian of democracy keep people accountable and currently um I am trying

3:55

to encourage my town to have a big old semi keen centennial anniversary party

4:01

next year awesome sean

4:07

Sean Sheen the elections director here at Secretary of State um I'd go

4:15

no hard to decide between loons and red tail hawks one of the one of the two in different

4:22

loons are so cool especially when you're camping on a lake and then you wake up you wake up to the sound of the loons

4:27

that's pretty amazing yeah that is the best kelly um Kelly Pyella I am the the the

4:36

new member of the municipal assistance and general counsel division i'll be

4:41

supporting um Jenny and her work moving forward uh can you talk about what you

4:46

have done in the past because I think it's really relevant to this group absolutely sure um most recently I was

4:54

working for FEMA doing flood recovery work with Vermont municipalities but prior to that I served in the

5:00

legislature for seven years and um was a town clerk for 13 years uh and did those

5:06

things simultaneously so I am really excited to now be with the Secretary of

5:12

State and um supporting all of the things democracy um and this is my first

5:20

like official meeting doing anything since I started this week

5:25

um and I'm just I'm really glad to be here we're excited that you're here yeah

5:31

it's really good yeah I think it's going to be a a really good fit all around um

5:37

and my favorite sound is I'm gonna have to agree with Sue and go with the peepers that is a you know it is a sign

5:44

that we are out of winter and and it's still time and limited too like it

5:50

doesn't last that long yeah it's a very you know like special moment in the year and um

5:57

yeah it's they seem like they've been louder this year maybe you think that every year it just surprises me but yeah

6:02

right for such little little beings they are mighty when they start singing so my

6:09

sister had a friend that put a decel meter they have a little pawn my sister and brother-in-law at their house and

6:16

the friend came over with a decibel meter and said it was over a 100 which is which is crazy for something that

6:22

small but that's a nuisance in our town [Laughter]

6:30

oh dear but they they don't accept a citation very well yeah they do

6:36

slippery little suckers um okay thank you thanks for indulging me

6:44

with that it's just I love doing that um because it's a good way for everyone to feel a little connected with each other so hope that it works for everyone um so

6:53

the way that I um broke up the agenda we have two topics that we're going to talk about today uh the first is we're going

6:59

to continue uh that our topic from our last meeting which is running effective meetings and I thought we could break it

7:05

up in spend an hour on that and break it up into three sections i'll try to keep us somewhat um on track with those three

7:14

sections and um I'm going to stop sharing the agenda so I can write notes

7:19

um here unless it which works better for people would you like me to share the agenda so you might not see everybody

7:25

the same or would you like me to stop sharing the agenda so we can all see each other do people have a preference

7:36

i like seeing people it would be good to see the notes every once in a while so we know that we're

7:43

being recorded well I also did start the recording and we also have a transcript going just so

7:49

people know um so we have that as well um but I will do that i'll um what I'll

7:57

do is I'll stop sharing and then when we switch topics but in topic one I'll

8:03

share again and then so we can review and then I'll do that with after each topic um because I I understand that

8:11

inclination um so oh but I shouldn't have stopped sharing right now but anyway I'm just going to

8:17

you all saw the agenda what I'm going to do is break the first section into three sections um elements of an effective

8:25

meeting that's already in the law um what's missing or not clear in the

8:30

current law and then um with those two um

8:35

sub subg group sub topics in mind um what topics should be

8:42

addressed in a best practices guide because really the first thing that we need to do as a group is um think about

8:50

a best practices guide for running effective and inclusive meetings so um this is probably the biggest task that

8:56

this group has to do um I think this will probably need to run through multiple multiple meetings and be

9:02

augmented as we continue to grow and learn together and and hear each other's perspectives um but I would like to

9:09

start structuring that document um and and thinking about that um and the best

9:16

way that I was thinking about that is what's current in the law that's very clear and then what isn't that we can

9:22

give best practices on because to me best practices means it's not in the law but it's something that you should do or

9:29

could do um and then we're going to take a little break so that everyone is not sitting for 2 and 1 half hours and then

9:37

um Robin is um going to give us an overview and the the details about the

9:44

findings of our um our civic health index um that we did and recently

9:51

published um you know Susan was a huge part of that megan was a part of that so

9:57

for some of you it it's going to be um old news or or um you know a refresher

10:05

but what Robin's Robin's going to give a whole overview but she's also going to talk about the parts of the civic index

10:12

that are really specific to this group's work and I think what would be helpful

10:17

as you're hearing her talk about the civic health index is um what should this group recommend that we do or that

10:25

a civics's um engagement partnership do to promote open meetings transparency

10:32

and engagement um and so as you're as you're hearing her overview and and uh

10:39

our findings that would be a good lens for this group to think about

10:44

okay um let's jump in what elements of an effective meeting are already in the

10:50

law and let's just sort of popcorn anyone can say anything uh at any time

10:57

what law the open meeting law okay and this is VSA title one chapter 5 subchapter 2

11:08

I believe so I don't have it as as well versed as you but yes I do not have that

11:13

well versed i just searched it up yeah

11:20

so you know the law changed i'll start how about I'll start the law changed significantly it used to be there was um

11:28

in last year so the things that I think worked prior to the change and current

11:34

is that there needs to be notice of public hearings that's that's uh

11:45

and that hearings need to be accessible um to the public

11:54

and now depending on what type of body you are

12:00

it depend the the format can shape shift depending on what type of body you are it can be um inperson

12:10

remote or hybrid does anyone else have something that

12:15

they think helps make um meetings effective and accessible

12:33

the recording requirements um

12:39

which are um currently for municipal it can um if you're just you need to make

12:48

an an at least an audio

12:54

How about how the audio andor notes are made available to people currently here

13:00

we have to ask our assistant town clerk for them um which takes time out of her

13:06

day they are not accessible uh just for anyone 24/7

13:13

okay that's something that Cynthia did you say that yes yeah okay um Cynthia

13:20

that's something um that should be happening um what type of

13:27

body is it select board planning commission are they making an audio

13:33

recording or a visual recording both okay yeah um

13:41

I'll have to look I know that for state bodies those need to be posted i'll have

13:47

to look at the law more closely but I um don't have it memorized um okay

13:58

that's a question for me i'm going to have to look at whether municipal have to post i should know

14:05

does the town have a website does your town have a website it does and there's meeting uh minutes

14:12

sometimes uh that come up within the appropriate time period but um yeah you

14:18

still have to ask for any audio or written

14:25

I mean visual sorry okay yeah the bs on our site say it it says it needs to be

14:32

posted right post in the designated electronic location if the town has a website because the legislature didn't

14:38

want to mandate that towns create a website but if you have a website you're

14:43

supposed to post them i didn't think there was a distinction between MUN and state no it's a state and local decision

14:50

making just if you're if you're not advisory is there not a there was a require

14:56

There's not a requirement that towns have a website now where they post the minutes

15:02

uh no okay uh the legislaturator is pretty hesitant to do that um because of

15:09

the wide diversity of our towns um that doesn't mean that that's not something

15:14

that I mean very candidly you know the legislature

15:20

could have a a fund that would help towns stand up websites and that would

15:25

be something that would equalize democracy a little bit across our towns

15:31

um because a website really does help with a lot of town functions um and

15:38

would improve people's access to information but that but they the end

15:44

isn't a requirement because we have so many different types of towns yeah I I remember it being discussed a few years

15:51

ago i just didn't know which one okay it was very actively discussed last

15:56

year with these changes because because of the posting and um yeah

16:04

you want us to be looking at this you want us to be looking at this

16:11

the statute the open meeting law statute and saying what in here already

16:19

yeah it could be not just the statute but your experience of open meetings like what what is working in open

16:25

meetings right now that is based in statutory authority versus um

16:32

what um what's missing or not clear like

16:37

um or what is a best practice so I'm thinking there's like there's things that are required in the statute there's

16:44

things that are not in the statute that maybe should be and then there's things

16:50

that just really effective public bodies do like um estab you know what's not in

16:57

the statute what's missing in the statute i hear this all the time i heard it in Rutland i gave a presentation on open meeting law in Rutland on Wednesday

17:04

to the regional planning commissions and um

17:10

how long can people speak if they're a public member they you know that is a very open question um it is done

17:19

differently entirely by body and sometimes that's not clear um what the

17:26

rules of the road are so I would say that shouldn't be in the that's not missing from the statute it's not in the

17:33

statute but it should go in our best practices guide some guidance on how to

17:38

establish the rules of the road around um public comment i'm going to just put

17:44

maybe we should talk about these topics not in isolation is what I'm not one two

17:50

three i'm changing the agenda is that okay because um because I think what's

17:55

gonna happen is we're gonna come up with ideas and not know which like we're gonna have to decide which category to

18:01

put them in i was going to say we'd be we'd be a lot more chatty right now if we were talking

18:07

about what we want to change

18:13

okay well I want chatty so um so we're gonna

18:18

um change it up um so um if you're if you're talking generally

18:26

from experience and I mean I think we all have different experiences the you

18:32

know one thing is when the um the chairperson

18:37

is able to acknowledge and connect together the people who are in the room

18:43

the people who are on Zoom and the people who may be um attending

18:50

the meeting later through some sort of recording and acknowledging that all of

18:55

those people need to kind of have a seamless experience so if folks are referring to a graphic and the camera

19:04

isn't picking up that graphic or the people on Zoom can't see that graphic making sure

19:11

that everybody so how so making sure everybody has a seamless

19:17

experience with that and you know I just was at in Mount Mansfield the Richmond chair of the Richmond Select Board was

19:24

talking about his experience making sure that you know when he's

19:30

bringing something up he makes sure the camera is focused in the right place and

19:36

you know certainly we're having that experience now where I'm like who's you know like I may want to see you closer

19:43

but I can't because I just have this wide shot oh having

19:50

effective technology that um makes the audio and video um

20:00

create a create a more familiar and intimate experience

20:06

in that there is a way that I can change the settings on this but I don't know what

20:11

it I don't know how to do it so I I just pinned you which makes the three of you

20:17

larger on my team screen um Okay yeah and I think that works so that the

20:23

individuals have smaller boxes and and the group has a larger one um yeah that's a good piece and it's it's akin

20:30

to um having a designated technologist is akin to having a designated minutes taker right like this is a task which

20:40

is is effort consuming enough that you're not able to contribute in the way that

20:46

someone who is does not have that task does to the flow of the meeting um it's

20:52

tough it's obviously resource intensive uh but I think it is a part of having a

20:59

meeting run smoothly uh Mbury is point Andy oh sorry i didn't mean to mbury is

21:06

fortunate that we've got uh multiple staff people who attend select board meetings and at least one staff person

21:11

who attends uh DRB and planning commission all that so that they

21:17

make sure that teams runs right that the sorry zoom um and that any reference

21:24

documents are recorded by zoom uh through the share uh but I know that a

21:30

lot of bodies don't have that luxury and Andy is that a town person or is that

21:36

the Mbury access that is town staff uh Mbury access records what we're records

21:42

the room using their own their own technology in the room and

21:47

they have a feed to the Zoom meeting so that they can capture the presentate
presented materials yeah when that's the

21:55

focus yeah exactly yeah so for and is that clear to folks

22:02

like and we do that you know in Burlington and other places do that where they they we
have a camera or a

22:10

series of cameras and those cameras will pick up it's

22:16

different than what you have right now in your room Lauren which is you know a

22:22

smart TV which has it which has its functions and

22:27

you know it's it's certainly on the list of you know optional technologies and

22:32

it's better than not obviously um but when you know the city of South

22:39

Burlington for example hires us so they don't have to hire you know we then can

22:45

manage it put it this way if the city of South Burlington had to hire one person to

22:51

come in and run all of their meetings they would be in a pickle because that's

22:58

a hard job to fill right but we can fill that with multiple staffers for them

23:08

and I I I think that's a place of of um

23:13

anyway that we I I put it in in good quality good good

23:20

audio and video quality that makes the experience um useful to us and that

23:28

might be on the other side too like like you know Cynthia can't um put turn on

23:33

her camera because of crappy broadband probably so

23:39

having access to um Starling

23:47

starling still crap

23:54

yeah along those lines i mean i'm not sure how to tie this in but I completely agree with what Megan's saying and it

24:00

and andy it makes such a huge difference in the quality of the people who are online but also the people who are in

24:07

the room um if the technology is being wellrun and well staffed and obviously

24:12

Megan's got people whose job it is whose literal job it is to know all of those tricks all of the and to have excellent

24:19

equipment um and if you're in a town that start with you know bad internet

24:24

like we were talking about with Cindia Cynthia um or a person at home doesn't have great equipment um the town doesn't

24:32

have the staff which i'm going to say the majority of them don't have the enough staff to do this kind of thing um

24:39

and we're expecting to have a hybrid hybrid access to a meeting what you wind

24:45

up with is diminishing the quality both of the meeting for the folks who are on hybrid but also the ones um who are at

24:51

home um and that's that's the experience that i'm worried about that's the that's sort of what we're navigating here is

24:58

how do we not diminish the quality of democracy by trying to improve you know

25:06

access um because we love access and we want uh and we want great quality democracy as well um so i i think that's

25:14

that's i just want to want to call that that's a balance i think that we'll we'll be looking at given the reality of

25:20

of um money and technology in our in our towns

25:28

is there a rule about when you have a hybrid meeting that you have to allow the chat

25:36

there is not it's not in the statute okay our

25:45

select board just declined to acknowledge any of the chats in the hybrid meetings and they're not

25:51

announcing that so people don't know that their chats are not being looked at

25:56

and the thing to do there would be to disable the chat um which again requires familiarity with the platform

26:04

i will recommend that to them thank or to use or to use the chat in a very

26:10

specific way because if you the problem with disabling the chat Andy is that you

26:15

know in our case it will get information like hey I can't hear right so using

26:21

chat for very specific non um gerine you know the chat can be used for um

26:30

you know mundane what's there's probably a word for it technical functions um and you

26:38

Yeah we use YouTube to live stream the meetings as well so besides having them on Zoom you can also watch them and

26:44

surprisingly a lot of people like you know we'll have hundreds of people watching a Burlington

26:50

City Council meeting yeah and I know and they're not on the Zoom right so and we post so so there is

26:59

that's a great point Cynthia is like making sure that people understand what

27:05

these other avenues so we post our our technical people post this chat is not

27:11

monitored by the municipality or our staff although I do tell staff if

27:19

somebody tells if somebody asks a question or somebody says I can't hear

27:25

to you know do pay attention to it so some people are too

27:31

if you record a Zoom meeting and make that recording available and chat is enabled right like that chat is part of

27:40

the recording not necessarily okay

27:45

and certainly on the live stream like in the early days of um because I spent a lot of time like

27:53

in the early COVID days of recording actually like being somebody who was recording these meetings and live

27:59

streaming them i would actually move the chat into the window because it wasn't clear so that if there was anything

28:06

going on it was recorded as part of the video so so anybody who was watching

28:12

could see what was happening in the chat um

28:18

you know I don't think that that's a practice that we're doing now so I think I think basically what Cynthia is saying

28:25

is clarify how the chat is going to be used and

28:32

certainly if anything so what I wrote down is guidance on chat

28:38

should it be used if yes how or disabled um should be discussed in our best

28:45

practices um and it sounds to me like probably Our

28:52

best practice will say it should be used only for technical or logistical questions

28:57

or during public comment i mean or it could be used for public comment um but

29:02

only during public comment period and someone should read that question out loud and say identify who's asking the

29:10

question is what I'm hearing from our conversation

29:15

yeah because then you get into a question of does that stuff need to be recorded as part of the minutes so if

29:22

somebody says something um in that if somebody says something in

29:29

the chat just like you know if people are texting if if select board members are during

29:38

the meeting it becomes part of the Freedom of Information Act request

29:46

so so a couple of things that you just that you just said Megan oh sorry yeah

29:52

well I mean that could be another thing is like you know stay off your other tech

29:59

yeah yeah um hi five hello okay

30:06

um okay so um you just said some things that I think should be in the um best

30:13

practices guide uh Megan uh there should be guidance on

30:19

external tech during a meeting

30:25

um minutes

30:30

what should be in them

30:36

and there was something else you just said that made me think something but I

30:41

forget it will come back i'm sorry Megan were you you were saying

30:48

the public comment if it's if it's I'm just trying to

30:53

trigger my brain go through what you were saying again you were saying I mean if if there's going to be anything

30:59

discussed in the chat that's germanine to the meeting it would have to be reflected in the minutes or the or the

31:04

recording so that's another reason to just try to keep that

31:10

keep it out of the keep it out of the realm

31:19

okay so Frank um thanks for joining what we're talking about right now is um a

31:27

couple of things a couple of elements and we're going to talk about this for another uh 35 minutes which is um

31:34

elements of an effective meeting that are in the law things that are missing or not clear in the law and then we are

31:42

tasked with creating a best practices guide so as we're talking about these things we're we're differentiating you

31:48

know does something need to be changed in the law versus is there best practices and I think that's going to be

31:54

a squidgy line for us honestly because I think sometimes we're going to want some of these best practices to be in the law

32:00

but sometimes that is unadvisable so um that's going to be I think a tension between recommendations for changes of

32:08

the with the law and we may all have different perspectives on that versus what's in best practices um so

32:16

um and just just for Frank's benefit I'm going to share and because we haven't you guys haven't seen what I'm typing

32:22

I'm going to share the agenda again so that he can see where we are and um see what we've discussed and then you guys

32:29

can just uh let me know how I'm reflecting our our thoughts here

32:37

and um I probably haven't said this before but I hate typing in front of

32:42

other people i am a dyslexic person um and I'm a very bad speller um so just

32:48

give me a lot of grace i I do spell correctly ultimately but not initially

32:55

um and it causes me anxiety so but I'm happy to do it i'm trusting you and I just told everyone who wants to see this

33:01

recording that I don't like it so practicing vulnerability um

33:14

so you're in part in a elements of an effective meeting we are in all um three

33:21

parts we decided it I was going to do it A B C but it turns out that's not how

33:26

our brains like to work um as a group or the discussion flow so we're doing all three together

33:33

and Lauren I just looked up where you are now where we talked earlier on the posting the recording um so that's in

33:39

the one BSA 312 a6 but it actually the exemption doesn't

33:44

specify if they don't have a website it it says if it would impose an undue hard

33:50

ifing would impose an undue hardship on the municipality and it says the burden of proving that compliance would be an

33:58

undue hardship is on the municipality yeah to to prove that and I was just

34:03

thinking in the day of with the conversation going to YouTube channels and how anybody can set up a YouTube

34:09

channel with no issue is is really the undue burden more on actually recording

34:15

them well the recording the recording is a requirement there's it's it's a much

34:22

harder there's an undue hardship exemption to the audio recording for

34:28

municipalities but um when I've been giving trainings on open meeting law I'm really recommending that nobody use that

34:35

because we carry around recorders with us all the time um and I think it would

34:41

be pretty hard to defend not doing at least an audio recording which is what's

34:47

required for a municipality um so um

34:52

I actually think you have to be community should be really careful about arguing that they have undue hardship

34:58

altogether um but creating a website I think you without funding or but

35:07

right that you could just post it to a YouTube channel and wouldn't need you could just communicate

35:13

your other right communication methods that here is your YouTube channel yeah i mean you could put you could put on your

35:19

meetings and and agendas recordings of these meetings will be posted on this YouTube channel and then they would all

35:26

be there and and that would be and it could be audio or it could be audio visual um is it does it meet uh the sort

35:35

of I think Megan probably has the highest standards for good quality audio

35:41

and visual recordings of all of us here um if none of that would meet sort of

35:48

what she would want as the gold standard but uh to meet the law you could do that

35:53

i'm just curious how many I don't know if we have any sense of how many municipalities have claimed that undue

36:00

hardship to to even record in we're we're advising I I don't think that we

36:09

have heard of any I would have to check with Jenny i would I don't think we've heard of any town that has claimed they

36:14

have undue hardship for audio um and if we get the question we're trying to help

36:20

people get to audio i would guess that quasi municipal

36:27

bodies would be uh more likely to not be doing this at this point um regional

36:32

planning solid waste um I have not seen any of those recordings

36:40

at any rate we record this in solid waste and the

36:46

regional planning commission for county but have you had complaints has the office had is there a list of complaints

36:52

in the office from folks who are trying to

36:58

not per se and I would have to ask Jenny that question and she's out today um but

37:03

I will that's a good that's a good inquiry um

37:08

Andy your point there um helped me uh remember that I think that something

37:14

that's missing or not clear in the current law is more clarity on what is a

37:21

decision making

37:27

advisory versus non-advisory I think is how it's stated in the yes in here there

37:33

is great confusion about that isn't ified with S59

37:39

a little but not maybe a little but I don't think it's enough we were asking

37:45

Ruth Hardy about this and she was not clear about which town boards and

37:51

commissions were advisory versus non-advisory uh is it if you have some

37:56

amount of budget that you have control over yourself um

38:01

not clear yeah I think it's very unclear and just so you guys know um I will talk

38:10

about non-advisory more frequently as decision-making bodies because

38:15

non-advisory is the worst word I could ever think of and it like it needs to

38:22

change like it's a horrible word and as I was saying to the Rutland um regional

38:27

planning you know I was in the room i was in every room that was there during

38:34

that legislative session uh where this was talked about and it's a great lesson

38:40

in humility helping to build laws because they don't work the way you want them to and so I'm sorry that I did not

38:49

make more of a like this word makes no sense non-advisory at the time but it

38:55

really does not make sense particularly if you're not in the statute all the

39:01

and they've changed it to public bodies in S59 they've gotten rid of

39:06

non-advisory and changed it to public bodies not all public but there's there's

39:13

public bodies and advisory bodies now Megan but advisory bodies are a subset of

39:21

public bodies yes but there's not

39:27

Okay i I thought it was clarifying it maybe I'm not reading it right i'll have

39:33

to look at it again i've looked at it a couple times but I haven't been as involved this year

39:42

frank have you shared the u slide you shared

39:47

in Rutland that's not on the video yet um but could be amended to go on the

39:54

video and because you built it in pieces uh where you show the

40:00

um the uh advisory and non-advisory

40:07

and you get into decision-m which is correct because the public really should know and have access to interactively or

40:16

at least audibly to how the sausage is made which is what a planning commission does in our town

40:23

there's a there's definitely a a split in the planning commission confusion

40:29

based on past advisories as to whether we were advisory and non-advisory

40:36

and I was saying well it's how the sausage is made and it's made at the planning commission where decisions are

40:42

made uh many for many levels so um I think

40:49

that that that term making sausage is something that the public is really

40:54

interested in knowing how that happens right

41:00

it's really important that and that's where you know our office gets into a really that's why I think there should

41:07

be more clarity in the law because people call our office to ask am I

41:12

advisory or non-advisory and a planning commission is a great example of that it that's probably the

41:19

one of the more gray areas and so we we just advise that you treat yourself as a

41:26

decision-making body because you can't be wrong if you if you treat yourself as a decision-making body you can't be

41:32

wrong but if you treat yourself as an advisory body and you are a decision-making body you you could be

41:38

wrong right so um so we've been saying that we think that planning commissions

41:44

should treat themselves as decision-making bodies because they are making incredibly big decisions they

41:52

don't have final decision making power but they are making decisions that are acted on um but that's you know I

42:00

think that falls more right now because of that the ambiguity in the law um to

42:05

best practices versus in the law

42:10

when I was the vice oh sorry go ahead go

42:16

when I was the vice chair of planning here briefly um I tried to get people to

42:22

focus on what we were doing by saying that we were doing the heavy lifting of thinking about things so the select

42:27

board would have all of the possible options from which to choose

42:36

yeah can you say that one more time Cynthia because I was distracted by the chat and I apologize okay um so I was

42:44

just saying that when I was the vice chair of planning here that the way to try to focus the others into figuring

42:51

out what we were supposed to be doing was to say that we were responsible for the heavy lifting of thinking about

42:57

things through thinking them through and researching them thoroughly so that the select board could then choose the right

43:04

direction to go from our findings which would be the advisory very strongly and

43:09

yet we have one person who's both on the planning and the select board so

43:16

so it kind of um defeats the purpose of having a planning commission in some ways because it's the same he's he's

43:23

advising himself right and and a select board is not making a decision on the micro decisions

43:30

at the planning level which is which would be advisory if you were advising

43:36

on every decision to be made to the plan or to the UBL um you would be con you know waiting for

43:45

every selectboard meeting to get that approved to be able to do it because those micro decisions are being made to

43:52

include and exclude and rewrite totally at the planning commission level

43:58

uh and a document that shows up at the select board is could be entirely different than any previous version

44:07

uh so very difficult to cover that in any select board agenda

44:13

um other than some major points i agree

44:25

okay say one more thing i'm going to move us out i'm sorry um i'm going to move us out of uh

44:33

planning commissions because I really think we could probably spend the next two hours on planning commissions it's

44:38

just a very hot topic um and Susan I see that you are saying let's stop screen

44:43

sharing i can do that um so we can see each other's faces again and um and I

44:51

want to just do a little timekeeping we have about 20 more minutes to talk about

44:56

what topics it feels like mo mainly the most relevant thing is what topics need

45:01

to be addressed in a best practices guide susan

45:09

yeah I posted a couple of links um just because um uh not I think this is a

45:15

really rich conversation and we're coming up with some really specific stuff that I think is really useful um

45:20

and I just want to say in case it feels hopeless that there have been some great

45:25

groups that have thought about this very question in Vermont um who have come up

45:31

with some actually really useful tools I think um and so I've linked to a

45:36

couple of them and they're just things that we could draw from one of them is the uh Vermont Council on Rural Development Leadership uh in action

45:42

guide um another one is something that public agenda did um we uh uh school boards association um and uh Vermont

45:50

Community Foundation uh and VCRD brought in uh the National Group Public Agenda

45:56

to um help do a training on public engagement at large um with a Vermont

46:02

focus and that's what that strengthening and sustaining public engagement in Vermont guide is um and I guess that

46:08

would be one other thing that I would add is we're talking about effective um

46:14

meetings um Susan can I just ask talking about chat and and um the use of chat

46:22

can you send those to me in an email so that I can find them later because what will happen is because you put them in

46:28

chat I will they'll always be in chat and available to me but they won't be available to external people and then

46:34

I'll forget where you put them but if they're in an email and I say Susan is going to email these resources to me in

46:40

this document then I can search for you and find them so I will do that pause there i just want Yeah um we may want to

46:48

I mean I can send them to everybody um as well uh because they're pretty pretty

46:53

um extensive and I I actually think they're pretty good um and one of the

46:59

things that that they um that they do we're talking about effective meetings

47:05

but I actually think I I think that if we were going to do a um uh best practices one of the best practices that

47:12

we can do is not do everything in meetings um or not do everything in um public uh like basically be more

47:20

creative in how we engage the public be more uh creative in how we bring people into the public conversation um and um

47:29

these talk about that um so that a select board might think that the only

47:34

way to get public comment is to invite people to a select board meeting when in fact they could be holding a different

47:40

kind of a meeting that looks entirely different um as long as it's worn properly and you know is under open

47:46

meeting you can do all kinds of stuff that make people understand their

47:51

democratic uh connection to the town better than having two minutes at the

47:57

microphone um and that is absolutely nationally uh recognized best practice

48:03

you know this is not this is not just a just a theory so so how extend that how

48:10

I'm taking that is think about what can be done in a meeting and how we engage people in a conversation think about

48:16

different forums etc or formats is that a fair summation of what you said sure

48:24

use different formats for public engagement yeah

48:32

okay frank do you still have your hand up or is that a lingering hand i couldn't tell no i was just following up

48:39

on the uh two points number one is

48:45

some stuff needs to be done at a meeting a select board meeting for example

48:51

uh where they have to approve warrants for payroll and pay and payes

48:59

uh that the treasures presented to them and if you have those moved to first in

49:04

the agenda then you know the meeting can fall apart electronically as long as

49:09

that's done and people are getting their paychecks the other level with that would be uh time of the essence grant

49:17

filings uh which the select board would have to sign agree upon and sign off on

49:24

and that's pretty much mission critical to the financials operation duties of

49:29

the select board that should be a hierarchal is in in the in the uh

49:36

attention gathering here because if you have an agenda and one person who's in

49:41

the meeting is virtual remote and that person's needed to make up the uh quorum

49:48

and that person drops off then essentially you have a suspended meeting which you can't even

49:55

you don't even have a quorum to call for an adjournment of the meeting uh and vote on it so you

50:03

Oh sorry so so so that this skeleton of

50:09

what absolutely must be done uh is one thing business-wise

50:16

and then we have another separate um topics that get covered in various

50:23

meetings that um is related to what I was saying before

50:29

uh but I was just thinking of somebody with a who's working on the town crew or

50:35

something road crew and they need the paycheck to pay their mortgage and

50:41

there's no approval that's a problem i'm going to interrupt you for just one second because what I what I'm hearing you say and I just want

50:47

to confirm and I'm adding it something um and I want to make sure the group agrees is think about the agenda and the

50:54

priority of the agenda items what is essential to the business of the body and the piece that you are not saying

51:00

that I would like to add is think about what topics are most important to the public because I've gone to meetings

51:07

where the thing it's everyone knows why everyone's there and the thing that everyone wants to talk about is left to

51:14

the very last moment and that is really irritating as a public member i

51:19

understand why bodies do it because you get people to leave your meeting um but that's not accessible

51:26

so it's I don't love it do people agree with that that is absolutely the case uh

51:34

and you're right that is not running an effective meeting or at least not running an inclusive meeting

51:41

the this the second point was that the debate

51:47

on um advisory non-advisory is raging

51:53

um and it's and and did did did was it

51:59

discussed that the open meeting law is in an amendment process now due to the

52:04

uh emergency need to address what you talked at the Rutland about at the Rutland meeting well what what I believe

52:12

is happening and I need to look at the law again they're actively changing it right now so the last I looked at it was

52:18

when it came out of the Senate side and Andy posted the Senate um

52:26

the I don't know whether it is that an amendment made on the House side Andy that you made that you posted or was it

52:33

as amended in the Senate that was as passed by the Senate I think yeah and then I

52:39

I just posted the most I just posted the most recent amendment after the House

52:44

received it from the Senate and has been looking at it okay so I don't want to

52:50

speak to it very much because I I Jenny's been really focused on this and

52:56

I've been focused on other legislative stuff so but my understanding is the biggest thing that's changed is

53:02

non-advisory is being removed which is awesome um but

53:08

what is an advisory I don't think still is completely defined enough so I still

53:15

think we need this some more clarity in the law even with the current draft and

53:22

um I have had people ask legislators members of the public ask are we going to do that now and my big ask was don't

53:32

change the open meeting law that much this session because we're doing this working group we're going to have

53:37

another we're going to have recommendations we're you know I don't love when we change things and then we

53:44

haven't done the research on things and then we need to change things again so um that's been my big ask i think that's

53:51

sticking right now but um I clearly need to go do a deeper dive

53:57

um Megan and Frank can I just ask can you take your hand down just because it's confusing to me of when when you

54:04

Thank you and then when you want to put your hand up I'll definitely call on you um Megan yeah i just want to I'm I'm I'm

54:10

I won't belabor S59 too much longer but I was I did happen to be there and sit

54:17

sit in on committee and they had a long conversation or what felt like could be a longer

54:24

conversation on regional the the requirement of regional bodies to have an in-person

54:31

location because the um CUDS were coming and asking for an exemption and So as

54:38

long as you're aware of that it seemed like oh this is a sticky road especially given the fact that our school

54:46

that we may be seeing a consolidation of school districts and so to eliminate

54:52

regional um you know CSWDs or CCRPC's or any of

54:58

those um so anyway as long as you're aware of

55:03

that and have a eyes on it we are aware of that yep and we do have eyes on that

55:08

and just so this body knows we have testified about the school redistricting

55:14

um a good amount based both on the election law changes that will need to happen but also the open meeting law

55:20

changes and our strong recommendation is that it be clearer in the law what's

55:25

required for the wards because um like what's required for these school

55:31

districts and our recommendation is that the law requires a certain number of

55:37

always has a physical location um and which it would um but that also that if

55:45

depending on the size of the districts or maybe even not if there's wards within the districts which looks like

55:51

there will be that there be public meetings required in each ward every year so that people don't have to travel

55:58

all the time to a place far outside of where they are um I think that would be

56:04

um it'll help communities with the adjustment of the bigger districts so on

56:09

that I think Oh so sorry Frank oh no no go ahead Megan i just think on that back to like what makes an effective meeting

56:17

is a consistent and familiar location for the in-person

56:22

format and so whether you have to find you know

56:31

even if nobody's going to show up in person when they do want to show up they need to like that that needs to be a

56:37

consistent and and familiar location

56:46

thanks in in the word because they're amending it now the question becomes

56:54

can this body come up with a preliminary report to fit into this legislative

57:01

session regarding cleaning up the advisory non-advisory with some definitions

57:07

and particularly addressing the planning commission uh right i think the answer's

57:13

the answer is no because we are at the 11th hour in the legislative session and

57:20

I think that this is such a hot button topic that it would require a lot more

57:25

discussion so I I totally understand the inclination but um this office is not

57:30

going to not going to make that recommendation um because it is we have

57:37

like a week and a half two weeks left and any changes that are made on right

57:42

now also then have to go to the Senate side it's very logistically um challenging at this particular moment um

57:50

and I think the legislaturator is doing the best they can with where they are but I don't think um we should add any

57:59

more complexity to this bill right now um the the two trainings those two

58:06

slides clarifying things uh that were presented in the Rutland

58:12

meeting um which really reflected you guys point of view

58:20

on the uh and probably from your discussions the actual legislative intent

58:27

I'm imagining because otherwise you wouldn't have gone forward with those two slides so I think that that's needs

58:33

to be um endorsed and and certified as being

58:38

the rules of the road going forward for especially for open meeting training

58:44

sessions if those slides are used uh that at least it reflects the

58:51

legislative intent um which then people don't have to go running to their lawyers about or they

58:58

can present that to their lawyers saying this is actually reflecting legislative intent um to without actually clarifying

59:08

um I'm just you know because I don't know if a

59:13

lawyer is going to understand this uh myself

59:19

lawyers frequently don't understand a lot and I say that as a lawyer Um

59:24

so um I think that what Frank is referring to is the secretary and I when

59:30

we give this presentation we really talk about the intent of open meeting law and

59:35

if you ever have a question about what you should be doing you really need to

59:40

defer to open and transparent and accessible access and defer to that

59:46

which is why our recommendation is to planning commissions if you feel like you're in the gray treat yourself like

59:52

you're a decision-making body because you can't make a mistake um but what I'm

59:58

saying Frank and I I hope I wasn't too direct but I I am a very direct person

1:00:03

um we can't go in right now and and make and start listing um bodies that should

1:00:10

be decision-making bodies versus advisory bodies the legislature is not anticipating that from us and we have

1:00:17

not done our due diligence to start um saying yes or no um I just and there is

1:00:23

a large concern and we ran into this last year of there are so many different types of bodies and everyone calls

1:00:30

bodies different things and um that's why we went to legislative quasi

1:00:36

judicial budgetary and I forget the fourth word because that seemed to be

1:00:41

the most generic way to cast a big net um but I think even those words need

1:00:48

more definition um or more clarification so um there's still a lot of work to do

1:00:58

all right anything else in best practices we have five more minutes on this then we're going to take a break

1:01:05

just one thing is that those two slides were very clarifying and easy to follow

1:01:13

uh you know what slides I'm talking about and very well done and that should be that should be distributed

1:01:19

and and uh at least a showing hands with the committees maybe that they feel that

1:01:26

those slides reflect their intent in one way or the other to go forward with them

1:01:31

thank you thank you

1:01:37

anything else on best practices yes I can yes I can i have a little bit

1:01:44

of uh changes in that PowerPoint but I will uh work on that and clean it up and

1:01:50

uh share the whole deck with this group

1:01:56

i guess Megan it seems important to say accessibility practices

1:02:02

the whole gamut of language access translation

1:02:10

avoiding acronyms helping people to understand

1:02:20

you know accessibility it's really important

1:02:26

I know is quorum the elephant in the room

1:02:33

because in small towns like Versure they only have three people in the legboard and they can't ever go to the same party

1:02:42

oh yeah um we can talk about that um when are you having a meeting

1:02:48

i thought they can go to the party as long as they don't talk about town business that's correctly right but

1:02:54

there's often the appearance from folks outside the circle of conversation that potentially town work is being done bad

1:03:01

optics and and it's bad optics but we don't want to stop people from going to the

1:03:07

same wedding or I mean small you know like small towns are small towns like I can't go to the grocery store without

1:03:14

meeting a lot of people so um you know I think we

1:03:19

and and you know I think um that's sort of going upper level um you

1:03:26

know I think I don't know what you guys think about this but some public bodies publish sort of their best practices

1:03:34

adopting a lot of things which is making it very clear to the public that and

1:03:40

some chairs do this this is this body's time to talk about these topics and then

1:03:46

at the end of the meeting saying the discussion among the members of this body are closed on these topics and we

1:03:52

will not talk about these topics again until our next meeting you know that can be really good for the public to know

1:03:57

when they see you out in the world with each other um because then you then they

1:04:03

know that you've made a public record that you're not going to talk about those topics again um so

1:04:10

um some what I'm going to say is uh what I said is when are you having a meeting and then I'm also going to say um public

1:04:20

notice of um rules of the body um one

1:04:27

thing that came up in that Rutland Planning Commission Frank and I have been spending a lot of time together this week um is uh email you know uh

1:04:37

it's really important that um that public body members like a member

1:04:44

of a bo resident will email every member of the body um the same question on the

1:04:50

same email string and there needs to be uh some clarity and rule established

1:04:58

with the body of how you handle that um so yeah email uh yep front porch forum

1:05:12

is there any way is there any way to prevent uh people on the board from uh

1:05:19

weaponizing the open meeting law against each other when they have problems with each other accusing each other of uh

1:05:27

forming cohorts etc it's kind of ugly but it happens oh it does people are so

1:05:34

peopleish um

1:05:41

so I'm writing down Cynthia from that what to do when

1:05:47

uh OML and I'm going to also say public records requests are used as weapons and

1:05:54

that can be b member on member or public on on body uh that can go many different

1:06:00

directions i've seen it all right I'm going to share this screen

1:06:06

again because we're almost at time and I want to make sure that um you guys

1:06:12

um that I haven't missed anything

1:06:18

frank yeah on the email side

1:06:24

uh the emails are public record and I'm assuming they have to be stored are they

1:06:29

going to have a 30-day time frame that they're stored or are they going to be in stored indefinitely because the

1:06:36

storage hurdle becomes a whole different technical question um and I don't know I

1:06:44

don't know if any towns are doing it storing their emails and some of them have Gmail accounts and things so um

1:06:52

just many towns are Yeah Gmail and I and they're not keeping

1:06:58

the emails uh in an archive of what goes on from select board to member to select

1:07:04

board member or to etc which I'm wondering if that is something that

1:07:09

is because the emails seem to be in the o

1:07:15

open media lies and in general is a is a public is going

1:07:21

to be kept available to the public somehow to be examined and I don't think

1:07:28

that there's any pro policies at the town levels that you know Andy you may be able

1:07:35

comment on this as well as if anybody's doing it there are policies that apply um very

1:07:43

clear policies that apply whether or not towns are doing it is a different question and Andy I don't want to cut off what you were going to say uh yeah I

1:07:50

think there is some nonclarity about what is a public record right um a a

1:07:56

text message or text chain between a non-quorum uh collection of a public body I have

1:08:03

always considered to not be a public record um if I do that using a town

1:08:08

provided email address I would consider it to be a public record um and then it

1:08:14

has to do with the technology behind things and whether things are preserved and available for requests for public

1:08:20

records and all of the various technical followons that come from that um yeah

1:08:27

clarity around these things would be lovely i think it it's probably outside of our purview

1:08:34

yeah uh yes and no i i'm gonna say yes and no on whether or not it's outside of

1:08:39

our purview but um because we really like records here at the Secretary of State too we like open meeting law but

1:08:44

we also like records so um and anytime we can provide clarity I think we should

1:08:50

um but you know I think that let's say Sean

1:08:57

Kelly and I are all part of a public body and we are all using our Gmail accounts because we don't have official

1:09:04

emails from provided to us um if we're talking about board business even though

1:09:10

it's on our personal emails that's public record are you members of a body

1:09:15

of more than seven members

1:09:21

i don't think it really matters oh if we're talking even though you

1:09:27

could discuss that in a non-corum group outside of a warned meeting and have it

1:09:32

not be a violation of OML yeah I think it's still a public record

1:09:38

there's a difference between what's open meeting versus what's a public record sure um and um I mean I I would have to

1:09:47

think about that a little bit more but um if you're if you are if I'm saying to

1:09:52

Sean you know I'm talking to you about my opinion as an elected select board

1:09:59

member and I'm looking for your opinion as an elected select board member i think that could be interpreted as a

1:10:05

public record for sure now if Kelly Sean and I are talking about when we're going to meet up to go to the concert on the

1:10:11

green that's not a public record we're not talking about um board business

1:10:17

but but it it get I mean I think there needs to be some clarity there but um

1:10:24

if you send those while you're in a meeting I would imagine those would be subject just like if you text your

1:10:32

neighbor in a meeting but I don't see how that's different than you know the

1:10:39

progressives caucusing on the side during the city council meeting

1:10:44

and you know what I mean and being but you know talk about effective side

1:10:50

conversations are effective to public meetings yeah well I think but I think there's a

1:10:55

really different thing between um that and maybe that's something that we need to talk about distinction

1:11:06

last year oh I was just I stopped talking because I was thinking about typing sorry

1:11:12

distinction between open meeting and public records so here's the thing i

1:11:19

know that anytime I email a legislator or text a legislator that is a public record we're having a side conversation

1:11:27

about something and and I don't know if that's and and I'm going to just say I

1:11:33

don't know if that's really different with with the fact that I'm a state employee doing state business versus I'm

1:11:38

a select board doing select board business and I think we need some clarity around that so you know if I'm

1:11:45

communicating with a legislator about a policy item it is public record and and anyone

1:11:53

should and can be able to ask me that um if I'm communicating with Frank about a

1:11:59

policy item that's substantial and related to the business of this office that's a public record so um if I'm

1:12:07

communicating with Shawn unless we're talking about something that I can exempt from the public records because

1:12:13

we're talking about litigation or a contract that's a public record so um

1:12:20

but I need to understand that a little bit more in the context of a municipal

1:12:25

body

1:12:30

it it's fascinating and I I think it will if this was well understood it would push a lot more things to phone

1:12:36

calls and that it is chilling yeah i have a qu

1:12:43

I have a comment um it's I'm a

1:12:50

self-professed computer geek uh and I going back and I have

1:12:58

there's issues of redundancy keeping records uh there's also the fact that sometimes

1:13:07

the records if text typing in a document

1:13:13

if the formats change like Microsoft was famous for doing just to sell more Microsoft Office product

1:13:20

uh if There would need to be a standard essentially like um uh open document

1:13:28

format which is an Oasis internationally standard uh format which is designed

1:13:37

was initially governments were involved universities different people who were running into document storage and were

1:13:45

having to change as new formats

1:13:50

arose they uh were having to upgrade documents to the newer format versions at expenses

1:13:58

and so the um Oasis open document format

1:14:04

was a solution where in the future no matter how far in the future we go that

1:14:09

those documents would still be accessible by current by the current technology of the future looking back at

1:14:16

the documents uh and most uh office suites word processing

1:14:23

platforms would have the ability to do open document format uh

1:14:29

and I don't know if you want to comment on that at all uh not

1:14:35

I'm going to cut you off on that because I just want to I I wrote how to best store artifacts of the body recordings

1:14:42

minutes agendas emails texts public comments etc because we may want to talk about that in more detail but I also

1:14:49

we're now 10 minutes into our break i want to make sure that we have it and um

1:14:55

and uh yes Susan I'll add that uh Susan's talking about facilitation um

1:15:01

best pract

1:15:08

um let's say seven minutes um and I'm sorry that I didn't give you the full 15

1:15:14

so I apologize i need to take the facilitation uh so all right five

1:15:19

minutes uh thank you let's put ourselves on Nothing

1:23:24

hi everyone

1:23:29

okay I'm going to stop sharing unless did someone have anything more in the break

1:23:35

that came to mind that's bad facilitation to open up a

1:23:41

previous topic i have one one very self-center

1:23:49

self-serving request and and maybe this would come up in the you know for

1:23:54

various um organizations but specifically when it says involving

1:23:59

someone who is dedicated to good quality audio and v video and probably similar

1:24:04

around facilitations naming the organizations like VCT Vermont Access

1:24:11

Network naming specific organizations questions that Yeah I think I think we'll do that

1:24:18

when we actually get into writing the guide like resources available um yeah

1:24:28

okay hearing none other Robin I'm going to um turn it over to you but I'm going to

1:24:35

just introduce Robin a little bit more than she introduced herself um you know one of the big priorities of the

1:24:41

secretary um upon taking office was to increase civic engagement we hired Robin

1:24:48

um as the director of our civics program she's done an amazing job on a whole

1:24:54

variety of topics including the civic health index which is a has been a big

1:24:59

part of her work um but also um just a

1:25:05

wide variety of things she's really taken a lot um and taken something that was you know green grass and made a

1:25:13

whole a whole city park so um it's pretty awesome um and um we're really

1:25:19

proud of the work that she's done and of her and of the civic health index um

1:25:24

again which many of you have been engaged in um we do have a digital copy of it available on our website um I can

1:25:32

um make sure that you all have that as we are sending around the PowerPoint

1:25:37

i'll send a copy of the digital um version um and with that i'm going to turn it over to you Robin

1:25:44

oh she put it in the chat perfect see she's excellent

1:25:51

uh yeah don't get excited that's that's the easiest part for sure um

1:25:58

all right so i'm going to go ahead and share my screen we have this this slideshow um

1:26:07

just give me a moment to get set up here okay we're seeing we're seeing a the

1:26:14

correct thing yes thanks Megan i see nodding um so i guess before i jump in i

1:26:20

just want to acknowledge um that some of you are very familiar with this and uh

1:26:26

really appreciate all of the support we've gotten megan was one of the very first people i had a conversation with

1:26:32

when we were considering doing this project and informed a lot of our early

1:26:37

thinking about uh partnership and trying to bring in different uh voices and then

1:26:44

Susan was really our editor and helped uh me put together something coherent

1:26:51

especially with the frame the framing of all of this and so i'm just can't

1:26:56

overstate how grateful i am for her support as we got this off the ground

1:27:01

uh i think what we're going to do is just i'm going to give the presentation

1:27:08

that we have been giving so that you can have some context around the project and

1:27:13

some of our findings and um i'll go more quickly over some parts than others and you know try to focus on what seems most

1:27:20

relevant to this group but uh i have my two screens up in front of me so i can see the chat right now and i can if you

1:27:27

want to ask question clarifying questions as i go please feel free to do that um or raise your hand like but i'll

1:27:34

try and get through the initial presentation piece uh rather quickly so that we can spend more time talking

1:27:39

about it but feel free to interrupt me I guess is what I'm saying so our civic health index is based on a

1:27:47

framework with this organization called the National Conference on Citizenship and we're the 37th state that did this

1:27:55

one of these reports uh I actually just met the person who wrote uh Maine and

1:28:01

New Hampshire's civic health index who's been hired as a professor at Vermont Law School so that's an exciting uh future

1:28:07

resource to have available but um this organization National Conference on

1:28:12

Citizenship holds a data set that is based on um census supplement and looks

1:28:19

at a wide variety of civic health indicators that's the word we've been using for um the different findings and

1:28:27

so we worked with a lot of organizations early on to kind of look at those

1:28:33

indicators and um think about the story that they were telling for the state of Vermont and you know we asked people at

1:28:41

a really early meeting like what does this idea of civic health even mean to you and these are some of the responses

1:28:49

that we got um I'll just give everyone a moment to read through those i don't

1:28:54

need to read them all out loud to everyone um

1:29:17

And so the way the National Conference on Citizenship defines the civic health

1:29:23

is the way communities are organized to define and address public problems so that's sort of the baseline of um the

1:29:30

project but as we were having these local conversations there was a lot of focus on feelings of trust and belonging

1:29:38

and those topics were not necessarily representative in the data that we

1:29:43

received from the National Conference on Citizenship which as you'll see as I present it focus you know focuses on

1:29:49

things that are easier to measure than trust and sense of belonging um and so

1:29:57

we worked with this group of partners their logos were all here on the front page

1:30:02

but especially the Center for Rural Studies at UVM um Vermont Humanities Up

1:30:08

for Learning and the Americanore programs in Vermont to try and pull in other data across the state that would

1:30:14

tell more of a story i think really early on we learned that this was going

1:30:19

to be our first round of this report and that there's a lot of learning left to do with with new research but the first

1:30:26

report was more of a curation of data that's already been available um in

1:30:32

different forms and kind of pulling it together to get a baseline so um after

1:30:37

these conversations we we pulled together this sense of civic health domains and so the report is organized

1:30:44

around these six topics uh volunteerism and donating political engagement

1:30:49

cultural access social and community context which is really where we dig in on those feelings of belonging and

1:30:56

community media trust and access and government trust and access and so that's um the framework we've been using

1:31:04

as we go through um having these discussions and I think you know for

1:31:10

this work political engagement government trust and access and media trust and access are probably the three

1:31:17

most relevant uh but as we certainly learned going through this process there's a lot of overlap as well and um

1:31:25

I'll just say a little bit about our process so once we got the um report

1:31:31

written we've been taking it around to have community conversations uh we did an initial five community conversations

1:31:38

at libraries across the state our kickoff was down in Brattleboro and we

1:31:44

invited people to come see the same presentation and um then we had panel

1:31:49

discussions with different uh a combination of people who worked closely on the report and then people local to

1:31:56

the area who were involved you know who this impacts in some way and they were all recorded by a member of the Vermont

1:32:03

Access Network and so uh that website link that I put in the chat you can go watch any of the panel discussions uh if

1:32:10

you would be so curious to do so uh we've developed some school conversation

1:32:16

guides uh for teachers who can talk about this and um we're you know kind of

1:32:22

always planning more more conversations i recently did a webinar for all the librarians across

1:32:29

the state there was like 45 people that showed up and so that was really exciting we're talking about how to get

1:32:34

more resources out to libraries and um we have a few more public events

1:32:41

scheduled for the summer as well so um the last piece I'll say is the the

1:32:46

one uh about framing is we the initi uh

1:32:53

original research that we did was based on uh the Vermont youth civic health survey which we administered across the

1:32:59

state we had over 2400 responses um and it's grades 7 through 12 and we

1:33:06

really wanted to bring a youth perspective to this so it's really interesting as I go through you um you

1:33:12

know seeing what some of the differences are between the youth responses and the results that the adults gave so we are

1:33:20

the first state to do a statewide youth survey as part of our civic health index and um I think as we're thinking about

1:33:28

open meeting law I can just say like so much of the work we did with young people around this was like they were

1:33:35

like we want to be engaged in these things um in a meaningful way and so I

1:33:41

love the idea of thinking about ways we can bring young voices more like create a more welcoming space for them in

1:33:48

public meetings so I'm going to go through these you know pretty quickly um these are just

1:33:54

like the topline findings the report goes you know more in depth to each of these sections of course and gives a bit

1:34:00

more context um in volunteerism and donating we ranked fifth in the country

1:34:07

for informal helping and 13th for formal volunteerism and uh second in the country for

1:34:14

donations to political organizations i think what I'll say about this is you

1:34:20

know we weren't very surprised that Vermont ranks higher in informal helping compared to volunteerism uh it's with

1:34:28

all of the flood recovery and the community groups that we've talked to about this like people are like it's

1:34:34

just been really interesting thinking about the language we use to talk about civic health to talk about any of this u

1:34:40

political participation because some people might be doing a lot of volunteering but it's not like they're

1:34:46

not selfidentifying it as that they're participating in mutual aid they're helping their neighbor muck out their basement they're um not seeing they're

1:34:54

seeing that as like being a verter and not necessarily as being a civic

1:35:00

civically engaged person or something so um that's one of the things that came up

1:35:06

the other thing just and this will be true throughout the whole report so I'll say it now uh we rank really high in a

1:35:13

lot of things like there was no I think you know Vermont is kind of known for

1:35:18

its civic spirit and so there's a lot of high rankings but if you look at the percentage number it's not always that

1:35:25

high and one of the things that Lauren and I talked about that we thought would be interesting for this group is to look at some of these percentages not

1:35:34

rankings and think about how like what a realistic goal would be And so um get

1:35:41

into a little bit more of that here in a minute um volunteerism by demographics

1:35:46

you can see um kind of also not very surprising that it increases

1:35:53

with age with uh financial security and with uh educational attainment and so I

1:36:01

think you know this could be relevant one of the things that we didn't get a chance to do in this report and I I've

1:36:06

said this so many times but you know this is a 40page report and we could probably write a 400page report on each

1:36:13

domain if we wanted to really dig in and so this is looking at volunteerism very broadly but like one aspect of

1:36:20

volunteerism in Vermont that is vital is all of these roles that people play in

1:36:26

municipal government and on committees and um you know how can we broaden

1:36:32

participation and you know with acknowledging the the really real life constraints that make

1:36:38

it easier for older wealthier highly educated people to be the ones that are

1:36:44

able to show up at meetings and so that's some food for thought there uh

1:36:50

this is really one of the big ones for this group is you know we rank second in the country for people that attend a

1:36:57

public meeting and also for people that attend that have contacted a public official and so when you look at that

1:37:04

like we could be like great like make a little infographic about Vermont is excellent and we rank second in these

1:37:10

things but you know when you look at the numbers it's 17.4% 4% of people are

1:37:16

attending a public meeting in Vermont and so you know for this group one of the pieces that we thought would be

1:37:23

interesting to get into in the discussion piece is like what is our goal like what's a realistic goal what

1:37:29

would we be striving for in that um in that area and you know seeing that

1:37:36

we're about double the national average it's like still pretty low right so

1:37:41

that's that's just something to think about uh this was a look at voter turnout

1:37:47

which I think the most interesting thing about this is that like it hasn't changed very much over time there's been

1:37:53

lots of different uh contexts you know in the world and in uh

1:37:59

Vermont and it's it's remained relatively steady but you can see the midterm elections are always uh quite a

1:38:06

bit lower than the presidential election years and then if you imagine like uh

1:38:11

local elections that's obviously um a drop down as well

1:38:16

robin is this of registered voters or eligible voters or the population

1:38:23

it is of um registered voters

1:38:31

and then this was kind of our one of our biggest kind of like uh oh we need an intervention like how are we going to

1:38:36

fix this is on the youth survey we asked when you become eligible do you intend

1:38:41

to register to vote and 36% of youth said no and so that felt like you know

1:38:49

we've made some jokes like well they might get registered at the DMV and even

1:38:54

if they don't want to be uh but that's actually not going to help when it comes to turnout and So

1:39:01

um yeah that's just that's been you know for all of the ways that we can

1:39:06

celebrate that Vermont is doing well with this report that was one thing that we were grateful for this youth survey

1:39:12

to call attention to social and community context uh this is

1:39:20

really we tried to dig in around the sense of belonging and feeling trust in

1:39:25

your neighbors you know we rank second again for working with neighbors to do something positive for the neighborhood

1:39:32

and we rank second for discussing political societal or or local issues with neighbors and you know one of the

1:39:40

things I'm I think Susan and I talked about was like oh okay well we rank second for discussing these issues but

1:39:46

like are these like good quality uh models of discussing different you know

1:39:53

discussing different differing opinions with your neighbor and coming to some constructive conclusion or is this like

1:39:59

venting at your mailbox about the person whose sign you don't like down the street and so again it was kind of like

1:40:07

another um you know just there's lots of asterisks

1:40:12

of like places where we know we could go much deeper and just acknowledging that this is kind of our initial uh stab at

1:40:19

all of this and then um we took some this local like a more Vermont ccentric

1:40:26

study that is the Vermont well-being study that the center for rural studies uh does each year and this was one of

1:40:35

the only uh pieces in it that they thought would be relevant to this uh section on belonging and it's around uh

1:40:43

verters reporting never feeling uncomfortable or out of place because of and then a whole list of different

1:40:48

things culture race skin color language accent sexual orientation gender identity or religion um and so that's

1:40:55

increasing that people say that they never feel that way so that's a good increase 62% to 78% um but the whole

1:41:02

group as a whole was like that's 22% of Vermonters who who do report feeling

1:41:07

uncomfortable and if they feel uncomfortable in their community then they're probably extra uncomfortable

1:41:13

walking into a meeting and raising an issue uh in a setting that might feel a

1:41:19

bit formal or uh new to them and so that's another thing that we've been

1:41:24

thinking about a lot i recently uh sat down with a class at UBM and I had a

1:41:31

really thoughtful question and they said, "Do you think if diversity increased in Vermont that that number

1:41:36

would decrease because people felt more comfortable because there was more people like them in the room or do you

1:41:42

think that it would increase because people with those uh diverse identities

1:41:48

would feel would continue to report feeling uncomfortable?" And so I just thought that was like such an

1:41:53

interesting question that I haven't really been able to let go of since they asked it

1:42:00

um then you know this was a youth survey uh

1:42:05

find that 82% of youth report talking to people from a different

1:42:12

racial ethnic or cultural background than theirs at least once a month and we thought like well that feels high um

1:42:18

probably higher than a lot of adults in Vermont and so that is a promising thing

1:42:23

coming from the youth survey um the cultural access and engagement piece this you know we worked with

1:42:30

Vermont Humanities and looked at some of their surveys and um thinking about uh

1:42:35

what people are participating in groups and cultural activities and this is an area where

1:42:42

youth are reporting much higher participation than adults and so again it's kind of getting at the

1:42:48

the like factors of adulthood that make it hard to show up and and join clubs and and do extracurriculars and things

1:42:55

like that a lot of parents are helping their their young children do that and don't have time to do it for themselves

1:43:00

necessarily um if Sarah was here that she always likes

1:43:07

to say that this is her favorite stat because 93% of respondents in the 2024

1:43:13

Vermont poll said that they agreed strongly that uh opportunities to view

1:43:19

or participate in arts and culture are important and she said you know you can never get 93% of people to agree on

1:43:25

anything and so that is um worth uh noting But at the same time um our arts

1:43:34

and culture industry in Vermont is really struggling um ever since COVID like every person we've talked to at one

1:43:39

of our community meetings can name some event that they love loved previously that hasn't fully come back uh since CO

1:43:47

and now we're looking at um you know businesses struggling and a lot of um I

1:43:54

just saw Nectar in Burlington is closing for the summer which you know they've been open for 50 years they're kind of a

1:44:00

a mainstay and they're going to try and reopen in the fall but they're taking a pause and then you know the Vermont

1:44:06

humanities and all of our libraries are dealing with funding challenges right now so this cultural access piece is

1:44:12

really also something that needs to stay on everyone's radar as an important area

1:44:18

to focus on um media trust um we rank

1:44:23

second again we're never first we are always second and there are Is there another state that's first in all of

1:44:30

these that we're I was just about to say it's it's different different states

1:44:36

um and I we have that in the report there's a little chart so I can share that with

1:44:42

you if you're interested um but we rank second for people that say they frequently read watch or listen to news

1:44:49

or information about political societal or local issues um and it was about 5050

1:44:55

with Vermonters if they seek out national or local news and there's some

1:45:01

more um breakdowns of this by uh age group and political affiliation and what

1:45:07

um their news preferences are that are in the report there's a big chart that breaks some of that down that's all

1:45:13

coming from the Center for Rural Studies and the Vermont Triple um and then the last one is around

1:45:21

government trust and access and this was a place where we really know we have some work to do in the future because

1:45:26

there was not as much out there um already so the main this is like the

1:45:32

main um Vermont well-being study piece of data that we had but you can see that

1:45:39

uh trust in government is much higher at the local level than it is at the

1:45:44

national level um and um

1:45:52

yeah curious how what that how that will change the next time we do the the

1:45:57

well-being study but um so you know as much as this government

1:46:03

trust and access piece is probably one of the most important ones for this group to think about it's unfortunately

1:46:08

not a place where we have a whole lot of data um to inform us yet but it's

1:46:14

certainly something that's on our mind moving forward and um it's just it's actually when we talked to the National

1:46:20

Conference on Citizenship they said that our inclusion of trust both media and

1:46:25

government in our report made them want to see what they could develop for their

1:46:31

future um data set that they offer because they felt like it would be

1:46:37

useful moving forward to also be able to have the national comparisons on that so we're hoping um moving forward there

1:46:44

might be more to it andy do you have a question yeah a quick

1:46:51

one i was just curious how someone could have uh could believe that corruption is widespread throughout the community

1:46:57

government and not say that they have no confidence in local government seems strange that there's a gap there

1:47:05

yeah I feel like maybe it's the the um lack of it says government in my

1:47:12

community but maybe lack of national or local uh definition just like took their

1:47:17

brain in one direction rather than the other when they read the question there's so many of the questions in the

1:47:23

national data set that we were like "Oh we wish we could reward this a little."

1:47:28

But then you're kind of getting rid of all the longitudinal and comparison data and everything but you know there's

1:47:34

things that we certainly had lots of questions frank did you have a thought

1:47:44

i think you're on you're on mute

1:47:50

uh this is a sociological based study there's some biological aspects underly this uh that I is a

1:47:59

lency in the state and um at one time was taking continue education courses

1:48:05

and they included personality profile experts uh in the continue education which

1:48:12

showed you had four quadrants of general people and that could be broken down

1:48:18

into little subqu subsets in each quadrant and it defined how people act and react

1:48:27

and think and comfortable levels and stuff like this uh at the biological

1:48:32

level um there's was a study fascinating study out of England England where they

1:48:39

took the volunteers of the study and and and were able to uh see if they define

1:48:47

themselves as progressive or conservative and they did brain scans and they actually found that there's an

1:48:52

area of the brain that's bigger for the conservative uh wall building group uh

1:48:58

and smaller in the progressive area and vice versa the bigger the another area of the brain that's bigger in a more

1:49:04

progressive thinking versus the other group so your trust factor might be

1:49:09

falling back on this policies related to those comfort feelings that are biological

1:49:16

going on um and many of the kids they don't develop a sense of ability to

1:49:22

measure risk this is borne out in insurance statistics under the age of 25 with the prefrontal lobe development um

1:49:29

and businesses generally and everybody's a small business person a lot of places in Vermont Ro Vermont and all over and

1:49:36

um I know many of them and they just will not comment or put a sign up on their property or anything about

1:49:44

anything because they don't know who they're going to aggravate and they'll no longer have that person coming to to

1:49:51

them to ask for services or whatever as an income stream so they protective of the income stream and the fact that

1:49:57

they're going to comment on something might aggravate somebody else to the point where they're just can't handle

1:50:02

doing business with them anymore so there's other factors which you may get into but I just wanted to bring those up

1:50:08

thank you no I really appreciate that and and that is pretty much the end of

1:50:14

the the primary presentation and there's more like there's some more um fun facts

1:50:19

in the report if you want to if you like me are a nerd for this stuff and want to

1:50:24

read the fine print um but these are some kind of some of the biggest takeaways that we've been sharing with

1:50:30

folks um the last slide I have is just around next steps and I can just share them

1:50:37

with you uh for interest but I think I'll go through them quickly because we'd like to get to talking about um how

1:50:44

this can can inform this work um you know the first thing obviously is to

1:50:49

develop more data we had left with many more questions than answers and as we started uh diving into all of this um

1:50:57

wanting to hold more community conversations because that's really what's going to help us get to the why

1:51:03

of a lot of this which is what's most useful when we're designing programs or

1:51:08

interventions i think um even the most well-designed survey isn't necessarily

1:51:14

going to be able to give us people's reasoning for why they feel a certain way or are choosing to not register to

1:51:20

vote or um participate um there's been a lot of talk about trying

1:51:26

to develop a statewide civic engagement coalition almost every state has some version of this and Vermont doesn't have

1:51:31

an active um like named body that is is focusing on this and I'll just be

1:51:38

completely transparent with everyone in the room lauren knows I've been having a bit of a uh existential crisis about

1:51:44

this but you know so many of our partners that we worked with on this project are really in like a crisis mode

1:51:50

right now of one situation or another that I've been having trouble sending

1:51:55

the doodle poll to talk to kind of reconvene after we you know we did these

1:52:01

community conversations and what we've learned and I I know I've got to do it at some point and I'll do it with um

1:52:08

I'll do it with empathy and uh understanding that maybe not everyone will be able to come right back to the

1:52:14

table on it but it's been um pretty apparent to me that you know this is

1:52:19

like a a lot of there's a lot to to do and to talk about

1:52:24

and having a group of of folks to help move it forward is going to be essential

1:52:30

um yeah and I mean I think you know just continuing to support what's working

1:52:36

well supporting volunteerism efforts in Vermont improving access to civic spaces and you know when I write that that's

1:52:43

one little uh bullet point but that means everything from ADA accessibility to um comfort and and people knowing how

1:52:51

to uh make their voice heard in an effective way in a public setting and um

1:52:57

feeling access in that way um expanding civics education which is another big part of my role and something that I

1:53:03

work on a lot is with um K to2 teachers and trying to bring civics education and

1:53:09

opportunities to students um and also obviously continuing to invest in arts

1:53:14

and culture so that is the general uh the the lowdown

1:53:23

but I think um I don't know Lauren if you have like an idea of where to start

1:53:28

sort of feedback or people have more general questions I'm happy to to feel those too

1:53:33

well why don't we start Thank you Robin why don't we start with general questions or things just responses to

1:53:40

that um and then you know this is one of the seven or eight topics that we're

1:53:47

supposed to address in the report is an update on the civic health index and um

1:53:52

and Robin and I were talking about this yesterday i think this is a section of the report that our office can really be the primary author of um and um but

1:54:03

where we should go and what we should do I think I would love this group's input particularly around access um since

1:54:10

that's what we're here to do um so if people have um gut responses to this

1:54:19

um why am I getting feedback i don't know

1:54:24

um if people have got responses to this or if um you have recommendations on

1:54:30

what we should put into our report of the direction we should go with the civic health index um I'd love to hear

1:54:38

them Frank oh Frank you're on mute one of our

1:54:43

gay-haired founders which actually most of them were in their late 20s early 30s the country uh said that um the

1:54:52

foundation to democracy i asked a question to people and they don't understand it uh but the statement was

1:55:00

clear the foundation is to democracy is education as you raise the level of

1:55:05

education then you float all boats uh better and uh so

1:55:12

along the inclusive theme uh with education

1:55:18

you're going to inevitably float all boats which means your civic index will

1:55:24

automatically go up thank you

1:55:31

yeah I think um Cynthia you said something last meeting that has just

1:55:36

been sitting with me which is that um

1:55:42

people don't know how to participate in public meetings because they're so formal and they don't know when and how

1:55:48

to talk and that's so off-putting and intimidating i'm I'm paraphrasing what

1:55:54

you said but um it really has been sitting with me because um in terms of

1:56:01

belonging there's many ways in which I don't belong in a lot of spaces that I'm in but

1:56:08

the way that I do belong is I understand formality and that is such a um

1:56:14

privilege and not everybody has that and so I've been thinking about how

1:56:21

spaces need to explain that almost every time because there could be different

1:56:28

people in the room than that were there before um and I don't know if I'm

1:56:34

adequately um reflecting what you were saying Cynthia but but that just has really struck me may I add to it yeah of

1:56:43

course um even in a setting like this one we're in right now there is a there

1:56:50

are a group of you who have worked together before who are in professional capacities who have a standard of

1:56:57

speaking and organization amongst you that only occurs when you've been in it

1:57:03

just like any group and so people who are not in it are people who have

1:57:09

probably been denied the education or didn't even think it was an option for them and so if you want to get more

1:57:16

people belonging having a common choreography is certainly the way right now there's a

1:57:24

a movement of foot which um is not original but it's come back again to

1:57:31

speak in a particular way that's careful and politically correct if I can use

1:57:36

that term um to the extent which I think people are

1:57:42

not exactly being honest or clear and I fear I fear that um that we cannot be

1:57:49

candid that we have to be so careful with our language And you can tell when somebody's doing it because they are speaking slowly and

1:57:58

deliberately and making sure they don't step in it and making sure they call

1:58:04

their attorney to make sure they didn't step in it you know and

1:58:09

you're laughing that's great um Um

1:58:15

Yeah yeah no you have to because especially in the political environment

1:58:21

you get nailed for everything um you know you're you're on the you're in the hot seat and so there is this

1:58:27

self-protectiveness that happens but so somebody totally unschooled such as myself comes along and I say crass

1:58:34

things in public and it doesn't matter because uh

1:58:39

uh I'm not in the hot seat but I'm also not going to be included in the serious conversation of well stakeholders

1:58:47

um because I don't have a a Harvard education or whatever it is that that

1:58:53

allows you to be in the club so I feel that all the time which is really the key point of why I'm here

1:59:00

thank you well I'll just say Cynthia I am really glad you're here um I want to

1:59:06

say that to you and Frank um and I would love any feedback on how this group can

1:59:12

be more inclusive the way that I have been doing that is treating you as an equal stakeholder to everyone who's

1:59:18

named in the statute um but if there's other things that would help with belonging please let me know at any

1:59:25

point uh that's really important to me and with this group in particular because that's the intent of this group

1:59:31

there there may be other groups where you know just the stakeholders who are named are really the ones who need to

1:59:37

have the most participation but in this one um that's what I've been doing but I

1:59:42

would love any other feedback thank you i appreciate that and um I figured if there was any group that was going to do

1:59:48

that it would be this one susan

1:59:59

oh Susan you're on mute yeah I totally agree with you about um I

2:00:05

was I was so intent on taking my hand down um making sure um that we have lots of ways

2:00:12

to engage i I think that on the one end yes uh civic um education

2:00:20

is critical in order to give people the skills they need to engage and we also

2:00:26

need to make the forums and formats that we engage people in more diverse um to

2:00:31

because we've got lots of different kinds of people um and uh they're coming from different places with lots of

2:00:37

different kinds of wisdom and and so that's what I love about the fact that the civic index has you of its of its

2:00:44

you know key priorities one of them has to do with the arts um and cultural access because that makes a difference

2:00:51

in I mean how people engage artistically how people engage emotionally um things

2:00:58

like volunt uh you know basement after the flood getting getting muck out of there

2:01:04

there's so many different ways that people um engage in what we're calling

2:01:10

democracy um and and I think that's that's that's what's important is is having that expanded view not just like

2:01:18

do I know how to testify because the fact is most people are not going to have that that skill yeah we want to get

2:01:25

more people to have those skills but the outcomes of a hearing are going to be are actually affected by how many people

2:01:32

went to that play that opened their mind you know or how many people actually know their neighbors in a way that they

2:01:38

understand a different point of view um so that's what I love about that that the civic index has those different

2:01:44

things and also the you know the freedom and unity thing that that um the secretary of state's office and

2:01:49

humanities were involved in that that really broadens the definition of democracy not to just public hearings um

2:01:57

so I I think it's I I want to commend that and I also think that it's

2:02:02

important that you know this this commission looks not just at you know was the you know were the minutes

2:02:09

recorded in this certain way that that's important and let's let's think bigger about what democracy needs

2:02:16

yeah Frank

2:02:21

just to uh pile on to that wonderful comment Susan is that uh a lot of this

2:02:30

stuff uh should be required in schools where actually would involve

2:02:37

role playing for civics for and a education on when you get out

2:02:43

in the world uh you're going to have to get a mortgage you're going to have to do all kinds of things that you just simply

2:02:50

don't have a comfort zone for and you get intimidated by and so uh you could

2:02:57

work up multiple chapters that would be an interesting course

2:03:02

curriculum that would be wonderful if it were required and it would be apolitical it

2:03:08

would be just a this is how you do it and and

2:03:15

exercises on how fun it is to do especially the younger you are so that

2:03:20

they grow up and they don't have to go through those barriers or glass ceilings or whatever they just know that they're

2:03:26

can do it thank you thank you Frank i just want to say I've been thinking

2:03:31

about that and thinking about how yes we absolutely need to do that with our youth but how do you do it when

2:03:38

you're 34 55 70 like it's not just a

2:03:43

youth problem of we have a broader group of people who feel like and while we

2:03:52

have more trust at the local level we have a whole group of people in Vermont

2:03:57

who don't feel like local government is serving them don't understand how to engage with local government don't um

2:04:06

and are intimidated by it or and I think sometimes then think okay well then that

2:04:12

means they're bad or they're doing things for me because it's all the barriers are so big it's more more

2:04:18

complicated um so I don't know that one thing I'm going to say something that I

2:04:24

haven't crowdsource but one thing that I've thought maybe we could do here at the Secretary of State as part of our

2:04:30

civics uh program is some training on how to participate in a public meeting

2:04:35

if you're a member of the public right i mean we're doing a ton of education about what it means to do if you're a

2:04:42

member of a body but what does it mean to be a member of the public and what can you do to prepare yourself and what

2:04:48

can you do what's appropriate for you to speak and when when is that and how do you submit written comment i mean

2:04:53

there's so many things that are unknown um so Susan likes that idea and maybe

2:04:59

Susan you can help us with the video all right um Andy

2:05:06

hey thanks um amazing comments i I like it all um one thing I don't want to lose

2:05:13

track of when we talk about citizen engagement is uh as I mentioned at the

2:05:19

last meeting right the concern about process preventing action um

2:05:26

right and the the counterpart to that is the responsibility of elected and

2:05:32

appointed representatives to represent the entire community all of the residents all of the people right we

2:05:39

there is always and it's impossible to overcome um people with time and money

2:05:45

are the people who show up that's exactly what we just saw in that in that engagement uh survey and um

2:05:55

you can increase engagement and you will still have that same right increasing

2:06:00

money increasing free time uh group of people that show up and it is the role

2:06:06

of the elected people to properly represent the folks that aren't in the

2:06:12

room um obviously everyone should be welcome obviously you should make it as comfortable as possible for people to

2:06:18

come in and participate but everyone is in the room through the process that

2:06:23

starts with voting yeah

2:06:29

I love it i just wrote down representation means the whole community how do you engage with those who are not

2:06:35

in the room um what did you mean Andy when you said it begins with voting

2:06:42

yeah well it begins like like as an elected member you do not just represent

2:06:50

ideally uh the folks who voted for you you are taking on the mantle of of being

2:06:56

one member of a board which thinks about the entire community's needs and priorities

2:07:04

yeah u Megan

2:07:12

oh Megan you're on mute i took my hand down but didn't turn my

2:07:18

mic on that's a common problem it's okay um I got excited when you started

2:07:25

talking about the media education piece and all ages because of course that's one of the things that Van does in our

2:07:33

communities um and I'll just tell you two quick stories um that relate to that which is um a UVM student who was in her

2:07:41

fourth year who came and did an internship with us and was like it was a month-long internship you know one or

2:07:49

two days a week she's like I've learned more about the city and this community

2:07:55

in my internship than in all four years at UVM and I it's like you know the one time

2:08:02

it's like heartwarming and it's like on the other it's like and we're doing this with no funding

2:08:10

from the university we do it using the same funding that pays for the public

2:08:15

meeting coverage and every you know what I mean we ek out our eek this out of the work um and we do that with all ages and

2:08:24

um and need to figure out so I'm very interested to hear about you know

2:08:30

something coming out of the Secretary of State's office because trying to leverage this on a bigger scale a

2:08:36

civics's education um would be amazing and um you know

2:08:43

recently we just hired a new um community producer who had been a volunteer

2:08:49

who is a member you know I'll just say like basically he's a member of a protected class and he said right now

2:08:57

one of the ways that he feels most excited about engaging is being part of

2:09:02

recording what's going on in the community right so recognizing that like you sort

2:09:08

of what Susan was saying civics happens not just at the meetings um but you know

2:09:15

underlining the importance of these third spaces to create um

2:09:22

avenues for engagement outside of work outside of the bar outside of school and

2:09:30

you know we recognize them most obviously in libraries

2:09:35

um and then beyond that like how do we protect those third spaces um that

2:09:40

aren't that are meeting kind of a squishier need they're not squishy needs

2:09:48

well I'm gonna I'm gonna say something that again I don't want to get ahead of our skis but one thing that Robin and I

2:09:54

have talked about some with other stakeholders is like could we get a pilot town to create something that's

2:10:02

like welcome to our community so that everyone like that landlords are giving it to people when they rent um houses if

2:10:09

there's shelter it's being given to the people there when people buy a new home they receive it and it talks about all

2:10:15

of these things that we like how to come to a city council meeting how where the library is where the parks are where uh

2:10:22

the food shelves are you know like the whole gamut of things it would be a living breathing document that could you

2:10:28

know get bigger but how do we help people feel welcome when they come into

2:10:34

a new community and towns know who's coming in either by the landlords or

2:10:40

the town clerks i mean we don't know everybody but there's there's things that we could do that would help people

2:10:46

feel like okay I belong here and I'm welcome here and I'm wanted here and

2:10:52

let's make it a video and let's translate it and we can do that yeah

2:10:57

yeah we've talked about that yeah the town of Bethl operator manual that's that's the one we like

2:11:05

welcome manual yeah cool or just even the state i mean you could

2:11:11

start with welcome to the state of Vermont too you know what I mean you could you could start

2:11:17

yeah what a neat idea as Verters which is a term that I use very

2:11:24

intentionally for everyone who decides at any point in time to live here not someone who's lived here for forever i l

2:11:32

really think the term Vermonter can be very exclusionary um and we want more

2:11:37

Vermonters we want them to be here um and so how do we I know Frank has I know

2:11:45

Frank has his hand raised but I have to tell you we did that like three 10 years ago we did a summer camp and I asked the

2:11:52

kids like "Let's go out and ask people who's a real verter." And that was the first thing is that they didn't realize

2:11:59

like there actually is no legal definition you know these kids are like "Oh of course there's no legal

2:12:04

definition of what a verter is." And it was fascinating who answered immediately that they were

2:12:12

a verter and who had real strict rules and I'll tell you it was all the

2:12:18

newcomers who were like I'm a verter i've just been here three months but I'm a verer and it was everybody who'd lived

2:12:24

here forever who was like there's got to be rules about this seven years

2:12:33

oh sorry Cynthia do you have something more on that yeah just really quick yesterday I had a conversation with a

2:12:39

person who claimed ownership of starting the flatlander terminology in the 70s

2:12:45

and I expressed my skeptical uh feelings about that and um and he backtracked

2:12:51

after a while and said "Well maybe I'm just the thousandth monkey."

2:12:58

People aren't peopleing again this so

2:13:04

uh Frank yeah the it's what's it's popped up in our local organizations

2:13:12

as you know the new people come in we had a grant for West Paul to make it

2:13:20

better blah blah and and the fire department as a h part of that uh was

2:13:27

that they were having um problems with newer residents coming

2:13:34

into the state who were volunteering for um these the volunteer fire department

2:13:40

and for other volunteer organizations um so you know being more welcoming

2:13:48

um is certainly something that would be that that this is available to them and

2:13:54

should and is something that there's no learning curve jumping in and meeting new people uh and it's a a friendly

2:14:02

setup uh right that's a great example of you may

2:14:08

move to a town and not understand that there's a volunteer fire department that you can be part of it that there you

2:14:15

don't have to do any excessive training and you would have a community almost instantaneously

2:14:21

right and and so you know there's all of these things that people don't know um

2:14:26

including myself um so I think I don't know I don't know where that would go I

2:14:33

there's been some really great examples of um of communities that are doing it

2:14:38

cynthia's been doing it um herself so that's awesome that she's here and has been doing it um but how do we help

2:14:46

towns understand the value of that so that more do it so it radiates into more

2:14:51

communities would be really um interesting the the the and you on a second point is

2:15:00

that there was a fellow I'm not going to quote him but I'll

2:15:06

quote him there was a a contentious issue that arose and uh this person said

2:15:14

off the record on the side um it's the new people coming into town

2:15:21

with with all these new ideas and they're not interested in keeping the

2:15:26

things the same which some people are interested in keeping things the same some people are coming in with great

2:15:31

ideas and so you have two camps sometimes that arrive there and

2:15:36

unfortunately sometimes it's the education thing again um back my

2:15:42

father's was one of the founders of the planning commission in the 60s time frame um he

2:15:48

was also on the school board and they had full funding for to build a new

2:15:54

school they had two schools in one west side one in Plet and they were going to build this one had a swimming pool fully

2:16:00

funded by the federal government no bond required can you imagine and uh and it

2:16:08

came to a vote of course but there were some people suspicious of this and there

2:16:14

was an information meeting that they held off to the side with a keg of beer and uh uh and and so some stuff rolled

2:16:22

out on it and it was defeated totally free new school defeated

2:16:29

so you have a little bit of a factor out there that that you have to break into

2:16:35

certain groups including well we just had a challenge to the unified bylaws where there was a a petition signed to

2:16:41

to do away with them uh because there was suspicion basically unfounded because they didn't

2:16:48

know that they could have a variance and in fact most variances in town were actually approved by the DRB and so when

2:16:56

they heard no they didn't realize they could go beyond So we run into a whole wide range of people dealing with people

2:17:04

and rules issues where they just simply don't know and um and they're

2:17:10

susceptible to you know what somebody's saying in a kitchen at a party someplace and it's totally wrong thank you

2:17:22

well there's five more minutes we just got the the warning um I just want to

2:17:29

say thank you for this really rich and good conversation um and uh we'll take

2:17:36

minutes off of the transcript and uh use the transcript for steps moving forward our next meeting agenda is still um the

2:17:47

how to run an efficient um and oh I'm very interested in watching that YouTube

2:17:53

Cynthia um how to run an effective uh meeting and I uh

2:18:02

I don't know exactly what materials we'll have available at that time but I would I would I would love if anyone has

2:18:08

any more thoughts on this or more materials can you email them to me or Jenny um so that we start accumulating

2:18:16

them um and not just have them in the chat so Cynthia all of those things if you could send me an email that would

2:18:21

just be fabulous because um it will it's just a better way to collect them and I

2:18:27

have a space u a thigh with all of these things so um that would be great um and

2:18:37

I really appreciate everybody's time on this rainy Friday and it's going to get sunny on Sunday maybe

2:18:46

hopefully thank you Lauren and team the quiet the other quieter folks at the table there

2:18:52

appreciate your presence um I was wondering do we know um I I

2:19:01

think unless I'm missing something I feel like um the town clerk's association hasn't been represented at

2:19:07

any of these meetings yet i have been reaching out to them they w they assigned people but then the people

2:19:14

shifted and they haven't reassigned people so um I need to re-engage with

2:19:20

them i talked to them maybe three or four weeks ago to see who was coming and they never got back to me so that's a

2:19:26

very good reminder Susan thank you yeah great and um the other reminder I just

2:19:31

wanted to add and I don't know if people are still interested in this at the very first time we got together um there was

2:19:37

some interest in um having at least one of our meetings be in person um and I just wanted to check and see if that was

2:19:44

a possibility if that was on the radar you know there's some activities that we could do in person that we that are a

2:19:49

lot harder to do in hybrid um if we wanted to and also that would be after the tumblers figure out who they're

2:19:56

bringing but I would love in person we are always we will always have a physical location

2:20:02

because we're we're hybrid we're required to be hybrid so we will always have a physical location so anyone's welcome in person at any time but having

2:20:09

all of us together I think would have a ton of value so people think about that look at the schedule let's talk about

2:20:15

which dates would work and Susan I would

2:20:21

uh love to engage with you on uh leading that meeting uh you are the our resident

2:20:26

expert probably in that um and I would love that would be incredibly beneficial

2:20:31

to me um for this meeting purpose but also professionally so I would love that um Frank

2:20:41

yeah uh I think that we have a marketing thing going on out there nationwide

2:20:48

on the cable networks anyways and that's the Hallmark Channel cuz they cover it seems like the settings are Vermont all

2:20:54

the time and everybody's jumping in and volunteering so maybe we could send them a a thank you note to the Hallmark

2:21:02

channel and and spell out a few other things that they might be able to slip into the scripts

2:21:08

they need to shake up their scripts a little bit they're a little formal so and I'm not going to I'm I'm not going

2:21:14

to disclose whether I fall for the formula every time or not um but they are formulaic so I think it's a good

2:21:20

suggestion frank thank you all have a wonderful day