

## **PST Takeaways Act 59 summarized 260331**

**Written by:** Eric Deluca, Equitable Access to Farmland & Capital PST Curator

- **F2P Role**
  - Per LAOB and VSJF conversations, maybe F2P can provide sensemaking materials e.g. clarify:
    - The moving parts of the Act 59 implementation process
    - How the Act and implementation relate to land and food access
- **Resources for Data and Context**
  - VAAFMs Ryan Patch is seen as a strong resource for data as well as context across Act 59 implementation and adjacent considerations.
- **OPAV 2.0**
  - Potentially have an OPAV 2.0 conversation with VLT and VHCB that includes both the PST and LAOB.
- **Development Zones & Easements**
  - There was a significant amount of conversation about development zones and the impact of development zones on easements.
  - “If a property is in a Development Zone, VHCB won’t fund an easement there.”
    - If a farmer wanted to conserve land...
      - (Example of two projects couldn’t move forward)
      - VHCB could tell Business TA providers what the rules are...
    - How much of such decisions is VLT policy v. case-by-case considerations?
      - “In town centers, VLT *does* ask if a project will disrupt the town’s goals for expansion.”
  - Regional Planning Commissions were identified as key to understand the issue of land access, given the Act 59 and Act 181 frameworks.
    - The impact of Development Zones on easements has to be clear to Planning Commissions moving forward.
- **Term Easements**
  - Term easements as alternative to easements
    - People are pushing back now on permanent conservation / easements
  - VHCB has the authority to recommend tools beyond easements.
    - The development of a VT “conservation plan” is on VHCB’s plate.
      - The timeline is urgent.
- **Understanding the Scope of Act 59**
  - Value and limits of easements
    - The broader conversation re limits of easements wasn’t from Act 59

- It was the VAAFAM mandate that led to CBI findings
- There's a hope that people don't conflate the conversation re easements with the broader set of needs.
  - And not conflate with Act 59 implementation with other, separate initiatives.
- The vision of the Act 59 agenda is broader.
  - Includes support for working lands and land use
  - The process is insufficient for what was legislatively mandated.
  - Many Act 59 stakeholders are sending delegates to stay aligned with the LAOB Land Vision process.
- Act 59 includes a definition of sustainable land management.
- **Current Use**
  - A 60-page publication re Current Use program across New England will be published as soon as April 2026 by Wildlands Woodlands Farmland and Communities. Alex Redfield is the PST's liaison to that project.
- **Farmland Loss**
  - Hannah has notes from the F2P 2025 Network Gathering Deep Dive Session: *Vermont Farmland Conversion—What's at Stake and What We Can Do About It*
  - How can we get farmland loss data, including at the GIS level, to non-farming landowners?
    - That would make it possible to say: <VT is predicted to lose x valuable farms in this region.>
    - If AFT gets to the parcel level, VT has Parcel Viewer
      - There may be reasons to stick with county-level data.
- **Inclusive Conversations**
  - Continually assess the relevance of the question: *"Is it safe and possible to say: Do you realize the thing you decided needed to be done looked like inequity to us?"*

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The following questions were provided to the Land Use and Land Access Topic Exchange to prompt discussions. Eric Deluca- the curator of the Equitable Access to Farmland & Capital Priority Strategy Team has answered the questions below from the perspective of the PST and his professional perspective:

### 1. Initial Reactions

- a. What stands out to you about this pathway and the actions it proposes?
  - i. The importance of vehicles and cultural capacity to listen to, co-create with, and financially support historically marginalized groups.
- b. What aspects feel promising or important for Vermont's food and farm system?
  - i. The complementary balance between innovating in inclusive land ownership and tenure models and funding mechanisms/affordability tools.
- c. What parts of the plan or process feel unclear or confusing?
  - i. The further evolution of OPAV
  - ii. The value, appropriate use, limits of, and (existing + prospective alternatives to established affordability tools
  - iii. How far it's feasible to go in confronting assumptions embedded in tools like easements and unpacking the impact of financial incentives and/or inclinations to reinforce established methods, despite potential externalities.

## **2. Implications**

- a. How might the actions within these pathways affect Vermont's farms, farmland access, and/or food production?
  - i. They have the potential to bring together stakeholders for common cause, or fall prey to overambitious aspirations that never prove implementable at a practical level. Such bridging can be both within stakeholder groups—like various kinds of funders across the Capital Continuum—and centering equity/community organizations representing underserved Vermonters within settings commonly populated by traditional functional actors (orgs).
- b. What opportunities do you see for farms, farmland access, or Vermont's broader food system?
  - i. First, to come together to learn about, explore, prototype, and demonstrate proof of concept on innovations that center social equity goals.
  - ii. Then to potentially implement, at scale, models for tenure, ownership, affordability, and collaboration.
  - iii. All with an eye toward lessons learned and harvesting of approaches and insights.

## **3. Concerns or Challenges**

- a. What potential challenges or unintended consequences should be considered?

- i. How to ensure that knowledgeable stakeholders with strong access to community input don't experience themselves as marginalized in implementation processes, e.g. Conservation Districts.

#### **4. Gaps or Missing Considerations**

- a. Are there important food system perspectives that are not reflected in these actions?
  - i. We've heard over time, and at the 3/23/26 listening session hosted by the F2P Topic Exchange, that multiple Conservation Districts are experiencing a gap in inclusivity.
- b. Are there impacts to farms, farmland, or rural communities that planners should consider?
  - i. The relationship between Development Zones and the applicability of affordability tools.

#### **5. Implementation & Recommendations**

- a. What would help make these actions successful?
  - i. Reinforcing and expanding the kind of open-minded, non-judgmental listening and empathizing that Isaac is modeling.
  - ii. Fully supporting Ornella Matta-Figueroa in access to resources made available through the Presencing Institute and its u-school (at no cost to her). <presencing.org>
- b. What funding mechanisms/tools/etc are needed to do this?
  - i. This is a broader conversation I'm happy to take up as curator of the Equitable Access to Farmland & Capital PST, as well as convening stakeholders within and beyond regular PST activities as planned for 2026.
- c. How should VHCB prioritize actions to support the food system and achieve the goals of Act 59?
  - i. Within a continuous dialogue with the LAOB and the stakeholder ecosystem that aggregates around them.
- d. What resources, partnerships, or support might be needed?
  - i. What do you/your organization/business have to offer that will help with the successful implementation of this plan
    - 1. The Equitable Access to Farmland & Capital PST stands ready at all times to partner, support, and amplify the implementation plan. We can address this in systematic collaboration as well as ongoing ecosystem sensing, with a bias toward alignment and frank, socially attuned dialogue on the most foundational, high-leverage, and meaningful-to-stakeholders matters.