

Diane Lanpher  
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House Committee on Corrections and Institutions (room 33)  
Testimony – Friday January 31, 2014 1:00pm  
Rep. Diane Lanpher  
Proposed Capital Construction Budget Adjustment  
Subdivision 2 (c) (12) Vergennes Property – Master Planning/Match  
Funds

Thank you Committee for providing me this opportunity to speak to you this afternoon. The Section I will be referring to is found on the bottom of page 5 of the Capital Construction Budget Adjustment.

The state of Vermont owns several hundred acres of property around Vergennes and into Ferrisburgh including a 66 acre parcel along Otter Creek, the current home of Northlands Job Corp with approximately 22 buildings on the site with space to house up to 280 students. The US Dept. of Labor leases this space from Vermont and then in turn contracts out the fulfillment of its Job Corp mission to a subcontractor. It is a large facility in a beautiful creek side location, walkable to downtown Vergennes. I hope you have had a chance to visit this property.

I come today to offer my support to the administrations recommended adjustment to the Capital Bill to include \$15,000 for BGS to create a Master Plan for the site. It is my intent to assist the community and the state in the creation of a thoughtful additional vision for this site. It is my belief Vermont should ask this question, Is this state asset being used in the best and highest use for Vermonters? The site is being used today for a good purpose, however if our tenant should vacate the property I believe it would be in the states interest to have a plan B ready.

The relationship between the City of Vergennes and the facility has had a colorful and somewhat tense history. Mainly due to the high cost of public services associated with responding to the population.

On June 30, 2013 the 20 year lease between the State of Vermont and the US Dept of Labor expired. It became apparent to me and others that with a new lease came opportunities for review and reflection.

Currently the new lease arrangement, which is under consideration has an opt out clause on a year to year basis. Given the unstable funding environment in Washington DC, I believe there

is a certain amount of risk to Vermont and Vergennes as they could be caught unprepared if the US Dept. of Labor became unfunded and unable to continue its mission in Vermont. I support the development of a well thought out plan to be at the ready when or if Vermont needs to determine a different direction, weather by design or if the entity leasing the property leaves.

I would also like to ask, If the committee pleases, allowing in-kind contributions by local entities to count toward match.

### RBA questions

How much did we do?

How well did we do it?

Is anyone better off?