

**Sunset Advisory Commission  
Board and Commission Review**

**Working Lands Enterprise Initiative Board**

1. In general, how often does the board and commission meet? Provide specific information on how often the board or commission has met in the past two fiscal years. Provide information on where agendas and minutes of meetings can be found.
  - a. The Working Lands Enterprise Initiative Board (WLEB) meets an average of 10 times per year (monthly from September – June). Committees of the board meet on varying schedules from monthly to quarterly to as needed. The WLEB will convene for an annual symposium which alternates between a one and two day event in August or September, and will gather as part of the Working Lands Legislative Day (generally February) and Working Lands Grantee Awards Day (generally June). At the latter two events, no board decisions are made.
  - b. WLEB agendas and minutes are stored on the state network in the AGR shared drive, organized by month and year.
  
2. Provide the names of members of the board or commission, their term length and expiration, their appointing authority, and the amount of any per diem they receive.
  - a. Please see attached for current board members, term length, and appointing authority.
  - b. Compensation: Private sector members, or any Board members not being paid through their place of employment or business to participate in WLEB activities, are entitled to per diem and mileage authorized under 32 V.S.A. § 1010(b) for the following activities:
    - i. attendance at a regular or special meeting of the WLEB board or of any WLEB committee, with per diem payment at the rate of \$50 for such attendance; and
    - ii. performance of other duties, assigned and approved by the chairperson, necessary for the efficient conduct of WLEB business, with payment at the per diem rate of \$50 per day prorated for actual time spent performing such other duties. Proration will be calculated based on two-hour fractions of an eight-hour day; under no circumstances will the daily payment exceed the per diem amount.
  
3. Provide an overview of the board or commission’s purpose.
  - a. The WLEB, in accordance with Act 142 of 2012 legislative session, has the following powers:
    - i. to design and conduct an ongoing public engagement process, which may include taking testimony and receiving information from any party interested in the Board’s activities;

- ii. to gain information through the use of experts, consultants, and data to perform analysis as needed;
- iii. to request services from State economists, State administrative agencies, and State programs;
- iv. to obtain information from other planning entities, including the Farm to Plate Investment Program;
- v. to serve as a resource for and make recommendations to the Administration and the General Assembly on ways to improve Vermont's laws, regulations, and policies in order to attain the goals set forth in section 4604 of this title;
- vi. to establish an application process and eligibility criteria for awarding grants, loans, incentives, and other investments in agricultural and forestry enterprises and in food and forest systems, provided that the Board shall prioritize assistance under this chapter to a person engaged in farming or forestry before providing assistance to a nonprofit organization or nonprofit corporation for a project that competes with a person engaged in farming or forestry;
- vii. to award grants and other investments, which may include loans underwritten and administered through the Vermont Economic Development Authority;
- viii. to enter into performance contracts with one or more persons in order to provide investment and services to agricultural and forestry enterprises, including:
  - 1. (a) technical assistance and product research services;
  - 2. (b) marketing assistance, market development, and business and financial planning;
  - 3. (c) organizational, regulatory, and development assistance; and
  - 4. (d) feasibility studies of facilities or capital investments to optimize construction and other cost efficiencies;
- ix. to identify workforce needs and programs in order to develop training and incentive opportunities for the agricultural and forest product sectors after consulting with the Department of Labor;
- x. to identify strategic statewide infrastructure and investment priorities considering:
  - 1. (a) leveraging opportunities;
  - 2. (b) economic clusters;
  - 3. (c) return-on-investment analysis;
  - 4. (d) other considerations the Board determines appropriate; and
- xi. to develop an annual operating budget, and:
  - 1. (a) solicit and accept any grants, gifts, or appropriations necessary to implement the budget pursuant to 32 V.S.A § 5
  - 2. expend any monies necessary to carry out the purposes of this section.

4. Is that purpose still needed? What would happen if the board or commission no longer fulfilled that purpose?
  - a. The purpose of the WLEB is critical to the success of the granting program, which provides funding that allows for catalytic change in the farm and forest sector. The WLEB's combined expertise across the working landscape and participation in other statewide, regional, and national efforts ensures that state funds and philanthropic dollars are spent in areas that will have the greatest chance for system and sector development.
  - b. If the WLEB no longer fulfilled this purpose, grant applications would be decided by state representatives from VAAF, FPR, and ACCD without private sector or partner organization input. Furthermore, the impacts to the forestry and agriculture sectors would be notable as WLEB members are actively engaged with policy, visioning, and addressing developing issues.
  
5. How well is the board or commission performing in executing that purpose? What evidence can you provide to substantiate that performance?
  - a. The WLEB has an excellent track record, as evidenced by the following statistics for the time period of 2012-2017:
    - i. 149 projects funded
    - ii. \$4.5 million in funds distributed, leveraging over \$9 million in matching funds
    - iii. Grants have had the following cumulative impacts:
      1. 852 people employed
      2. 485 jobs created
      3. Payroll increase of \$2.09 million
      4. \$26.5 million in additional sales
      5. 13,228 acres impacted
    - iv. For every \$10,000 dollars invested
      1. 1.08 FTE is created
      2. \$59,000 in additional sales is realized
    - v. Grants funds also support service provider technical assistance provision via statewide and regional organizations.
  
6. If the purpose is still needed, can State government be more effective and efficient if the purpose was executed in a different manner?
  - a. AAFM believes that the WLEB is an effective and efficient board that closely meets the needs and demands of the authorizing legislation. At this time, no changes in execution are suggested or supported.
  
7. If the purpose is still needed, do any of your board or commission's functions overlap or duplicate those of another State board or commission or federal or State agency? If so, is your board or commission still the best entity to fulfill the purpose?
  - a. No, the WLEB is a unique multi-agency, private sector collaboration whose functions and efforts are not duplicated. The WLEB remains the best entity to

continue its work and purpose.

8. Does the board or commission's enabling law continue to correctly reflect the purpose and activities of the board or commission?
  - a. Yes.
  
9. Provide a list of the board and commission's last fiscal year expenditures including staffing costs. How are these funded?
  - a. Staffing and administration are covered by AAFM's general fund allocation.
    - i. AAFM provides 1 FTE via a pay grade 25 who serves as program manager with .75 FTE of additional support from staff and leadership.
  - b. WLEB expenses for per diem, travel, and meeting expenses are paid for through AAFM's general fund allocation
    - i. \$18,000 per year
  
10. Is the board or commission required by law to prepare any reports or studies for the Legislature, the Governor, or any State agency or officer? If so, have those reports or studies been produced? Does the board or commission have ongoing reporting obligations?
  - a. Yes, WLEB and AAFM, which provides administrative support in accordance with Act 142 of the 2012 legislative sessions, develop and distribute an annual report. This report is made available to all members of the House and Senate committees on agriculture, forestry, and economic development, the Governor, and partner agencies – FPR and ACCD. All other legislative members receive a brief overview and infographic that highlights program success over the prior year. Additionally, the report is available in digital format on the Working Lands website and via AAFM's website.

# Board Composition and Terms

Updated October 2018

\*No member can serve more than three consecutive three-year terms.

\*If a board member resigns, the new member completes the resigned member's term, and is then eligible for re-appointment.

1. Secretary of Agriculture, Food & Markets or designee-CHAIR

**Anson Tebbetts**

Designee: **Alyson Eastman**, Deputy Secretary

2. Commissioner of Forests, Parks & Recreation or designee

**Mike Snyder**

Designees: **Sam Lincoln**, Deputy Commissioner and **Matt Langlais**, Caledonia/Essex County Forester, VT Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation

3. Secretary of Commerce and Community Development **Mike Schirling** or designee

Designee: **Ted Brady**, Deputy Secretary

4. Appointed by the Speaker of the House: **\*Initial 3 Year Terms, 3 Years Thereafter**

- a. One member who is a consulting forester

**Charlie Hancock, North Woods Resource Group**

**2012-2015** \*Kurt Zschau (resigned 2014, replaced by Joe Nelson)

**2015-2018** \*Joe Nelson appointed second term in May 2015

**2018-2021**

**2021-2024**

- b. One member who is actively engaged in maple production

**April Lemay, April's Maple**

**2012-2015** – Emma Marvin

**2015-2018** – Emma Marvin

**2018-2021** – April Lemay, April's Maple

- c. One member with expertise in sales, marketing, or market development

**Eric DeLuca, Leverage Point Consulting**

**2012-2015** – Eric DeLuca

**2015-2018** – Eric DeLuca

**2018-2021** – Eric DeLuca

- d. One member who is actively engaged in on-farm value added processing  
**Bob Lesnikoski, Vermont Cranberry Company**  
**2012-2015** – Eleanor Leger, Eden Ice Cider  
**2015-2018** – Bob Lesnikoski  
**2018-2021** – **Bob Lesnikoski**
  
  - e. One member who is actively engaged in manufacturing or distribution of Vermont agricultural products  
**Jeremy LaRocke, Agri-Mark/Cabot Creamery Cooperative**  
**2015-2018** – Mark Curran  
**2018-2021** – **Jeremy LaRocke**  
**2021-2024**
5. Appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees: **\*Initial 2 Year Terms, 3 Years Thereafter**
- a. One representative actively engaged in primary wood processing or logging  
**Dave Hubbard**  
**2015-2017** – Ken Gagnon  
**2017-2020** – Dave Hubbard  
**2020-2023**
  
  - b. One member who is actively engaged in wood products manufacturing  
**Jeff Hardy**  
**2012-2014** – Mike Rainville  
**2014-2017** – Chris Castano  
**2017-2020** – Jeff Hardy
  
  - c. One member involved in production agriculture whose primary enterprise is not fluid milk  
**Seat currently open**  
**2012-2014** – Brian Kemp  
**2014-2017** – Brian Kemp  
**2017-2020** – **Jane Sorenson (left mid-term)**
  
  - d. An agriculture and forestry enterprise funder  
**Will Belongia, Vermont Community Loan Fund**  
**2015-2017** – Will Belongia  
**2017-2020** – Will Belongia  
**2020-2023**
  
  - e. A person with expertise in rural economic development  
**John Mandeville**  
**2015-2017** – Robin Scheu\*

**2017-2020** John Mandeville

**2020-2023**

\*served from 2012 – 2015 in old seat on Board, replaced with this seat.

6. Appointed by the Governor: **\*Initial 1 Year Term, 3 Years Thereafter**
- a. One member who is a representative of Vermont’s dairy industry who is also a dairy farmer  
**Beth Kennett**  
**2012-2013** – Amanda Thurber  
**2013-2016** – Beverley Thurber (resigned in 2015, replaced by Johanna Laggis)  
**2016-2019** – Johanna Laggis (leaving 2018, before end of term); Beth Kennett, finishing term  
**2019-2022**
  - b. Vermont’s forest industry who is also a working forest landowner  
**Kathleen Wanner/Executive Director**  
**Vermont Woodlands Association**  
**2012-2013** – Kathleen Wanner  
**2013-2016** – Kathleen Wanner  
**2016-2019** – Kathleen Wanner  
**2019-2022**
  - c. An employee of a Vermont institution engaged in agriculture and/or forestry education, training and/or research  
**Megan Camp, Shelburne Farms**  
**2015-2016** – Megan Camp  
**2016-2019** – Megan Camp  
**2019-2022**
  - d. A person with expertise in land planning and conservation efforts that support Vermont’s working landscape  
**Gil Livingston, Vermont Land Trust**  
**2015-2016** – Gil Livingston  
**2016-2019** – Siobhan Smith  
**2019-2022**
7. EX Officio, Nonvoting members:
- a. Manager of VT Economic Development Authority or designee  
**Jo Bradley**  
Designee: Senior Agricultural Loan Officer of VACC  
**Sarah Isham**

b. Executive Director of VT sustainable jobs fund or designee

**Ellen Kahler**

c. Executive Director VT housing conservation board or designee

**Gus Seelig**

Designee: Program Director of Vermont Farm Viability Program

**Ela Chapin**