

March 16th, 2023

Memo from the Vermont House Environment and Energy Committee to the House Appropriations Committee

Re: Two Follow Up Items Regarding the Vermont House Environment and Energy Committee Letter Dated March 3rd, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify our letter from March 3rd, 2023. We are writing to clarify two areas in particular.

The first area pertains to the ACCD Brownfields program. Please note that our recommendation for the House Commerce Workforce and Economic Development bill is different from what was submitted during the Budget Adjustment Act (BAA). The reason for this is because more time was needed to discuss the policy items in detail (specifically, the cap amount of \$200,000 and the site/parcel language).

We support the language in Sections 31 - 33 of the Workforce and Economic Development bill presented below, rather than the language sent on March 3rd, 2023 (and the BAA):

* * * Brownfields * * *

Sec. 31. BROWNFIELDS FUNDING; USE IN FISCAL YEAR 2024

The Department of Economic Development shall use the \$10,000,000.00 appropriated in fiscal year 2024 for Brownfields Redevelopment for the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites to be used in the same manner as the Brownfields Revitalization Fund established by 10 V.S.A. § 6654. Notwithstanding the grant limitations in 10 V.S.A. § 6654, projects supported by this appropriation shall be in the form of grants that may exceed \$500,000.00 per site. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall award the amount of \$1,000,000.00 in fiscal year 2024 to regional planning commissions for the purposes of brownfields assessment. In awarding funds under this section, the Secretary, in consultation with VAPDA, shall select one regional planning commission to administer these funds. To ensure statewide availability, the selected regional planning commission shall subgrant to regional planning commissions with brownfield programs, with not more than 10 percent of the funds being used for administrative purposes.

Sec. 32. 10 V.S.A. § 6654(e) is amended to read:

(e) A grant may be awarded by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development with the approval of the Secretary of Natural Resources, provided that:

- (1) A grant may not exceed \$50,000.00 for characterization and assessment of a site.
- (2) A grant may not exceed ~~\$200,000.00~~ \$500,000.00 for remediation of a site.

(3) A grant may be used by an applicant to purchase environmental insurance relating to the performance of the characterization, assessment, or remediation of a Brownfield site in accordance with a corrective action plan approved by the Secretary of Natural Resources.

(4) Financial assistance may be provided to applicants by developing a risk sharing pool, an indemnity pool, or other insurance mechanism designed to help applicants.

(5) All reports generated by financial assistance from the Brownfield Revitalization Fund, including site assessments, site investigations, feasibility studies, corrective action plans, and completion reports shall be provided as hard copies to the Secretaries of Commerce and Community Development and of Natural Resources.

Sec. 33. EFFECTIVE DATES

Secs. 31 (Brownfields funding in FY 2024) and 32 (Brownfields statutory grant cap) of this act shall take effect on passage.

Second, on page 4 of our March 3rd, 2023, letter, we state:

“Identifying a special fund to support compensating volunteers via community engagement stipends. The need to do this has come up several times in Committee. For example, the Public Service Department is allocating \$300,000 to conduct outreach for the next Comprehensive Energy Plan (which we support), the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board has requested funding to complete outreach to a Biodiversity bill that our Committee just voted out, and if additional requests are made of the Vermont Climate Council, then it is likely volunteers would need support to provide their time and expertise to complete additional VCC work.

- *Relatedly (but different), there is a need within the Agency of Natural Resource to support facilitation efforts – particularly to environmental justice work.”*

We still concur with our above statement.

However, we would like to be more specific to directly include in the Budget, the \$75,000 appropriation presented in H. 126 to address community engagement associated costs.

Thank you for your review – please do not hesitate to contact us with any further questions.

Sincerely,

House Environment and Energy Committee