

*Present: Alyson Eastman, Stephanie Bond, Sarah Lang, Jen Stromsten, Adam Grinold  
Bob Stevens, Josh Druke, Randy Capitani, Konstantin Von Krusenstiern, Mary Ann Kristiansen,  
Bill Colvin, Ashley Havreluk, Susan McMahan  
On the phone: Avery Schwenk Hermit Thrush, Bethaney LeClair World Learning SIT  
Regrets: Laura, Gary*

Bob opens with commentary on perception that things are fine and the need to keep getting the message across about economic development. Our work is just beginning.

Introduced Stephanie Bond, new staff member supporting grants and administration

Alyson Eastman

Related Attachments: cover letter, job order, booklet in Spanish & English

VT Dep Secy of Ag here to talk about recruitment efforts to bring Puerto Rican workers here.

- She provided overview (**see my notes below from earlier more detail**)
- Alyson met earlier with a group of local employers representing over 1400 jobs and 3-4 sectors to help them understand what's possible and how to navigate the paperwork.
- Some discussion about the fldatacenter – looking at Brattleboro wage levels
- Displaced workers from Puerto Rico are not the only target – if you submit DOL job order you can tick off a box to circulate that posting in all 50 states

Bob – we don't tend to look at the unemployment pool and post to them. We go after people who are currently employed.

Alyson – **with the waiver you can place ads and target other platforms, so go after a range of people not just those in the unemployment pool.**

Randy – what kind of turnaround is there? Could Vermont businesses go down and do a job fair?

Alyson – Public Law 87 prevents job fairs, waiver is specific to each EMPLOYER.

Vermont is looking to run a ThinkVermont Campaign and interview PR folks here, share that down there to promote opportunities.

Dept of Ag Communications staff have been interviewing workers to tell their story (showed video of Jamaican workers who return regularly to work VT farms)

Alyson has worked for 13-14 years with the international workforce through the visa program so vast experience problem solving, and understands why people will come here to make in 5 hours what it takes a week to earn in Jamaica.

Bob – are there other areas of the country to reach out to? How do we identify where they are and how to get the message out?

Chance at Vt DOL handles the JobLink listings.

Looking for opportunities to put together complementary workforce needs – different seasonal demand – to create full jobs

Alyson – it's important to think about how we frame the conversations for employers. JobLink was supposed to be there for the employer and employee, and we can use it more fully especially with the ability to push ads out to all 50 states.

**There is ability for a recruiter to get the exemption (not just an employer?)**

**The psychologist Intern at the Retreat from Puerto Rico has been asked by the Commons to tell her story**

Minutes from December

Motion to approve Randy, MaryAnn Seconds, pass  
(they say “November”)

ACCD Ex Officio

No answer yet – they are trying to decide if it’s the right approach for the agency

SoVermont Economy Summit

Update – reviewing final Mount Snow contract, asking Mayor of Holyoke to speak on subject of PR and repopulation, meeting every other week to hammer out program

RED

Meetings tend to reflect prior month discussion SeVEDS had, so they just did the data discussion this group had in Nov/Dec

TERR

Update...

BCIC board tomorrow – asking to be co-applicants for USDA RBDG for \$30K to bring more cash into the SoVermont

BDCC funded \$35k and we have commitments lining up from 8 employers for \$5k each

Fast Tracks / Career Counselor update

We’ve been developing \$500k ask. Got VTP carveout. Hoping for WCEDP. They were contingent on raising the rest, so we went to McClure / VCF and wait for that. DOL is excited to invest in this program. Within 30-45 days we may be ready to announce!

Advisory committee formed, current and former school leaders and board members and employers, CTE Career Center, State Agency of Ed and Flexible Pathways Coord – because this is being seen as a pilot program the state is watching closely.

(Bob refers to the links from the SeVEDS/BDCC newsletter)

Petitioning

Brattleboro in the article for \$2/pp

Westminster, Vernon, Guilford, Dummerston, Marlboro, all signatures completed

Dover separate article, Newfane too

Wilmington requested and will be funded from 1% tax fund

Putney separate article

RFP

Have had first submission finally, but 5 people reaching out with questions.

### Southern VT YP

2 pieces of paper to review (see attachments) – gathering info on events, demographics, issues  
Adam covers issue of trying to make sure YPs understand they are connected to BDCC & SeVEDS and how we are trying to navigate that with mailing lists and membership ‘concepts’  
...and encouraging board to interface with YP committee and YP group

Randy suggests to use the YP newsletter to educate everyone, to ramp it up gradually so it makes sense to them.

Catherine from YP Advisory board went back and gave them a great synopsis of all she had learned about SeVEDS

Next Steering Committee meeting is February 5 (here 5:30-7:30)

Also suggestion of having YP update late in SeVEDS agenda so YPs who work late can come YP Gala – buy tickets!

Mary Ann – we have to let them know how we are adding value to **them and relevant**, and keep letting them know how cool it is that we do this strategy work etc.

Rising Stars nominations! Only had two from here last time.

### Data Discussion

Cost to build being pushed up by wages, being pushed up by scarcity of labor

Josh – how does it work for someone who does not have free housing to give someone?

Adam – opened conversation with SIT about their dorms for workforce housing

Bethaney – great, and other opportunities to utilize the campus during quieter periods

Housing talk too – will we see multifamilies being built widespread?

Ashley – I’ve been househunting and nothing has been updated.

Adam talking about the CDBG tool to upgrade private units as affordable units, which is much less money per unit.

Lots of talk that brings us back to Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, they are buying 5 houses per year for 5 years.

“Housing as a limiting piece of infrastructure”

Bob – what is the end product of this conversation?

Will we have some kind of strategy? Is housing some part of the strategy.

Randy – housing is one of the key challenges to bringing people here

Bob – an actionable plan would be phenomenal. What about temporary housing to land people here? And we ought to assess our assets. It will be more cost effective to take existing stock to renovate and rehab.

And talk about “forced recession” – because of a lack of people.

(sorry I did not capture all of this very well)

### Gary Fox

Wants to join as a representative from Bellows Falls

KvK Nominate, Bill Second, All in favor aye.

### Notes from earlier Meeting at BDCC with Alyson Eastman and several local employers:

This is common practice in agriculture through H-2A and H-1B program. People from Puerto Rico are American citizens, but mainland employers are prohibited by law to recruit over there to prevent exploitation but this program in light of high unemployment, and now the hurricane, allows employers to receive a waiver.

Not in the news because there is not an agreement yet between the governors of Puerto Rico and Vermont.

Vermont is looking to run a ThinkVermont Campaign and interview PR folks here, share that down there to promote opportunities.

REVIEWING PACKET of materials provided for employers

**Job order** is the way to frame the employment demand

1. Need different job orders for different jobs or timeframes, but can lump together multiple of same job.
2. If you have online training people can do remotely that's good to include in the job order form. Include drug testing, any other training and testing.
3. Specify needs like drivers license or experience.
4. Looking into transferability of licenses like RNs
5. Housing & Transportation - H2A and H2B visa = seasonal and they come alone. Puerto Rican recruits may come with their families. - **icert** <https://icert.doleta.gov/> **Portal has the housing and transportation language for you to use.** Transportation is not required but it may help get people up here, often with H2A we write into the contract 1x week grocery store trip etc. **If you are going to deduct for housing that has to be specified in the job description as part of a signed agreement (and you have to match ss medicare etc on full wage).** **Question** - can you have a clawback on the housing costs. Employers can advance a stipend that is deducted later through payroll but can't bring overall wages down below minimum wage in that time period and must be disclosed in job order.
6. If not housing them must offer a wage that fits costs. Use federal prevailing wage data for county / town / naics. <http://www.vtlmi.info/indnaics.htm#industry> This part is not

regulated like visa programs, but if employers are offering housing it has to be up to code or it will jeopardize the program.

**Template letter** (one of the attachments) for employers

**Desire to track this via DOL so we can record**, so once the job order is filed with PR we are also sending to VtDOL (there's a box to check to advertise in all 50 states for employees). So this effort can do double duty!

Once this goes through, **you get a list of employees**. Then you can face time or skype or call, or they can go into DOL and use Webex. (we can be recruiting from Puerto Rico directly, or recruiting PR residents in the US, folks who have filed for unemployment and left the island - tens of thousands have left the island looking for work)

Normally Alison sends **interviewers** to run job fairs and prescreen people. That can't happen here because of the law. It will probably take 3-5 years to build these structures down there, and the pipelines down there including friends and family building connections to jobs.

Nancy asks about language ability. Alyson suggests UVM migrant worker support. They have Spanish language materials for workers on every subject.

**Is this an opportunity for Serge Lior?**

**How do we build from the resources down the valley - Holyoke**

- **Employers can do this (send the two forms to the PR DOL) on their own and Alyson will help (tell you where to send them and helpful hints)**
- **or go through the state process.**

**Adam on what we can do to facilitate - housing @ SIT, shared transportation, shared language resources,**

**FLCDataCenter.com** foreign labor online wage library  
**Provides Wage levels [of experience] by region**

**ICERT portal** displays everyone with an H-2A or H-1B visa so you can look at other people's applications to find examples of housing.

