

**Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council**  
**Quarterly Meeting Minutes ~ June 27, 2024**  
**via ZOOM and In-Person / Passed October 10, 2024**

Catamount Arts Center  
115 Eastern Avenue  
St. Johnsbury, Vermont 05819

<b>In Person:</b> Amanda Bianchi, Danielle Brier, Silas Callison, Justin T. Bear Deth, Anastasia Douglas, Michelle John, Jesse Suter, Collins Twing.
<b>ZOOM:</b> Kele Bourdeau, Betsy Choquette, Kate Daly, Melanie Feddersen, Randy Lizotte, Adam Poulin, Jenn Townley.
<b>Absent:</b> Johnathan Gardner, John Spinney, Beth Sightler, Lindsey Owen.
<b>Support Staff:</b> n/a
<b>Guests:</b> Janet Callison, Michael Shore and Peter Shore, Senator Jane Kitchel
<b>VTDDC Staff:</b> Kirsten Murphy, Susan Aranoff, Chelsea Hayward

## 1. Welcome:

Anastasia called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM. She welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. There was a quorum.

- **Ice Breaker: What are you looking forward to this summer?**

Attendees took turns replying to the ice breaker. Some answers were “going to the DC conference,” “swim at Cape Cod,” “vacation and being a tourist,” “beach,” “nature,” and “gardening.”

- **Assigned roles:**

- Timekeeper was Collins
- Zoom Chat Monitor was Michelle
- Processor was Amanda
- Jargon Buster was Justin

- **Adopt Meeting Minutes from March 28, 2024**

**Motion:** Justin made the motion to adopt the meeting minutes from March 28, 2024 as presented. Amanda seconded. There was no discussion.

**Motion passed unanimously with 2 abstentions.**

## 2. Membership Committee Recommendation

- **Learn about 1 new candidate -**

Randy Lizotte. Michelle spoke on behalf of the membership committee. Randy and Michelle were already friends from the VT Leadership Series. He has both an intellectual disability and a physical disability. Randy is a well-known leader in Vermont's self-advocacy community. He can commit to all 4 Quarterly Meetings. And he is also married to a person with an intellectual disability.

- **Decide whether to recommend candidate as a member -**

Kirsten let everyone know that Candice Price resigned with 1 year left of her term.

**Motion:** Michelle made the motion to recommend to the Governor that Randy Lizotte be appointed to the VTDDC. To recommend that he fill the unfinished term that ends on March 31, 2025. Justin seconded.

**Motion passed: 13-0-0.**

Randy joined the remote call. Anastasia welcomed him to the Council.

## 3. Policy Committee Report:

- **Learn about what happened to each of our legislative platform issues by the end of the 2024 session.**

Susan spoke on behalf of the policy committee. She praised Anastasia, Collins, Jenn, and Michelle for their active participation. She encouraged members, especially self-advocates, to join the committee.

All 4 of VTDDC's platform items passed through the State House. Those 4 platform items were...

- A pay raise for direct support professionals. The legislature provided a 3% increase for DSP wages in the 2025 budget.
- Vermonters with disabilities are now one of the top five priorities in the housing conservation board.

- Ending state Medicaid’s ability to recapture funds from ABLE Savings accounts upon the death of the beneficiary. This was adopted.
- Preventing the State from sending people with I/DD to a new locked forensic facility. Over the summer, a study committee will discuss how Vermonters with disabilities who are court-involved can be safely supported in the community.

Susan noted that more than half of the comments and testimony legislators received during the public hearings for the state budget were from family members, self-advocates, and allies seeking more housing options for Vermonters with I/DD. This made a strong impression on lawmakers.

- **Learn about the Veto Session**

This year the Governor vetoed a record number of bills. He did sign the budget, which is where most of the Council’s platform items were. The legislature met briefly in June. Lawmakers overturned several of the Governor’s vetoes.

#### **4. Executive Director’s Report, Kirsten Murphy (part one)**

- **Learn about a visit to the White House**

Kirsten, David Frye, Hasan Ko, and Karen Topper were invited to the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on the White House campus to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Olmstead Decision. This is the first time that the DD Council network was selected to speak at and attend an important White House event.

At the event, leaders from the Biden Administration talked about the importance of the federal government doing more to improve the “caring infrastructure.” “Infrastructure” means things that a country has to have to function well. Usually, this word refers to things like roads and bridges. The White House understands the terrible impact that the direct care workforce crisis is having on people with disabilities. They want to see the federal government invest in the workers needed to provide direct care.

**Did you know?** The Olmstead Decision is a ruling by the Supreme Court from June 22, 1999. Two women with disabilities wanted to live in the community instead of a state-run institution in Georgia. The court said it was discriminatory to not let people have a choice on where they live.

## 5. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Training:

Facilitated by Rachel Siegel, Toward Liberation, LLC.

- **Learn what to do when someone says something hurtful**

“A lot of time when people talk about equity, they’re afraid to make mistakes,” Rachel said. “Making mistakes is a normal part of this work.”

Rachel mentioned that our culture is “conflict avoidant.” She asked Council Members to practice asking for an apology and to practice giving apologies.

Group agreements –

- Expect discomfort.
- Accept that we may not finish.
- “Oops” and “Ouch.”
- Confidentiality. Do not share other peoples’ private stories.

Rachel asked if anyone had had their feelings hurt? She also asked if anyone has hurt the feelings of others, maybe by accident. A few Council members shared stories of mistakes they had made, times when they spoke up about a hurtful comment, and how each of these situations made them feel.

Rachel asked for examples of people who are different in ways they cannot change. How did they feel? How were they excluded? Can they figure out the mistake for themselves?

Intent is important. What is the impact? And how do they respond? If someone’s intent was to be hurtful their response may be different than if it was an accident.

What is a good apology? Rachel shared an outline for a good apology:

1. First, be clear you are apologizing. Say, “I am sorry.”

2. Say you regret what happened.
3. Admit you said something that was wrong or hurtful.
4. Admit that what you said had a negative impact on the other person. Empathy is the ability to understand another person's feelings. Use empathy to help you understand how the other person felt.
5. Ask for forgiveness. Make amends. Making amends means doing something to make the situation better – for example, promising to be more careful about what you say in the future.

People took turns practicing good apologies and speaking up when a hurtful comment is made. They talked about emotional responses and timing.

To close, Rachel asked, “What is one thing you learned?” and “What is one thing you want to learn more about?”

## 6. Lunch:

Senator Jane Kitchel joined the Council for dessert at the end of the lunch break. Senator Kitchel began her career as a social worker, then moved on to the Agency of Human Services. Eventually she became the Secretary of AHS. Currently she serves as Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Senator Kitchel is not running for re-election this year and will be retiring after many years in public service.

Justin played his flute to kick-off discussion with Senator Kitchel.

Susan talked about Make-a-Date. Council members expressed their thanks to Senator Kitchel for supporting legislation that will improve housing for people with I/DD.

**“Please pay attention to the people who don’t always have lobbyists or big voices at the table,” said Senator Kitchel. “If you don’t speak your voice can’t be heard.”**

Senator Kitchel also said that it is important to prioritize funding existing programs like Reach Up that make up Vermont’s social safety net. Sometimes

lawmakers and advocates are quick to create something new at the expense of core programs, she said.

## 7. President's Report, Anastasia Douglas

- **Discuss why we need our members at each meeting. Participation is key!**

There have been several early resignations from the Council since Anastasia became chair. She is concerned that members may not understand how important it is to keep their commitment to the Council. She said, "When you speak at the Council, you're not just speaking for yourself. You're representing all Vermonters who identify in ways similar to you. When you don't show up... whose voice are you leaving out?"

Anastasia reminded members that VTDDC staff, chair, and co-chairs can help members find the support they need to fully participate. They can also help with scheduling.

## 8. Executive Director's Report, Kirsten Murphy (part two)

- **Learn about Five-Year State Plan Adjustments**

In six months, the Council will begin working on the next Five-Year State Plan. We are finishing Year 3 of the current Five-Year State Plan.

Our federal partner, the Administration for Community Living, asked for any amendments to state plans by June 21, 2024. This is earlier than in previous years. Kirsten asked the Executive Committee to review a change that has been discussed by the Program Committee several times: Dropping Objective 2.3 which is related to transportation.

Kirsten explained that this objective has not been part of the annual work plan for the past two years. Staff spoke with several officials at the Vermont Department of Transportation to explore how the DD Council could improve transportation for people with I/DD. Staff concluded that VTDDC does not have enough funding to be impactful on this issue. Kirsten emphasized that this does not mean that transportation is not an important issue for our community. It is! But the Council must make hard choices. The Council must focus on the issues

where we are most likely to be successful. The Executive Committee voted to drop Objective 2.3.

The Executive Committee also asked that the Five-Year Plan add emergency preparedness to Objective 2.1, Health and Wellness. Widespread flooding last summer shined a light on the need to involve people with I/DD in planning for future disasters. This change has been made to the Five-Year Plan. Kirsten is already working to connect with state officials working on disaster planning.

## 9. Budget Presentation, Kirsten Murphy

A budget is a plan to spend money. VTDDC is given about \$525,000 each year by Congress. This amount has not increased in at least 6 years.

- **Learn why our funding is getting very tight**

There are two types of expenses.

- “Fixed expenses” are costs that the Council has to pay and has no control over. Salary, rent, and fees. Most of the Council’s expenses are fixed.
- “Discretionary spending” is the money that the Council has control over. This money goes to grants and projects. Only about \$120,000 of the Council’s budget is discretionary. Fortunately, the Council has other grant funding that does not appear in the Council’s core budget. The Council uses these “project budgets to support work on Five-Year Plan Objectives.

- **Learn whether we are meeting our budget goals**

The Council stayed within the budget.

- **Decide on the proposed budget for next year**

There is about \$37,000 more this year in discretionary funds. This is money from 2022. Kirsten has been working with ACL to avoid sending this money back to the federal government.

Please look at Attachment B for additional information about the budget. There is also a video version of Kirsten’s presentation on the budget.

**Motion:** Justin made the motion to adopt the Federal Fiscal Year 2025 budget as presented to the Council by the Executive Director, today, June 27, 2024. Amanda

seconded. There was no additional discussion.

**Motion passed: 10-0-1.**

**10. Public Comment:**

There was no public comment.

**11. Summarize Meeting:**

The meeting processor, Amanda, said she was glad that everyone had fun. The meeting was interesting.

**12. Adjourn:**

The meeting adjourned 2:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chelsea Hayward

Attachment A – Vote Roster

Attachment B – Detailed budget



Name	Vote 1			Vote 2		
	Yes	A.	No	Yes	A.	No
<b>Kele Bourdeau</b>	1			1		
<b>Amanda Bianchi</b>	1			1		
<b>Danielle Brier</b>	1					
<b>Betsy Choquette</b>	1					
<b>Silas Callison</b>	1			1		
<b>Kate Daly</b>	1			1		
<b>Justin T.Bear Deth</b>	1			1		
<b>Anastasia Douglas</b>	1			1		
<b>Melanie Feddersen</b>	1					
<b>Johnathan Gardner</b>						
<b>Michelle John</b>	1			1		
<b>Randy Lizotte</b>					1	
<b>Lindsey Owen, Esq.</b>						
<b>Adam Poulin</b>	1			1		
<b>Beth Sightler</b>						
<b>John Spinney</b>						
<b>Jesse Suter</b>				1		
<b>Jennifer Townley</b>	1					
<b>Collins Twing</b>	1			1		

Those in grey did not attend the meeting, were not present to vote, or passed their vote along to another Council member to share with the Council.