



## *Bennington County Regional Commission*

# MINUTES

Thursday – March 17, 2022

5:30 PM

Meeting held via Zoom

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Present: Nick Zaiac, Jay Reichman, Steve Bendix, Nancy Faesy, Bruce Lierman, Sheila Kearns, Dana Rozycki, Megan Harrington, Janet Hurley, Leslie Perra, Mary Rogers, Charlie Rockwell, Brian Lent, Bryan Dalton (BCOA), Grace Winslow (BCOA), Rex Butt (LGK), Drake Turner (LGK), Paula Kamperman, Lex Merrell (Bennington Banner), Emilie Tenenbaum (LGK)

BCRC Staff: Jim Sullivan, Callie Fishburn, Bill Colvin, Cat Bryars, Jonathan Cooper, Allison Strohl, Scott Grimm-Lyon, Jim Henderson

The meeting was called to order by BCRC Chair, Janet Hurley, at 5:31 PM. Hurley welcomed those in attendance and noted that a quorum was present to conduct business.

1. Minutes of January 20, 2022 Meeting

There being no objections, the Minutes were accepted by unanimous consent.

2. Let's Grow Kids – Child Care Campaign

An overview of child care needs and the Let's Grow Kids (LGK) campaign was provided by Emilie Tenenbaum. Challenges include a basic market failure where the cost of services to families and difficulty in paying a fair wage to early education staff combine to create hardships and a shortage of needed child care. LGK is working across the state in local communities and with the legislature to develop solutions.

Drake Turner provided details on the current campaign (see attached presentation). The focus of their efforts are in ensuring affordability for families and adequate compensation for early childhood educators. Rex Butt, who works as a regional field manager, added details about outreach efforts and how people can support the effort, noting that he is available to help with local initiatives.

Responding to a question about the relationship between child care and workforce issues, as well as engagement with the business community, it was noted that there has been strong engagement with, and support from, business groups. Also noted that additional support for child care can result in many new jobs to meet existing demand. Availability of affordable child care allows existing Vermont residents to enter the workforce and is a strong recruiting tool to draw new people to the state.

Grace Winslow commented on how strong a presence LGK has become and how critical the work is to the state. She also recognized the importance of adequately supporting all child care workers, support staff as well as educators.

### 3. Bennington County Open Arms

Bryan Dalton and Grace Winslow were present to describe the Bennington County Open Arms (BCOA) initiative. The group began working together last summer with an initial focus on supporting undocumented immigrants, but then pivoted to support for Afghan refugees when that need emerged rather suddenly. BCOA may well go back to other work, including support for asylum seekers, but the current focus is on refugee resettlement.

The US government's Refugee Resettlement program works with agencies around the country. A new office opened in Brattleboro last year with support from BDCC. BCOA works with BDCC, supporting resettlement of Afghan families in Bennington County. Assistance has been provided to four Afghan families thus far. Assistance includes things like: general welcoming, addressing immigration status, learning English, finding housing, locating employment, providing some initial food and other supplies, assisting with transportation, cultural adjustment. The "cosponsorship circles" include support from several people for each family.

Families have reported positive experiences thus far, with some already starting jobs, connecting with a mosque and Afghan food store in the Albany area, and settling in to their new homes.

Bryan and Grace described training received by volunteers and recognized many of the individuals and organizations that have stepped up to help with their efforts: BCRC, area churches, ESL teachers, Vt Community Foundation, Tutorial Center, Bennington Banner, and the Green Mountain Community Network.

Community members have been extremely warm and welcoming. BCOA always is willing to accept more volunteers – to help with the families that have arrived and to enable them to welcome more families in the future. Many more families need resettlement support and it is expected that the next group of people to arrive will be relatives of those who have moved to the area.

In response to a question about locating housing, acknowledged that it is a challenge, particularly in the northern part of the region; thus far, housing needs have been accomplished via word of mouth.

4. American Rescue Plan (ARPA) Update

Callie Fishburn presented a summary of the final US Treasury Guidance and VLCT analysis of the ARPA funds that have been, and will be, released to municipalities (see attached presentation). The most impactful change is that towns and villages can now claim up to \$10 million (entire ARPA award for municipalities in our region) as lost revenue and use the funds for any typical “government service.” First reports from recipients is due April 30, when municipalities should claim the “revenue loss” and thus enable broadest use of the funds.

There are webinars upcoming on March 21 and April 5.

5. BCRC Annual Meeting

The BCRC’s Annual Meeting in May will be returning to an in-person event this year (with a remote option). The meeting will be held at the Manchester Town Offices. It will include a light meal and time for socializing, a talk on housing issues by DHCD Commissioner Josh Hanford, and presentation of the Bongartz Award for community service.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.



# Child Care Campaign Update

Bennington County Regional Commission — 3.17.22

# Vermont's child care crisis means...

3 out of 5

**OF VERMONT'S YOUNGEST CHILDREN DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO THE CHILD CARE THEY NEED.**

30%

**OF THEIR ANNUAL INCOME IS WHAT VERMONT FAMILIES CAN SPEND ON CHILD CARE EVEN WITH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

71%

**OF CENTER-BASED CHILD CARE PROGRAMS ARE EXPERIENCING STAFFING SHORTAGES.**





The solution is a child care system that is:

- ✓ Accessible
- ✓ Equitable
- ✓ Affordable
- ✓ High-Quality
- ✓ Accountable
- ✓ Sustainable





# H.171 set 2 goals for Vermont's future child care system:

VT families spend  
no more than  
of their annual income on child care

10%

Vermont early childhood educators are  
well compensated and  
well supported



# In 2022, we are focused on:

- Continuing progress towards long-term transformation
- Emergency investments to recruit and retain early childhood educators





# How Can You Help?

Business: Endorse the Childcare  
Campaign

Personal: Sign Our Petition



# How Can You Help?

Business: Endorse the Child Care  
Campaign

Personal: Sign Our Petition



Any questions?





# 2022 POLICY AGENDA

## 2022 Child Care Transformation Plan

In 2021, thanks to the incredible work and commitment of child care champions, the Vermont Legislature passed a comprehensive bill, H.171, which set in motion a public commitment to achieving an equitable, accessible, affordable, and high-quality early childhood education system in Vermont. Our state has never been closer to achieving this goal, but at the same time, things have also never been harder for Vermont families, businesses, or our essential early childhood education workforce.

In 2022, we must address these needs by continuing on the path laid out by H.171 and responding to Vermont's urgent child care workforce crisis.

### Address Vermont's Early Childhood Educator Workforce Crisis

#### Recruit & Retain Early Childhood Educators

To address Vermont's early childhood educator workforce crisis, we propose the following initiatives to retain current early childhood educators and recruit new early educators to the field.

- » **\$125,000 to establish and fund an early childhood education recruitment campaign** at the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children.
- » Embed early childhood education recruitment into all state workforce development programs.
- » **\$19.6M to issue quarterly retention bonuses** for early childhood educators currently in the field.
- » **\$11.1M for premium assistance** to ensure all early childhood educators working in Vermont have access to health insurance they can afford.
- » Develop a short-term, multi-faceted recruitment and retention strategy to attract early childhood educators to relocate to Vermont and retain the current workforce.
  - **\$5.7M to expand Vermont's student loan repayment** support program for early childhood educators.
  - Provide no-cost child care for the children of early childhood educators working in regulated programs.
  - Fund additional, creative benefits that acknowledge the importance of early childhood educators to our communities.



**Together, we can create a Vermont in which all children have equitable access to early childhood education opportunities, families are able to find and afford the child care they need to stay at or return to work, and early childhood educators are equitably compensated and valued for their critical work.**

Learn more and sign on in support of this policy agenda at: [www.letsgrowkids.org/sign-on](http://www.letsgrowkids.org/sign-on)

LET'S GROW KIDS

[info@letsgrowkids.org](mailto:info@letsgrowkids.org) | 802-232-2512

19 Marble Avenue, Suite 4, Burlington, VT 05401



## Better Support Child Care Programs

### » Update CCFAP policies related to child absences to reflect the realities of program operations during an on-going pandemic:

Child care programs currently use a set of complex codes to request payment from CCFAP when a child is absent. Given the pandemic, many families are struggling with juggling COVID-19 exposure and quarantine requirements for multiple family members, meaning that families are running up against caps on the use of some of these codes. Limits on absences should be eliminated and the current coding system should be replaced with one absence code to ensure families receive support and programs receive payment.

## Continue Progress Toward Transformative Solutions

### » Fund the Financing Study outlined in H.171: Appropriate funds requested by the Joint Fiscal Office for the study

established in H.171/Act 45 to determine the cost of operating a sustainable, equitable, affordable, and high-quality early childhood education system and options for how to fund such a system.

### » Create a Child Care Capacity Development Program:

Build the infrastructure to create a strong business and capacity development resource center to provide long-term support for Vermont child care programs of all types.



## Join Vermont's Child Care Campaign.

Sign on to the 2022 Child Care Transformation Plan: [www.LetsGrowKids.org/sign-on](https://www.LetsGrowKids.org/sign-on)

# LET'S GROW KIDS Action Network ON THE ROAD TO 2025

YOU'RE HELPING VERMONT TO BUILD A CHILD CARE SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR EVERY CHILD, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY. **THIS IS OUR PLAN!**

## 2025

**YOUR SUPPORT WILL HELP US CROSS THE FINISH LINE!**

Your donations and support will transform our shared successes into reality for Vermont children, families, and early childhood educators, until Let's Grow Kids sunsets in 2025.

### In 2023

**WITH YOUR HELP,  
LET'S PASS A BILL**

Our campaign goal in 2023 will be passing a bill that funds a child care system for Vermont that is accessible, affordable, high-quality, accountable, and sustainable.

### In 2024

**LET'S GET TO WORK**

We'll work with early childhood educators and our partners all over Vermont to set up our transformed child care system.

### In 2022

**TOGETHER, WE'LL SET UP  
A NEW CHILD CARE SYSTEM**

Your support will help stakeholders and partners like state agencies, the early childhood education sector, the business community, and others work on setting up the child care system of the future. Experts will analyze possible stable, long-term funding sources for our transformed child care system.

Plus, via the Let's Grow Kids Action Network, supporters like you will organize your communities to elect legislators who are child care champions.

### In 2021

**WE ARE GETTING  
READY**

Our campaign will advance legislation that lays the foundation for our future child care system.

**How?** By making short-term investments and establishing state goals for child care affordability, access, and quality.

[LetsGrowKidsActionNetwork.org](https://LetsGrowKidsActionNetwork.org)



# ARPA UPDATE: THE FINAL RULE

## AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT: DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS

Total amount of funding allocated: \$350 Billion



Vermont's Share: \$1.25 Billion



\$1 billion to the State of VT



\$200 million directly to local governments\*



Bennington County's Share: \$10.6 million

\*Includes the \$121 million of county money that was reallocated to municipalities

# THE FINAL RULE

- The U.S. Treasury Department issued the Final Rule for use of ARPA funds in January 2022.
- The Final Rule takes effect on April 1, 2022, but recipients of ARPA funding can choose to follow the Final Rule now with no penalty.
- Under the Final Rule, **municipalities can now claim a revenue loss of up to \$10 million and use it to fund government services** (expenditure category 6.1: Provision of Government Services).
- Municipalities do not need to prove the revenue loss by doing a calculation; under the Final Rule, revenue loss of up to \$10 million is now presumed by Treasury.
- The first project and expenditure is **due April 30, 2022**. When filling out the report, municipalities will have the option to make a one-time, irrevocable decision to claim the standard revenue loss of up to \$10 million (not to exceed the award amount) to pay for government services.



# IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- The performance period remains the same.
  - The second payment to municipalities is expected to arrive in the summer of 2022.
  - Recipients have until December 31, 2024 to obligate their ARPA funds and until December 31, 2026 to spend them.
- The first project and expenditure report is due April 30, 2022. VLCT recommends choosing the standard revenue loss of up to \$10 million as this will allow for greater flexibility and streamlined reporting.
- Ineligible uses of ARPA funds:
  - Pension funds
  - Debt service or replenishment of “rainy day” funds
  - Satisfaction of settlements or judgements
- Public engagement is still highly recommended!



# UPCOMING WEBINARS & RESOURCES

- March 21<sup>st</sup> at 3PM: Treasury Webinar on NEU Reporting Requirements
- April 5<sup>th</sup> 12:30-2PM: VLCT Webinar on the Final Rule, Compliance & Reporting
  
- American Rescue Plan Act | Vermont League of Cities and Towns ([vlct.org](https://vlct.org))
- ARPA/CSLFRF Final Rule Summary and Analysis | Vermont League of Cities and Towns ([vlct.org](https://vlct.org))
- Compliance and Reporting | Vermont League of Cities and Towns ([vlct.org](https://vlct.org))
- ARPA Advisory Committee Formation Toolkit | Vermont League of Cities and Towns ([vlct.org](https://vlct.org))