

SEPTEMBER 28 WORKING LANDS STAKEHOLDER MEETING TAKEAWAYS

- Consider adding H128 provisions on accessory on farm businesses (AOFBs) into the report: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/Docs/BILLS/H-0128/H-0128%20As%20Introduced.pdf>
 - It includes definitions of farmstays and what educational, recreational, and social events include, as well as storage, preparation and sale of qualifying products.
- Overall, the document should do more to discuss exemptions based on activities not just geographies. This is a suggestion around how the document is framed more than anything.
 - Activities that relate to essential functions should be exempt – i.e. activities that are essential for enabling Act 250's goals.
 - These include things like AOFBs that are critical for enabling a viable ag economy and maintain Vermont's working landscape.
 - It is also important to acknowledge that there is a lot of other permitting/jurisdiction is in place for agriculture and forestry. Focus on where Act 250 actually adds value.
- The details of tier 2 are critical for the rural economy. We need more granularity around Tier 2.
 - “and/or” in 2B carries a lot of weight. Those differences matter.
 - We need the right jurisdictional rule for 2B&C to enable worker housing in rural areas while preventing sprawl. The lack of worker housing is significantly inhibiting rural economic growth.
- Need to address the permit efficiency
 - The time it takes, the cost, and fear/reality of abutter jurisdiction means people do not pursue projects.
 - If the process were streamlined there would be less focus on the need for exemptions.
 - The proposal doesn't do enough to show how permitting efficiency and consistency will be improved.
 - Change “less sophisticated applicants” language to focus on lack of capacity, not sophistication
- More support for applicants is a great idea but the details will matter. This function runs counter to NRB culture. It is not clear if this support role could or should be housed within the NRB.
 - The ombuds role could be housed at RDCs instead. That function would seem to match well with their mandate and function.