



**Steering Team Meeting Notes
3-4 pm February 3, 2026**

Present

Michele Bailey, Josh Bell, Jane Cadwalader, Meg Campbell, Amy Cunningham, Elizabeth Malone, Tom McMurdo, Rachel Onuf, Paddy Reagan, Joseph Watson

Business

Rachel Onuf started the meeting with a **Resilient Cultural Organizations Cohort update**. The VACDaRN Co-Leads began working with the RCO Cohort in June 2025. Amy Cunningham is doing a hefty part of the work, and we thanked her for all she does with this group! The Cohort is working through the NEDCC dPlan emergency preparedness tool. This has been a great opportunity for Rachel and Jane Cadwalader to work on their own dPlan for VSARA. It helps them to understand the process and solve any issues the Cohort may find.

The start of the new year provides a good opportunity for updates and **strategic planning**; what VACDaRN should be thinking of and working towards. It has been three years since our strategic planning session with Steffi Lahar and we can dedicate an upcoming meeting to reviewing the notes from that session and identifying some longer-term goals. There are also some specific items to work on this year, including updating the VACDaRN group text; recruiting additional steering team members representing emergency management, performing arts, and/or regional planning commissions; and working with Buildings and General Services to post a RFP for document recovery and secure a new contract (the statewide contract with Polygon expires in July).

Action items:

Amy Cunningham will contact members for their current phone number and update the contact list. Rachel will share the strategic planning session notes and identify geographic distribution of current steering team.

In preparation for the next meeting, the Steering Team should consider whether the following **four strategic priorities** identified in the 2023 planning session are still relevant and if so, what we might do to achieve them:

1. Identify new steering team members to diversify location and background.
2. Share and save community wisdom
3. Offer hands-on emergency scenarios
4. Create a virtual space for resources and where emergency services can be promoted.

Steering Team Updates

Amy Cunningham reported on the Resilient Cultural Organizations Cohort meeting in January. Taiga presented on the emergency management landscape at the state and local levels. On June 5th, the Creative Convening will occur adjacent to the Downtown and Historic Preservation Conference, which is June 4th. They are both occurring in St. Albans. Amy invited Steering Team Members to consider what VACDaRN might do for a session.

Amy will be presenting a Grant Seekers workshop in four places around Vermont in 2026. The workshop's purpose is to review all four grants that are offered by the Vermont Arts Council.

Michele Bailey continues to work on grants and programs. Next week she will be hosting the Cultural Facilities Grant Workshop on February 10.

Elizabeth Malone reported that the book collection at Vermont Humanities will be given away. Instead of loaning books, they are now trying to give away their books.

Vermont Humanities is renting out office space. If anyone is seeking space or knows an interested party, they should contact Elizabeth.

The Vermont Reads program, featuring *The Light Pirate* by Lily Brooks-Dalton, has been a great success. Brooks-Dalton will be coming to Woodstock April 10th and Burlington April 11th to discuss her book.

Tom McMurdo said that IMLS funding has passed the US House of Representatives, but it still needs Senate approval. IMLS LSTA funding makes up a third of the Vermont Libraries budget. VTLIB launched the application process for \$9.6 million in competitive grant funding through the Public Facilities Preservation Initiative Grants for Small, Rural Public Libraries in Vermont on December 3, 2025. The grant funding comes from US Housing and Urban Development, and they expect to award about 20 grants ranging from \$50,000 – \$400,000. The application process closes March 31, 2026.

Paddy Reagan is no longer hosting Waking Windows, which has given him extra time to work on other projects. Through the UVM Language Series and School for the Arts, he receives emails about safety and response from UVM. These communications give good insight into how a large institution responds to student protests.

Paddy recently did a walkthrough with the fire chief at the Community Center in Jericho. They surveyed the building and looked at likely impacts of fire. It was recommended that the town install an alarm that calls for the fire department, even though it is pricey.

Paddy learned about a type of fire mitigation that uses herd animals to eat down the fuel. He thought this was a neat alternative to traditional landscaping.

Joseph Watson reported on the CHERN event that took place at Lake Champlain Maritime Museum on November 17th, 2025. The guest speaker, Nick Artim, spoke on causes of fire in historical structures and its prevention. The group took a behind the scenes tour of the LCMM collections area. Joseph commented that these annual meetings give members an opportunity to take behind the scenes tours at

locations around the region, giving participants knowledge of the space for emergency response purposes.

Joseph reported a water incursion at Middlebury College in the collections in December 2025 and January 2026. The leak occurred at a location with previous water damage thought to have been fixed in 2014. The leak was repaired in December, and then it leaked again in January. This time, Joseph is leaving the plastic up long term until he's certain it's fixed. The building was built in 2004.

Meg Campbell reported that Preservation Awards nominations are open and the awards will be given at the Downtown and Historic Preservation Conference on June 4th. Steering Team members discussed doing an emergency preparedness session at the conference. Rachel said there is precedence for this: she presented on VACDaRN at the 2019 conference as part of a panel on “Cultural and Historic Resiliency” moderated by Jamie Duggan.

This year the preservation retreats will occur in different areas of Vermont instead of all at Grand Isle. The Grand Isle Lake House caterer has moved on and the Preservation Trust is considering what to do next. The first retreat will occur at the Grafton Inn, and it sold out immediately. Meg said the response has been positive and having the retreats in different parts of the state will make them more accessible.