

Essex Economic Development Commission (EDC)
Business Outreach Meeting Minutes

August 21, 2025, 8:00AM

Meeting Held at Vermont Construction Academy, 276 E. Allen St, Winooski VT 05404

Minutes Submitted by Clerk Keith Dunbar, August 24, 2025

Attendees

Commission Members:

Present: Igor Polenov, Chair: Ken Signorello, Vice Chair; Keith Dunbar, Clerk, Irene Wrenner

Remote: N/A

Absent: N/A

Staff: Jean O'Sullivan

Staff:

Public: Matthew Musgrave

Partners:

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 AM by Chair Polenov.

2. Agenda Additions/Changes

- No agenda additions or changes.
- Motion to approve the agenda:
 Signorello motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by **Dunbar**.
 Vote passed unanimously 4-0.

3. Public to be Heard

- No public to be heard

4. Approval of Minutes

- Postponed until 9/3/2025 meeting

5. Partner Updates

- No partner updates were heard

6. Business Items

Vermont Construction Academy Tour and Presentation

The Commission received a comprehensive tour and presentation from Matt Musgrave, Associated Builders and Contractors of New Hampshire/Vermont, regarding the Vermont Construction Academy operations.

Key Information Presented:

- The Academy was established through industry-led initiative due to workforce shortage (3% annual net loss in construction workforce)
- The facility operates as a 501(c)(3) organization
- Current programs include:
 - Pre-apprentice program (5-week, 40-hour per week course)
 - Apprentice program (4 days on-job training, 1 day classroom/shop)
 - Professional development and safety training

Funding Structure:

- Pre-apprentice program: Currently funded by federal grant through state (free to participants)
- Future pre-apprentice program cost: \$3,000-\$4,000 for 5-week course
- Apprentice program: \$9,000-\$10,000 over three semesters (employer-funded)
- VSAC funding options available for participants and employers

Facility Details:

- Located in former Needham Electric warehouse
- 10-year lease secured through initial investment
- \$300,000-\$400,000 in donated in-kind labor and materials from member companies
- Capacity: 15-16 students optimal, up to 50 in large classroom
- Equipment donated by Milwaukee Tools and other industry partners

Community Partnerships:

- Complementary relationship with CTE programs (not competing)
- Works with students unable to access limited CTE seats
- Age requirement: 17+ for apprentice programs, typically 18+ for employment due to insurance requirements
- Projects include community service work (picnic tables for Camp Pina in Maine)

7. Reading File

- Milton EDC Vision & Priorities Statement – no action was taken due to time constraints
- Email regarding the Tree Farm Recreational Facility – no action was taken due to time constraints

8. Next Meeting

9/3/2025, Regular Business Meeting. Agenda to include:

Action Items:

- **Lamell Lumber Connection:** Commission member to make connection between Vermont Construction Academy and Lamell Lumber for potential partnership on materials/projects
- **Draft Ordinance:** Commission to include draft ordinance for temporary lawn signs on next meeting agenda
- **Legislative Outreach:** Commission to facilitate connections with:
 - Senate Economic Development Committee
 - Local representatives (Tina from Burlington, Aaron from Essex)
 - State officials to demonstrate Academy's capacity and utility

- **Newsletter Coverage:** Photos from visit to be shared with Tammy for inclusion in newsletter
- **Future Collaboration:** Explore opportunities for Essex projects that could utilize Academy students, particularly:
 - Municipal projects with flexible timelines
 - Pre-fabricated construction elements
 - Community improvement projects

9. Adjournment

- Motion: **Signorello** motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 AM, seconded by **Polenov**.
Vote: Unanimous approval 4-0.