

Thursday, February 20 (VASEN Meeting)

*Attendees:* Aaron Linas (Richmond), Alex Burgard (Harrisonburg), Dilcia Molina (SECOSOL), Elias Crim, Erin Dougherty (Norfolk), Hunter (Roanoke), Leslie Moncada, Matt (on VASEN's coordinating committee), Nat McKeller Crosby, Patricia (Patty) Troup (law student at Washington University in St. Louis, on VASEN's coordinating committee, [omgitspatti@gmail.com](mailto:omgitspatti@gmail.com)), PG (on VASEN's coordinating committee), Serena Fulton (Richmond), Trey Hartt (Nelson County), DNOVA Summit Crew (in-person with Eleanor, Jeff, Johanna, and Kristen)

- Check-ins
  - Trey: help run a nonprofit called [the Hive](#)
  - Alex: working to set up crowdfunding for manufacturing cooperative in Harrisonburg
  - Jeff/DNOVA peeps: <https://nextsystem.gmu.edu/events/16791>
  - PG: works with the VA General Assembly (legislative advocacy and community building)
  - Erin: part of [Eleanor's](#) (a cooperative bookstore)
  - Matt: currently reading [The Great Law of Peace](#)
  - Hunter: mutual aid, political education, food security, and ecology work in Southwestern Virginia
  - Elias: working on social cooperatives
  - Serena: work with a lot of people starting businesses and moving them to the coop model; involved in the [People's Assembly in Richmond](#) with Aaron
  - Aaron: had 400-500 people at the last gathering; next one in April; co-owner of a conservation landscaping business that is worker-run
- Regional dinners updates
  - Matt: did a Resist + Build event in Richmond about a year ago; applied to a grant to do site visits, but didn't get enough, so decided to give folks \$ to host a series of dinners
  - Trey: hosted a dinner with husband that was values-centered but in a purple zone; invited cooperative housing peeps + cooperatively owned water mill + Native plant nursery folks set up as a cooperative + ED of a Housing Resident Association; had a local group cater and had a good conversation about what our vision is for our lives and our region/combat the isolation → one invitee interested in starting a folk

school/skill share community so in conversation about how to sustain that work

- Matt: discussed “what brings us to light?”
- Alex: gathered ~20 peeps at the Friendly City Food Cooperative
  - PG: newly reinvigorated NAACP + Northeast Neighborhood Association + graduate students from JMU + new council member
  - PG: visioning process for an area plan for the neighborhood; moving from structures of exclusion (lawn ordinances as proxies for exclusion) → inclusion everywhere
  - PG: There’s a Signal group on low impact landscapes that we’d really like to connect through, whether people are working on the people or the plant part of the ecology
- Hunter: have a community space we can use; do a potluck twice a month – wrapped together with Roanoke workers meeting
- Details about our dinner here.
- Interest in starting an interpretation cooperative (training provided from SECOSOL leaders).
- VASEN updates
  - Dinners as a safe cultural *and* political space
  - Looking for someone to help with website (suggested NOVA Web Development)
  - Book club (Sundays at 2pm ET) - facilitated by Anne Mitchell; started with *Collective Courage*, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, *Legal Foundations of Capitalism*, *Money for Beginners*, *White Poverty* (2/4 calls complete) – anyone is welcome to join; reach out to Anne directly ([anne500@me.com](mailto:anne500@me.com))
  - Participatory budgeting + Common Shares
    - PB (with \$3 million of the City’s budget) is happening in Richmond right now! <https://www.rvapb.org/>
    - Proposals are happening now; vote will happen in early April
    - Common Shares hosted a kick off event a few weeks ago with 40 people from the Richmond area - talking with Madre Tierra about a housing cooperative
  - Native yards organizing
    - Protecting natural landscapes from HOAs
    - March 21 “Pollinators In Your Yard” event in Harrisonburg with the Department of Public Works

- Repealing tallgrass and weed ordinance in the Harrisonburg and Shenandoah and Richmond
- Interested in expanding social cooperatives to support this work