Public Hearing Essex Junction, VT Meeting Minutes

Champlain Valley Exposition North

3625, 105 Pearl St, Essex Junction, VT 05452

October 17, 1:01-2:30 PM

Members present— Brian Cina; Jill Charbonneau; John Cohn; and Honorable John Dooley.

Staff present—Ryan Flanagan

Public present— Michelle Weissman; Jeremy Huckins; Anselm Bradford; Eric Stormfield; Craig Roskam; Angelo Dorta; Eric Bronson; Christopher Pepe; Polly Mangan; Monique Bogue; Tom Dinitz; Paul Garrett; Fred Thodal; Sherrra Bourget; Henri Amistadi; Michael Rooney; Chris Miller; John Villere; Benny Boas; Mike Veruxi; Alexana Wolf; Maureen McElaney; John Burton; Dongdong Lin; Henry Wu; Coumba Winfield; George Eget; Brandon Mattiolo' Spencer Thomas; and Michael Bradshaw.

(12:45-1:01 p.m.)—Public gathered and found seating for the event.

(1:01-1:21 p.m.) **Welcome, review of agenda**

- ❖ At 1:01 p.m., Katie Hodges, Sales & Marketing Coordinator at Seven Days, opened the meeting. She thanked the sponsors that made this event possible and handed the microphone to the task force members.
- ❖ At 1:03 p.m., Brian Cina introduced himself as representing the National Association of Social Workers, John Dooley introduced himself as a retired Associate Justice of the VT Supreme Court, John Cohn introduced himself as representing Vermont Academy of Science and Engineering, and Jill Charbonneau introduced herself as representing Vermont State Labor Council.
- ❖ At 1:05 p.m., Brian Cina also introduced the bill, H.378 / Act 137, which created this task force. He told the audience that the group is tasked with five requirements for the report associated with researching and recommending how to responsibly use artificial intelligence (AI) in the State. Originally, the report was due to the Legislature by June 30, 2019, but it had been amended and is now due on or before January 15, 2020. The task force was created in July of 2018.
- ❖ At 1:07 p.m., John Cohn discussed the general and public meetings. The group had brought in experts in various fields such as agriculture, technology, healthcare, and criminal justice for the general meetings. The public meetings have taken place all over the state. In total, there have been five including today's meeting at the Tech Jam in Essex Junction, with others in Burlington, Lyndonville, Norwich, and Manchester, VT.
- ❖ At 1:08 p.m., John Cohn introduced tentative recommendation areas. These involved recommendations on regulation and forming a permanent AI commission. He also discussed

that the group is looking at possible effects of AI and finding ways to make sure that people can be trained in this field, ethics are upheld, and jobs are still present. Jill Charbonneau voiced that the group looked at the new California law on regulation of use of personally identifying data, but the California Legislature is working on modifications before it will go into effect. Thus, it is not yet a model that Vermont could adopt. Brian Cina also stressed that he hoped that AI policy would become global. John Dooley told the audience that the group is still in the process of drafting the report, so he urged people to voice their opinions today.

- ❖ At 1:16 p.m., John Cohn told the audience that he is investigating the education aspect of AI with UVM professor Donna Rizzo. John Cohn explained that he hoped to find a way to create an economic advantage, then the state can continue to encourage AI job creation. However, everything first starts with proper education.
- ❖ At 1:21 p.m., John Cohn introduced the working definition of AI. He also gave other definitions for related topics including machine learning, neural networks, and deep learning.

(1:22-2:30 p.m.) **Public Comment & Discussion**

- ❖ At 1:22 p.m., John Dooley opened the floor to public comment.
- ❖ At 1:24 p.m., Maureen McElaney asked if the AI task force has investigated the DMV using facial recognition in Vermont.
    - ❖ John Dooley said that he had heard of a few companies using this technology in Vermont. However, the DMV needs approval from the Vermont Legislature to employ facial recognition technology and has not yet sought or received it. As a result, it is premature for the Taskforce to make a recommendation on the issue. He added that as far as the Taskforce could determine there is no use of facial recognition software by any law enforcement agency in Vermont. It is, however, being used by law enforcement in other parts of the country, and it is likely that law enforcement will seek to use it here.
    - ❖ Maureen McElaney voiced that she wanted transparency with respect to use of this AI application. She had heard of facial recognition being used elsewhere for recidivism in jails. She believed that citizens should know how and why this technology is being used.
    - ❖ At 1:31 p.m., Brian Cina said that the Attorney General has ruled that facial recognition is illegal. Jill Charbonneau also added that AI can work well within schools to locate threats, but people should understand how the technology is being used.
- ❖ At 1:32 p.m., Jeremy Huckins stated that AI is different from machine learning, which has been going on since the 1960s. Neural networks are also not necessarily artificial intelligence. Biases within these technologies can happen for a variety of reasons according to him. He is interested in what the government will collect on this topic.
    - ❖ John Cohn added that humans often point at the technology when it comes to biases, but it is typically the user and his or her intent, which are to blame.
- ❖ At 1:37 p.m., Joshua Burke stated that it is difficult to regulate fields like AI. There is no framework for AI in order to certify ethical usage. There's no certification or licensing techniques for it. There's also no fast, legal penalty for improper creation or use.

❖ John Cohn asked where Joshua Burke would like legislation to occur. Joshua said that the task force should start by looking at other careers for which you need a license (ex. Doctors, lawyers, and even engineers). Brian Cina added that what Joshua is suggesting is creating a licensure to establish proper ethics.

❖ At 1:42 p.m., Benny Boas asked how AI would be taught and what the standard would be for how it will be taught. He asked who would be writing this curriculum. He suggested a Socratic method which is often neglected in primary education.

   ❖ John Cohn stated that the ethics of AI will be in the conversation when creating the curriculum.

❖ At 1:44 p.m., Christopher Pepe asked what job effects the task force is looking at from AI automation.

   ❖ John Dooley told Christopher Pepe that UVM professor Stephanie Seguino had talked to the group about labor effects of technological change Some jobs will be lost as a result of the introduction of AI. This effect will be seen, for example, from the introduction of autonomous vehicles which are likely to cause a reduction or elimination of jobs for vehicle drivers. What is unknown is what and how many jobs will be added by the introduction of AI and whether workers in the lost jobs can be retrained to take new jobs.

   ❖ Jill Charbonneau said that there is pressure on the middle class. People today in this demographic are working harder and making less.

   ❖ Christopher Pepe asked if there was a way to reshape the necessary learning mentality.

      ❖ John Cohn said that people need to get the meta-skill of constant change.

      ❖ Christopher Pepe added that he hoped that people can get jobs in and around rural communities. He wondered what their next skill will be and what will motivate them as AI becomes widely used.

      ❖ Brian Cina added that what Christopher Pepe was talking about is a change in culture. The responsible thing for the government to do is be proactive.

      ❖ Jill Charbonneau provided an example with Vermont's aging population and how the government must act appropriately to prepare for this change.

❖ At 1:53 p.m., Chris Miller stated that a million people might lose their sales jobs due to AI. She said that people need to learn a new skill every few years to continue their job nowadays. There are already many people who do not have this skillset as SaaS becomes widely used in sales. She believed that some people will lose their jobs, but the workforce will evolve.

   ❖ John Cohn asked how the task force would lead the conversation to get people to proactive solutions.

   ❖ Chris Miller told John Cohn that people must have the mindset of continual learning. This might present itself as a challenge for small to mid-sized businesses.

   ❖ Jeremy Huckins said that people need to be more adaptable than ever. However, people should embrace this change if humans invest in AI the right way.

❖ At 1:59 p.m., Christopher Pepe asked about possible education regarding AI. He mentioned that his son's school had an extended learning program, which gives students the freedom to learn other subjects.

❖ John Cohn said that the task force was looking at a pilot program involving education, but it comes down to funding. He wants to get non-college bound students and non-STEM students involved in this program.

❖ At 2:03 p.m., Joshua Burke told the task force his thoughts on education. He talked about how Vermont had not established any K-12 programs around algorithmic concepts. Students need to learn more than just basic computer science. If the task force wants to educate the populous on AI's implications, it should advocate early education of algorithmic concepts.

❖ Brian Cina told Joshua Burke that the task force is concerned with maximizing AI's benefits and minimizing its risks. Education is certainly an important topic to address.

❖ At 2:07 p.m., Fred Thodal told the task force that one of the biggest concerns people have is the user betraying the system. He believes that interactive explanations almost like video games can help with the educational aspect of AI and algorithmic thinking.

❖ John Cohn voiced that MIT has something similar and it is useful in educating people on AI especially those that are younger.

❖ At 2:10 p.m., Polly Mangan told the group that it is important to consider their definition of AI. It is important to consider that AI is not always smarter than humans. She told the group to change the definition to AI to "performing tasks better or more efficiently." Polly Mangan said that humans will be still be needed for critical decisions.

❖ John Cohn agreed with Polly's definition of AI. He said that it helps when thinking about responsible deployment.

❖ At 2:11 p.m., Henri Amistadi said the one of the elephants in the room is Facebook. He suggested having an idiot's guide to about how Facebook and other companies are affecting people's lives.

❖ John Cohn asked what the vector would be to get this knowledge to the public.

❖ Henri recommended that consumer protection and user licensing agreements are beneficial. People should know where to access these agreements.

❖ John Dooley pointed out that some licensing agreements do offer options, but most people choose to ignore them.

❖ Henri told the group that to maximize privacy, people must look at certain settings. Default settings are for maximum information being revealed. He wanted a solid consumer awareness program with where the data is reaching and being sold.

❖ John Cohn agreed. He provided the example of nutrition nowadays being easy to understand. However, the same cannot be said for these licensing agreements as they are written in jargon.

❖ Christopher Pepe was curious about how this would apply outside of Vermont. Privacy settings are continuously moved. He asked how this traffic would be monitored.

❖ At 2:21 p.m., Jeff Baron asked about "deep fake," or a technique for human image synthesis based on artificial intelligence. It Is a national threat, and many people are concerned about it. Along these lines, he asked if there was a way to regulate how AI would be used for profit versus for the community.

❖ After this, other conversations emerged. Some general audience members addressed their fears with the deployment of autonomous vehicle. Christopher Pepe said that

some areas might still allow for the use of non-autonomous vehicles, but this would be atypical for most cities.

- ❖ Fred Thodal voiced that deep fakes are very difficult to do. He also said it is very difficult to know where anything on the internet goes physically. He applauded Vermont in looking at this issue.
- ❖ At 2:26 p.m., Brian Cina voiced that the forum is not over and encouraged members of the public to send testimony to Ryan Flanagan, Administrative Coordinator for AI Task Force. He told everyone that he hopes to understand the technology and maximize the benefit.
- ❖ At 2:28 p.m., John Cohn said that it is eventually up to the Legislature to decide; however, he hopes to raise opportunities for the state and address awareness concerns.
- ❖ At 2:29 p.m., Jill Charbonneau also gave her closing remarks. She said she hoped to unlock possibility for the group.
- ❖ At 2:30 p.m., John Dooley told the audience to look to a report coming early at the beginning of 2020.
- ❖ At 2:30 p.m., the meeting adjourned. Some audience members stayed later and had additional conversations.