

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

January 30, 2025

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Orenna Brand (Community Engagement Coordinator & Field Technician), Richard Noel (Chair), Vicky Drew (Supervisor – on Zoom), Lynda Ulrich (Supervisor), Molly Magnan (Supervisor), Sarah Larose (NRCS District Conservationist), Mel Auffredou (Senior Natural Resources Planner)

Conducted at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans and on Zoom
Minutes recorded by Orenna Brand

The written minutes are a synopsis of the discussion at the meeting. Motions are as stated. Minutes will be subject to correction by the Board. Changes, if any, will be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting of the Board.

Minutes:

3:12: Meeting called to order. Quorum present.

3:13: Lauren Weston presents Richard Noel with VACD Natural Resources Conservation Award plaque.

3:14: Richard Noel shares NRCC updates.

- FCNRCD's proposal for Enhancement Project Development Grant to work with municipalities and One-Time Core Services Grant have been approved by NRCC Finance Committee.

3:20: Vicky Drew shares VACD updates.

- Executive Director Selection Committee has selected a candidate who will meet with DMs on Monday, February 3rd, 2025.
- Due to recent executive orders, all IRA money is on hold, including a large portion of the VACD operating budget.
- VACD organizational development consultants will present their findings on Thursday, February 6th, 2025. VACD Board will decide which recommendations to implement in March.

3:23: Sarah Larose enters.

3:24: Sarah Larose shares NRCS updates.

- Federal hiring freeze has paused realignment effort.
- IRA funds are on hold statewide. NRCS is moving forward with all programs despite unknowns and preparing for funds to be rescinded.
- Due to return to office mandate, employees are preparing to return to federal offices throughout February. Some offices may not have enough seats and IT systems may not have enough capacity.
- Federal employees have received nationwide resignation offer email.

3:31: Lauren Weston shares implications of recent executive orders for the District.

- Lauren Weston shared a budget timeline with staff in case of funding stoppage.
- Lauren Weston will look into what percentage of budget is Federal funding and share with board.

3:38: Supervisors review minutes from December 19th, 2024, meeting. Dan Pipes makes motion to accept meeting minutes. Lynda Ulrich seconds. All approve, motion carries.

3:39: Lauren Weston reviews FY25 Financials to Date. Board accepts.

3:42: Lauren Weston discusses potential opportunity to work more closely with the Franklin Watershed Committee (FWC). FCNRCD is already doing several projects in Lake Carmi. Capacity to do such work depends on how federal funding freeze plays out.

- Supervisors note existing tensions between FWC and agricultural producers.
- Lauren Weston will get more information for next meeting.

3:52: Lauren Weston presents credit card options for District to consider opening.

- Preference for automatic monthly payments, no/low interest rate, no additional checking account.
- Vicky Drew and Richard Noel will be primary signers similar to current bank account. Lauren Weston and Orenna Brand will be secondary.
- Lauren will get more information on limits and choose between Chase Ink Business Unlimited, Capital One Spark Cash Select, and Bank of America Business Advantage Unlimited Cash Rewards, confirming selection with Vicky Drew and Richard Noel before opening.

4:00: Sarah Larose shares Franklin County Field Days updates.

- Field Days is still struggling to find land. Been advised to buy property near the airport which may not be suitable for building and may contain protected species.
- Most fairs in Vermont are facing large obstacles due in part to 3-Acre Stormwater Rule.

4:08: Lauren Weston shares that she has just received a notice to stop work on all BIL-funded LCBP grants. Lauren Weston will identify which grants are included and share with Board.

4:10: Supervisors enter into executive session to complete Lauren Weston's annual review.

4:25: Supervisors exit executive session. Lynda Ulrich shares that the board and staff reviews were very positive and the board would like to give Lauren a 5% raise above COLA (2.5%) retroactive for January 1st, 2025. Lynda Ulrich and Molly Magnan will meet with Lauren next Wednesday, February 5th, 2025, to share additional feedback.

4:30: Lauren shares other upcoming events/meeting.

- February 6th, 2025: Local Working Group Meeting
- February 13th, 2025: Advocacy Day at the Statehouse: Richard will attend (Lauren coordinating)
- March 14th and April 18th: Abenaki Land & Water Conversations
- Front Porch Forum: Supervisors will post on our behalf when requested.

4:33: Mel Auffredou enters.

4:34: Mel Auffredou presents on the Sandy Bay Engineer Procurement process. Supervisors review proposals from four firms. Vicky Drew makes a motion to select Fitzgerald Environmental Associates due to experience and cost. Dan Pipes seconds. All in favor, motion carries.

- Vicky Drew recommends consulting Toby Alexander at NRCS.

4:46: Lynda Ulrich exits.

4:48: Next FCNRCD Board Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 27th, 2025, at 10am-12pm at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans, VT.

4:53: Supervisors share county ongoings. Everyone's tapping. Lake is frozen. Lots of fishing. Bird flu in Windsor (chickens).

4:54: Dan Pipes makes a motion to adjourn. Vicky Drew seconds. All in favor, motion carries.