

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

June 12, 2025

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Orenna Brand (Community Engagement Coordinator & Field Technician), Richard Noel (Chair), Vicky Drew (Supervisor), Molly Magnan (Supervisor), Dan Pipes (Supervisor), Michelle Monroe (VACD Executive Director), Walter Hutcheson (Prospective Associate Supervisor)

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

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:

3:07: Meeting called to order. Quorum present.

3:08: Round of introductions.

3:09: Supervisors review May 12, 2025, meeting minutes and May 19, 2025, special meeting minutes. Vicky Drew makes motion to accept both meeting minutes. Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

3:11: Lauren Weston reviews FY25 financials to date (Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss by Month, and Bank and Credit Card Statements). Molly Magnan makes motion to accept. Vicky Drew seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

- Vicky Drew and Lauren Weston will meet monthly before board meetings to review financials in depth and be better prepared to speak to financials at future board meetings.
- District is working with consultant Dave Dore from Structural Integrity to audit financial systems. Will inquire about establishing business credit score and removing Vicky Drew as primary credit card user.

3:19: Supervisors discuss purchasing or leasing a truck. Vicky Drew makes motion to approve two-year lease on Toyota Tacoma from Handy Toyota with \$7,800 down payment and expected rate of \$231.57/mo. Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries. Discussion continues.

3:31: Dan Pipes enters meeting.

- Richard Noel shares insights on current vehicle options. Handy Toyota in St. Albans offering a special lease deal on Toyota Tacoma through end of June. 2-year full-service lease agreement (four-wheel drive and tow package included) considered a good short-term solution, with potential for future purchase with equity at lease end.
- Molly Magnan offers advice on maximizing equity through vehicle turnover (trading every 30k miles).
- Funds that could go towards this lease would be NRCC Capacity and Core Services funds: \$35k legislative appropriation + \$17,800 in one-time unrestricted funds available to use. If vehicle is purchased before end of June, funds for down payment must be drawn from FY25 budget.

- Need to evaluate cost savings from reduced mileage reimbursements to employees. Lauren will gather data on current mileage expenses and potential savings.
 - Additional cost considerations: insurance, fuel, tires.
- Discussion regarding benefits of buying vs leasing a vehicle, especially in relation to potential building/land office purchase for the organization in the next few years.

3:31: Dan Pipes enters meeting.

3:43: Supervisors review FY26 budget.

- Anticipated reduction in AgCWIP funds in FY27.
- Consider adding truck-related expenses to budget.
- Michelle Monroe recommended establishing a sweep bank account to keep individual account balances under \$250,000 which is federally insured by automatically transferring excess funds into other accounts. Lauren Weston to look into sweep account options.
 - Dan Pipes makes a motion to establish sweep account. Vicky Drew seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

3:50: Supervisors enter executive session to discuss wage increases for hourly employees.

Supervisors exit Executive Session. Motion made by Vicky Drew to provide wage increases for all hourly, permanent staff of 5% starting the first pay period in FY26. Specifically, this means: Kate Wettergreen – increase from \$30.75/hr to \$32.39/hr; Mel Auffredou from \$27.64/hr to \$29.02/hr; Dorothy Kinney-Landis from \$26.76/hr to \$28.10/hr; Kerry Brosnan from \$24.60/hr to \$25.83/hr; Morgan Pratt from \$24.64/hr to \$25.87/hr; Maria Burnett from \$23.83/hr to \$25.02/hr; and Orenna Brand from \$23.83/hr to \$25.02/hr. There is additional discussion that this across-the-board performance-based wage increase is independent of any Cost-of-Living Adjustment to be considered at the end of Calendar Year 2025. Additionally, the board of Supervisors will work with Lauren Weston to create performance-based metrics for future annual reviews to assist with determining pay increases for FY27. Dan Pipes seconds this motion, all approve, motion carries.

4:00: Molly Magnan exits. Quorum remains.

Supervisors enter executive session to discuss PTO plans for staff over 200 PTO hours.

4:24: Supervisors exit Executive Session. Motion made by Vicky Drew to allow Kate Wettergreen to carry over more than 200 hours of PTO across FY25 to FY26 with the understanding that Kate Wettergreen will draw down PTO hours to 121 hours by August 30, 2025. Dan Pipes seconds this motion, all approve, motion carries.

5:15: Dan Pipes makes a motion to allow Lauren Weston to roll over 200 PTO hours from FY25 to FY26 and FCNRCD will pay out \$12,000 lump sum payment to cover a percentage of the 443 additional hours of PTO (643 total PTO hours accrued as of May 26, 2025 pay period). Lauren Weston must create an Annual Leave Drawdown Plan to present to the board at a future meeting and provide monthly updates at future board meetings in FY26 to demonstrate accountability for drawing down those hours. Supervisors also request that Lauren Weston seek a mentor within the community to assist with guidance related to work/life balance as well as a myriad of other topics to provide insight, resources, and support.

5:16: VACD Executive Director Michelle Monroe introduces herself.

- Formerly at St. Albans Messenger, aide to Senators Leahy and Welch.
- VACD is looking for board members: Treasurer, Vice Chair, Secretary.
- Planning to form new committees and review bylaws during upcoming annual meeting. Also making operational changes to streamline grant reporting and better support Districts.
- Focus on strengthening District advocacy and overall conservation work in Vermont.
- Rural Fire Protection project happening in Swanton – should connect with Troy Dare.
- VACD Annual Meeting is scheduled for November 5 at Capitol Plaza in Montpelier. Will include board trainings, workshops, guest speakers, and dinner.
 - Advocacy Day Retreat also being planned.
- Wants to improve services to Districts, including board development processes (formalized Supervisor Handbook), guidance on annual performance reviews for DMs, standardizing DM salaries and job descriptions.
 - Lauren Weston to send staff review template to Vicky Drew and results to Michelle Monroe for distribution to other Districts.

5:38: Supervisors review proposals for monitoring Trout Brook Reservoir Dam Removal and select contractors. Dan Pipes makes a motion to approve the selections below. Vicky Drew seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

Proposals received from:

- Physical: SLR
- Temperature and Dissolved Oxygen: Costal Mapping & Sciences, Just Water Consulting, and Sovereign Consulting
- Taxonomic ID: EcoAnalysts, Enviroscience, and Haley Ward

Contracts to be awarded to:

- Physical: SLR – due to reasonable cost, familiarity with project, and having been the only proposal received for this scope of work
- Temp & DO: Just Water Consulting – due to lowest cost and familiarity with project and VT area
- Taxonomic ID: EcoAnalysts – due to experience with VT DEC protocols, second lowest cost, and comprehensive proposal for project (not a per sample table).

5:49: Sarah Larose provided NRCS updates to Lauren Weston via email; shared with Supervisors

- Bill Hamlet Financial Resource Specialist, and John Van Hoeson GIS Specialist have separated from NRCS – Chris Evans helping to fill gap of Bill leaving, Jim Eikenberry helping to fill gap of John leaving.
- Chris Evans is on a detail as the Financial Resource Specialist until end of September to fulfil the requirements of the NELDP (Northeast Leadership Development Program).
- Working to get all applications that were pre-approved to obligation by July 3rd.
- Multiple planners from NWZ assisting other zones with their workload.
- Local Fund pools all tentatively approved for Franklin, Grand Isle, and Lamoille, more follow up to be provided to districts by State Office.
- We've been working to update contractors lists, fencing contractors are sparse and difficult to get booked, if you know of or have any leads to fencing contractors, let us know!
- Construction season underway, multiple projects should be starting within the next few weeks.
- NRCS is looking for fencing contractors in the area.

5:50: Next FCNRCD Board Meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 30, from 1:30pm-3:30pm at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans, VT.

- Lauren Weston to confirm this timing with Molly Magnan and Lynda Ulrich.
- Agenda items to include: update regarding outreach related to building and land, locally led planning, county ongoings, FY26 Board Retreat scheduling and content, financial review of Tree Sale

5:54: Meeting adjourns.