

Northwest NRCC Supervisory Union Meeting Minutes
Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

June 10, 2026
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In Attendance: Lauren Weston (FCNRCD District Manager), Orenna Brand (FCNRCD Community Engagement Specialist), Vicky Drew (FCNRCD Treasurer), Dan Pipes (FCNRCD Supervisor), Molly Magnan (FCNRCD Supervisor), Lynda Ulrich (FCNRCD Supervisor – on Zoom) Karyn Rocheleau (FCNRCD Associate Supervisor), Julie Wright (FCNRCD Associate Supervisor – on Zoom), Molly Varner (GICNRCD District Manager – on Zoom), Kathleen Swanson (GICNRDC Supervisor – on Zoom), Emily Porter-Goff (LCNRCD District Manager – on Zoom), Sarah Ford (LCNRCD Supervisor – on Zoom), Martha Battle (LCNRCD Supervisor – on Zoom), Clare Ireland (NRCC Administrator – on Zoom)

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:

Part 1:

3:04: Round of introductions.

3:06: Clare Ireland gives overview of NRCC Supervisory Unions and how they interact with the State Natural Resources Conservation Council (NRCC). Supervisors temporarily appoint Kathleen Swanson as the NW Supervisory Union Representative to the NRCC by consensus vote.

- Supervisory Union Background
 - Supervisory Unions were established by statute in 1939 under Title 10, Chapter 33.
 - They serve as intermediary governmental structures between local NRCDs and NRCC at the state level.
 - Their purpose is to support regional conservation programming, administrative coordination, and communication among local, state, and federal entities.
 - Supervisory Unions elect representatives to the NRCC.
 - Supervisory Unions are required to meet at least once annually.
- Supervisory Union Elections
 - Supervisory Unions are boards comprised of members elected from District boards.
 - The Supervisory Union board elects a representative and alternate to the NRCC.
 - Elections should occur during a meeting, with the vote should be recorded in the minutes and provided to Clare Ireland.
 - Clare Ireland noted that a consensus vote could be accepted temporarily, with a formal vote occurring later if needed.
- Overview of the NRCC
 - Established by statute in 1939 under Title 10, Chapter 31.
 - Technically a state agency but functions as an independent board.
 - Operates entirely through grant funding.
 - Provides Core Services funding and guidance to Districts.

- Maintains a primarily supportive rather than an oversight-focused role.
 - Is currently staffed through a contract with VACD.
- Responsibilities of Council Representatives
 - Council representatives would:
 - Attend quarterly NRCC meetings (approximately 3 hours each).
 - Council and committee members are eligible for per diem compensation (\$50/day) and mileage reimbursement.
 - Meetings are hybrid.
 - Participate in occasional special meetings, estimated at 2-3 additional 1.5-hour meetings annually.
 - Vote on budgets, District guidance, and planning matters.
 - Voting members of the Council include: ANR representatives, Supervisory Union representatives, UVM Extension, VAAFM
 - Non-voting members include: VACD Executive Director, USDA-NRCS State Conservationist
 - Clare Ireland noted there has recently been increased interest in the Council due to statewide discussions including county and regional governance initiatives.
- Council Committees
 - Finance Committee: active, meets monthly, reviews agreements with Districts and funders, and often functions similarly to an executive committee.
 - Statute Working Group: currently inactive, reviews enabling statute and recommends revisions to the Council.
- Supervisory Union Meetings
 - Only one Supervisory Union meeting per year is required.
 - Meeting length is flexible.
 - Meetings can be used for trainings, team building, supervisor support, or regional collaboration.
 - Clare Ireland could provide trainings during these meetings.
 - The Northeast Kingdom currently has the most active Supervisory Union structure, meeting once a year for an all-day retreat.
 - Terms for Council representatives are two years, requiring elections every other year.
- General Discussion
 - Supervisors discussed whether the Council structure is necessary in a small state like Vermont.
 - There is a need for communication systems for Council representatives to report back to District boards.
 - The distinction between NRCC and VACD:
 - NRCC serves primarily in a support and compliance role and connects Districts with state resources.
 - VACD handles advocacy and legislative work.
 - A question was raised regarding whether Council representatives must be voting board members. Clare Ireland clarified that representatives must be elected officials – therefore alternates are not eligible.
- Appointment Discussion
 - Sarah Ford stated she believed Lamoille could identify a representative to the Supervisory Union and planned to bring the discussion to their board the following week.

- Franklin County board members expressed consensus support for Kathleen Swanson serving as representative to NRCC.
- Clare Ireland stated she could list Kathleen Swanson as the NRCC representative for the Northwest Supervisory Union for the upcoming June meeting, with the understanding that a formal vote could occur later if needed.

In documents following the meeting, Clare Ireland clarified that this election actually did qualify as “official” since: Grand Isle had a designated representative, and all of Franklin voted, meaning that anyone eligible to be an SU board member from that district voted to elect Kathleen. In a three-person SU, majority carries, so the vote from Lamoille becomes moot. It would still be helpful to have someone from both Franklin and Lamoille officially designated to the Supervisory Union going forward. Designation of an alternate would also be useful.

3:42: Vicky Drew inquires about status of Core Services agreements.

- Clare Ireland shares that agreements will be out the door on July 1.
- Mortgage language in Statute has also changed as of July 1 – Districts are no longer restricted from holding mortgages.

3:44: Clare Ireland and LCNRCD and GICNRCD District Managers and Supervisors exit. NW NRCC Supervisory Union meeting adjourns.

Part 2:

3:45: Franklin County NRCD Board Meeting is called to order.

3:45: Lauren Weston reiterates that mortgage language in Statute has changed. People’s Trust municipal interest rate is still lower than typical mortgage.

3:46: Vicky Drew has no VACD updates. Next meeting is in August.

3:46: Lauren Weston shares board member update. The Board fills a vacant seat and elects new officers.

- Richard Noel has stepped down as chair and as a Supervisor.
 - Richard Noel began serving on the Board in approximately 1980, with the exception of a 5-6 year period when he worked at the Farm Service Agency (FSA).
 - His current term is scheduled to expire this fall (2026).
 - Because the seat is vacant, the Board may appoint someone to fill the position until the term expires. The appointed individual would then need to run for election in the fall if they wished to continue serving.
 - The election process includes posting public notice and obtaining 25 landowner signatures to appear on the ballot. If multiple candidates qualify, a formal election would be held. Competitive elections are uncommon in Vermont NRCDs.
- Appointment to Vacant Board Seat
 - Board members discuss appointing Associate Supervisor Karyn Rocheleau to fill the vacant Board position.
 - Vicky Drew motions to appoint Karyn Rocheleau to the vacant Board seat; Dan Pipes seconds. All in favor; motion carries.
- Officer Elections
 - The Board discusses filling officer positions and reviews the responsibilities associated with each role.

- Lauren Weston notes that FCNRCD recently signed a contract with Structural Integrity to provide additional administrative and financial support, including full Board training to be scheduled in September.
- Treasurer role primarily involves financial oversight, reviewing major contracts in accordance with the new procurement policy, and serving as a secondary reviewer for financial matters.
- Chair role includes reviewing meeting agendas and facilitating Board meetings. Vice Chair can support.
- Elections:
 - Chair election: Karyn Rocheleau motions to appoint Vicky Drew as Chair; Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor, with Vicky Drew abstaining; motion carries.
 - Vice Chair election: Vicky Drew motions to appoint Dan Pipes as Vice Chair; Karyn Rocheleau seconds. All in favor, with Dan Pipes abstaining; motion carries.
 - Treasurer election: Dan Pipes motions to appoint Molly Magnan as Treasurer. Vicky Drew seconds. All in favor, with Molly Magnan abstaining; motion carries.

4:04: Supervisors review May 11, 2026, meeting minutes. Molly Magnan motions to approve May 11, 2026, meeting minutes; Karyn Rocheleau seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

- Lauren Weston to get photos and bios from Julie Wright and Karyn Rocheleau, and W9s from all newer Supervisors seeking per diems.

4:09: Lauren Weston presents FY26 Financials to Date. Karyn Rocheleau moves to accept FY26 Financials to Date as written; Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

- District is currently operating at a negative cash flow due to the timing of incoming reimbursements and invoicing.
 - Once invoices are submitted and accrued revenue is recognized, the organization is projected to end the fiscal year with ~\$51k in net income.
 - Approximately \$389k in invoices are expected to be submitted before July 1, 2026, and payments are expected to arrive between July and September.
 - While the bank balance may not immediately reflect these revenues, QBO will show them on the accounts receivable/payable side once invoiced due to accrual method accounting.
 - Payroll for the next two pay periods has also been factored into projection.
- In years without such high healthcare-related expenses, the District would typically expect closer to \$100k in net income.
- Board members discuss the role of net income within a municipality and whether maintaining large surpluses is necessary or appropriate.
- Current cash balance is approximately \$171k.
 - FCNRCD currently has no funds invested in CDs, since the District was considering purchasing a building.
 - Board may want to consider alternative strategies for managing reserve funds, including short-term Treasury investments (while maintaining two months of operating expenses per Operating Reserve Policy).
- Karyn Rocheleau and Molly Magnan agree to think about investment strategies before the next meeting. Karyn Rocheleau will also consult People's Trust regarding available options.
 - Lauren Weston will accompany Karyn Rocheleau to the bank to update financial statements to update slate of Board Members on listers card.

- The Chase credit card account has not yet been officially closed.
- Vicky Drew requests that the Treasurer have access to review Ramp credit card expenses in detail rather than only seeing lump-sum totals. Lauren Weston clarifies that all Ramp expenses are recorded individually within QBO.

4:21: Supervisors discuss updates to financial policies.

- Financial Policy and Procedures
 - Vicky Drew recommends incorporating the Operating Reserve Policy directly into the document or attaching it as an appendix alongside the Procurement Policy.
 - Board recommendation is that, eventually, all financial documents should be consolidated into one cohesive policy document.
 - Language added that clarifies that the Board Chair and Treasurer will have access to bank accounts, QuickBooks Online (read-only access), and Ramp.
 - Lauren Weston notes that the draft procedures were originally adapted from an NRCC template.
- Procurement Policy
 - Adapted from a VLCT template.
 - Agreed-upon threshold for Board approval is \$50k for procurement expenses related to contracts, grant agreements, amendments, and other purchases.
 - Board discusses additional safeguards for periods of leadership transition.
 - Lynda Ulrich expresses concern about allowing purchasing authority up to \$50k under a newly hired District Manager.
 - There is already language included in the policy that reduces approval thresholds during leadership transitions.
 - Lauren Weston moves that language to a more prominent location within the document and revises the timeline language from three months to a prior/immediate implementation period.
 - Under the transition provisions: Purchasing authority would automatically be reduced to \$2,000. A second signature requirement would be implemented.
 - Board members also discuss maintaining a list of policies to revisit upon future District Manager transitions.
 - Dan Pipes motions to adopt the Financial Policy and Procurement Policy as written, including (a) making the Financial Policy the overarching governing document and (b) incorporating the Operating Reserve Policy and Procurement Policy into the Financial Policy materials; Karyn Rocheleau seconds. All in favor; motion carries.
- Compensation Philosophy
 - District Manager will retain authority over personnel decisions within the approved budget; Board will still approve total personnel budget.
 - Supervisors discuss whether the District Manager should retain flexibility to provide salary increases associated with increased responsibilities and/or “spot awards” for excellent work. District Manager is open to retaining that authority but will likely not exercise it; decision made to leave specific language out of the philosophy document.
 - District Manager repeats concerns about maintaining a positive workplace culture.
 - The FY27 annual budget will be presented at the July 13 Board Retreat.
 - Karyn Rocheleau motions to adopt the Compensation Philosophy as written; Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

- Board of Supervisors Policy Handbook
 - Board will sign at July 13 Board Retreat.
 - Molly Magnan motions to approve the Board of Supervisors Policy Handbook; Karyn Rocheleau seconds. All in favor; motion carries.
- District Manager will meet with a lawyer to review all policies.

4:28: Lynda Ulrich joins.

5:03: Lauren Weston provides PTO update.

- Will likely come out slightly above 200 hours by the end of the fiscal year.

5:04: Lauren Weston shares upcoming events and meetings.

- July 13 - Board Retreat & FCNRCD's 80th Birthday Party
 - Lauren Weston to meet with Dan Pipes about strategic planning ahead of Board Retreat.
 - Lynda Ulrich will lead/plan team building activities for Board Retreat.
- July 23 – Fishing Festival
- June 30 – Aug 1 - Franklin County Field Days Tabling has been cancelled because Field Days has been cancelled.
- Aug 8 – Hike the watershed

5:09: FCNRCD Board Retreat is scheduled for Monday, July 13, 2026, from 8am-4pm at the Fairfield Community Center in East Fairfield, VT.

- August FCNRCD Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 12, 2026, from 10am-12pm at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans, VT.
- September FCNRCD Board Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 10, 2026, from 3pm-5pm at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans, VT.

5:13: Karyn Rocheleau motions to adjourn; Lynda Ulrich seconds. All in favor; motion carries.