Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes **October 21, 2026**

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Orenna Brand (Community Engagement Specialist), Viva Goetze (Agricultural Programs Specialist), Vicky Drew (Chair), Molly Magnan (Treasurer), Karyn Rocheleau (Supervisor), Julie Wright (Associate Supervisor), Walter Hutcheson (Associate Supervisor), Sarah Larose (NRCS District Conservationist)

Conducted at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans
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.

3:01: Vicky Drew calls meeting to order.

3:02: Vicky Drew shares VACD updates.

- Executive Committee meeting occurred this morning; committee is preparing for annual meeting.
- VACD Annual Meeting:
    - Starts at 9 am.
    - Karyn Rocheleau and Vicky Drew will carpool and have room for others in their car.
    - Lauren Weston would like Karyn Rocheleau to attend VACD Board Meeting.
- Lauren Weston recaps recent Advocacy Meeting: discussion was about how to divide a potential increased legislative appropriation fairly among the 14 Districts; potential revenue streams (e.g., taxation, permit fees); and streamlining Clean Water Funding. Kerry Brosnan attended follow-up meeting today.

3:08: Lauren Weston provides update on supervisor election process.

- Petitions are available as of October 19. If multiple petitions are submitted, a competitive election will take place. Election deadline is November 3.
- Karyn Rocheleau's petition has 25 signatures.

3:08: Supervisors discuss board trainings.

- Vicky Drew will complete Chair-specific trainings soon.
- Open Meeting Law discussion:
    - There is concern about discussion related to building purchase taking place; should have been a called meeting in executive session.
    - Question of how to comply with Open Meeting during emergency meeting situations may be incorporated into annual meeting training.
- Municipal Ethics discussion:
    - 45 minutes long; supervisors may want to do in-person as a group.

3:11: Molly Magnan enters.

3:13: Supervisors review meeting minutes from June 10, July 13, September 16, September 23 (strategic planning), September 30 (special meeting), and October 2 (special meeting), 2026.

- Karyn Rocheleau motions to approve the June 10, July 13, September 16, September 23, September 30, and October 2, 2026, meeting minutes; Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

3:14: Walter Hutcheson enters.

3:15: Lauren Weston provides financial updates.

- As of October 8, District has billed for large CWSP and NRCC contracts and is in a better cash-flow position than at previous meetings.
- Chase credit card has been closed but needs to stay on financial statements through end of fiscal year.
- FY27 Forecast:
    - Pursuing lots of grant opportunities and projecting a small but net income for FY27.
    - Currently unsure of about $30k-$70k in budget.
- Molly Magnan motions to accept FY27 Financials to Date as presented; Karyn Rocheleau seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

3:27: Lauren Weston discusses future banking.

- Currently, District maintains a checking and shadow account with 1.85% APY at People's Trust.
- Ramp offers checking account with 2% APY and free ACH or checks. However, terms are subject to change without notice.
    - Ramp also offers an investment account with up to 4.6% APY. Not FDIC-insured and may lose value. Board agrees not to pursue.
- District Manager would prefer not to deal with CDARS due to frequent paperwork.
- Discussion: is it worth saving money on checks and ACH for the staff time required to manage a new account?
- District has at least $125k that could stand to grow in a secure/insured account. Cash balance should never go below $150k.
- Molly Magnan knows of VT Federal Credit Union (VTFCU) savings account with 4% APY. Lauren Weston and Molly Magnan will look into terms and whether District can enroll.
    - Also of concern: keeping good relationship with People's Trust.
- Karyn Rocheleau will speak to her contacts about investment ideas.
- Karyn Rocheleau motions to explore VTCFU account in lieu of CDARS for the time being; Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries.
    - No new accounts will be opened for the time being.

3:42: Viva Goetze shares staff presentation.

4:02: Sarah Larose enters.

4:02: Sarah Larose shares NRCS/FSA updates.

- FY27 sign-up deadline has passed. Have not gotten finalized program funding amounts for the year.
- There is a new statewide workload prioritization tool.
- Things are very difficult right now, having lost a third of staff, with the same workload, if not more. On top of that systems are not functioning well and it is backing things up, such as payments and modifications.

- Updates to the Entities section of the Farm Bill has created new pass-thru entity layer, causing all entities to update their 902 Members information form with FSA. This update has resulted in system glitches on the NRCS side, resulting in difficulty making payments to customers.
- Difficult layers to work through with state to get wetland permits, causing delays on NRCS projects.
- FY26 Local Fund Pool was very successful; working with national to figure out what information can be shared. Lots of unknowns about FY27 Local Fund Pool.
- CEMA 216 training occurred; FCNRCD is qualified to perform soil sampling.

4:24: Supervisors discuss strategic planning.

- Discussion of what to do at next strategic planning meeting:
    - Desire to do more groundwork to fill supervisors in on exactly what the District does.
    - Staff made an internal Scope of Work + SWOT document; Lauren Weston will turn it into a picture-heavy presentation with enough information for board to get an overview of the work and come up with questions to direct the strategic planning process from there.
        - Will record for absent supervisors.
    - Vicky Drew would like to get out into the field.
    - Difficult to come up with strategy without having the full picture.
- Lauren Weston reminds supervisors to do the "homework" previously sent. Vicky Drew will send reminder over text or email.

4:38: Supervisors discuss building purchase process.

- Board made an offer on a property in Fairfax which was not accepted. Building is under contract but District Manager will keep an eye out in case things fall through.
- Supervisors discuss building in Highgate Center and agree not to pursue.
- Kent Henderson is looking to sell St. Albans office building; some tenants are beginning to move out.
- Regarding current lease agreement, Lauren Weston has had verbal conversation with landlord about renewing annually, but hasn't officially signed on for another year yet.
- Vicky Drew's house cannot be rented.
- Discussion about lessons learned from experience of making an offer:
    - Inspection needed.
    - Potentially comfortable going over asking (site-specific)
    - Heating costs should be considered.
    - Supervisors agree it is best not to make hard rules moving forward.
    - Focus on compliance with Open Meeting Law going forward.

4:56: Lauren Weston shares ways to stay up to date.

- District has Instagram and Facebook accounts, a blog, and a YouTube account.

4:58: Lauren Weston shares upcoming events.

- Permitting for Clean Water Projects Series (5 webinars) - (Oct 27, Nov 10)

4:58: Next FCNRCD Board Meeting is scheduled for Friday, November 20, 3pm-5pm at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans, VT.

4:59: Lauren Weston shares resource about VACD Resolution Process.

5:01: Lauren Weston shares that she has been named to the CAFO Working Group as Michelle Monroe's representative and is joining the Rural VT board. Will represent her own opinions (not FCNRCD's) on policy issues in these settings.

5:03: Sarah Larose shares updates on Franklin County Field Days.

- Board is working to plan a fair in 2027, with focus on agricultural conservation. Potential for collaboration with Dairy Days.
- Would like the District to be involved.

5:07: Karyn Rocheleau thanks Lauren Weston for speaking to students at BFA.

5:08: Karyn Rocheleau motions to adjourn; Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries.