

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

September 16, 2026

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Orenna Brand (Community Engagement Specialist), Vicky Drew (Chair), Dan Pipes (Vice Chair), Molly Magnan (Treasurer), Karyn Rocheleau (Supervisor), Dave Dore (Structural Integrity Consultant)

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.

Minutes:

3:03: Vicky Drew calls meeting to order.

3:04: Supervisors review August 12, 2026, and August 20, 2026 meeting minutes.

- Dan Pipes motions to approve the August 12, 2026 board meeting minutes; Karyn Rocheleau seconds. All in favor; motion carries.
- August 12, 2026, minutes corrections:
 - Vicky Drew notes that, regarding the NRCS reorganization, it is not correct that the entire national office is moving to Fort Collins, CO; rather, some departments are relocating.
 - Regarding the discussion of the FY27 Financials to Date, Vicky Drew recommended asking Michelle Monroe to help with issue of transactions showing up twice in QuickBooks Online (QBO), not Karyn Rocheleau.
 - Regarding the vote to accept the FY27 Financials to Date, the Board wishes to clarify that Molly Magnan entered before the vote took place, despite her entry being remarked upon in the notes after the vote.
- Dan Pipes motions to re-approve the August 12, 2026, board meeting minutes with the above corrections; Karyn Rocheleau seconds. All in favor; motion carries.
- Karyn Rocheleau motions to approve the August 20, 2026, board meeting minutes; Dan Pipes seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

3:07: Vicky Drew shares VACD updates.

- Vicky Drew has no updates; there have been no VACD meetings since the last FCNRCD Board Meeting.
- Lauren Weston shares that Sarah Damsell, Orleans County NRCD District Manager, is leaving after many years with VACD/OCNRCD.
- Lauren Weston shares that FCNRCD is still awaiting a month-overdue \$112k Agricultural Clean Water Initiative Program (AgCWIP) payment from NRCC. Also awaiting a more recent payment for \$115k, but it is not yet late. Not sure why the most recent AgCWIP agreement was delayed for two months.
- There is an advocacy meeting on September 23, 2026, from 9am-12pm in Berlin. Attendees will strategize approaches for suggesting to legislators how they fund Districts moving forward (e.g., with a tax).

- Current appropriation is \$57k and is for Core Services, covering requirements from NRCC to ensure that Districts meet statutory requirements (e.g., holding a Local Working Group meeting, maintaining a Natural Resources Assessment, holding the supervisor election process, etc.). Generally allows for some flexibility in doing work that isn't otherwise grant-funded.

3:15: Molly Magnan enters.

3:16: Dave Dore provides financial training.

- Introduction to Structural Integrity: focus is to help mission-driven organizations build operating infrastructure via improved financial and grant management, data management, staff engagement, etc.
 - Structural Integrity is a non-profit.
- Connected with Lauren Weston through financial training series facilitated by Watersheds United Vermont (WUV).
- Notes on discussion during training:
 - Terminology:
 - Operating Reserves: FCNRCD's policy is for two months; most organizations aim for three to six. Difficult to accumulate cash when doing grant-funded work.
 - Internal Controls: No need to be rigid and create unnecessary administrative challenges, but Treasurer should review bank statements monthly.
 - Board/Staff Roles:
 - Ensure (Up to Date) Written Finance & Accounting Policies & Procedures:
 - FCNRCD has worked with Dave Dore on reviewing QBO procedures, but not on reviewing full financial policies.
 - Financial policies may be out of date since switching to Ramp.
 - Vicky Drew expresses concern that there are areas of risk that the Board hasn't identified in our policies. Dave Dore can help to review and identify.
 - How to Read Financial Statements:
 - Profit & Loss:
 - Why is "Other" bigger than Net Operating Income?
 - Difficult to design accurate billable rate.
 - Financial Management Practices:
 - Budgeting:
 - Helps to understand whether District has enough projects to cover staff expenses or needs more.
 - Budgets can be built in QBO, but it is nice to have separate spreadsheets outside of QBO.
 - Important for consistency's sake to anchor the Board back to the original budget plan even as the cash flow changes.
 - When taking on new projects, can be helpful to understand whether they have a positive or negative impact on net income.
 - Cash Flow Management:
 - Budget should be approved based on Profit & Loss and on Cash Flow forecast.
 - Positive net income isn't a sufficient indicator of budget health.

- District sometimes pays contractors before we have the money on hand, as is common practice among Districts. Won't do that above a certain amount (~\$50k).
 - Need to find ways to earn interest on cash.
- Board Reporting & Oversight:
 - District relies on District Manager to provide routine updates and to monitor cash health.
- Financial Policies:
 - Full-Cost Accounting example: project work (60%), payroll taxes & fringe (10%), occupancy & technology (10%), grant writing & tree sale (5%), administration (15%)
 - Recommended level of funding to hire devoted financial or HR staff depends on complexity of funding streams.
 - For FCNRCD, full cost should be built into hourly rate charged to funders.
 - Easy to under-ask for what is needed to fundamentally complete the work.
 - Challenge: can't charge some grants for paid time off.
 - No IRS guidelines on what portion of overhead costs can be used to determine indirect allocation rates. 15% is now common de minimis rate, and it is an arduous process to get approved for a higher rate.

4:37: Lauren Weston shares financial updates.

- Chase credit account is closed.
- CDARS hasn't been set up yet.
- FY27 Financials to Date:
 - Balance sheet:
 - All money lives in shadow account.
 - Net income appears low due to end of quarter billing cycle – staff have been paid but District hasn't gotten reimbursed for project work yet.
 - Consider amending Operating Reserve Policy to be three months due to quarterly cycle.
 - Bank statements:
 - Lauren Weston points out Morgan Pratt paid time off pay-out.
 - Forecast:
 - Forecasting error:
 - \$100k of staff time on US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Strategic Woody Addition (SWA) grant was budgeted that can't be spent this Fiscal Year (FY) due to previously unknown permitting constraints.
 - Staff have been made aware and are chasing projects that can be funded this FY.
 - How do we make sure procedurally that this doesn't happen again? (e.g., if staff time is above a certain amount, we investigate to make sure allocation is correct)
 - FY28 budget is looking very solid as a result.

- District might be at a net negative at the end of the year (~\$20k) but has cash on hand to continue paying expenses. Ideally, this error shouldn't cost us a position.
 - Common for other Districts to have negative years.
 - District Manager should continue to monitor cash closely.
 - Might not be the year to increase the Operating Reserve Policy to three months.
 - Current budget assumes COLA of 4% and that staff take their tuition reimbursement; doesn't include increase in health insurance premiums or raise for District Manager.
 - Cash flow still looks good.
- Karyn Rocheleau motions to accept FY27 Financials to Date; Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

4:58: Dave Dore exits.

4:58: Supervisors discuss proposed agenda for strategic planning meetings.

- First strategic planning meeting is on Wednesday, September 23, from 3pm-5pm.
- Discussion of proposed agenda:
 - Too much content for two-hour meeting.
 - Would like to do SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, but timing is too short – Board should just use and reflect on previous SWOT.
 - Lauren Weston to send notes on strategic planning discussion during July 13 Board Retreat.
 - This is the first of five meetings and should lay the groundwork for the rest of the meetings.
 - What will be gained by discussing values? May be useful for private funders. Staff may be interested in moving away from conservation and towards regeneration.
 - Success metrics (qualitative and quantitative) are important and should be revisited in NR- and Ag-specific meetings.
 - Desire to reflect on funding and threats to reductions in funding.
 - District Manager should not lead the meeting because she is not neutral and needs mental capacity to think deeply and participate. Does not make sense to spend time bringing external consultant up to speed. Board members should all step up and facilitate one meeting each.
 - Framework: Dan Pipes
 - Internal Strategies: Lynda Ulrich
 - External Communications: Karyn Rocheleau
 - Natural Resources: Vicky Drew
 - Agriculture: Molly Magnan
- District Manager's goal is to know what the board thinks + general direction/guardrails for moving forward.

5:11: Dan Pipes exits.

5:15: Lauren Weston discusses future banking.

- Ramp used to have free checks and ACH; now \$1.99/check and \$3/ACH unless using Ramp bank account, which earns 2% interest.
 - Account is free and has no minimum.
- District Manager proposes closing shadow account, leaving some money in People's Trust regular checking account, and moving some money into Ramp. Will present proposal to Board at next meeting based on contractor expenses.
 - Look into People's Trust money market.
- District Manager to research Ramp High Yield Savings account before opening CDARS.
- Some concern with Ramp based on how quickly policies are evolving, but it is FDIC insured.
- Molly Magnan mentions that her Vermont Federal Credit Union savings account earns almost 4%.

5:22: Lauren Weston presents FY26 Financials (closed).

- Netted \$83k – better than expected.

5:23: Lauren Weston shares update on current lease at 431 Franklin Park West.

- Next extension will be a year-long extension, not month-to-month.
- Unsure of what happens if we break lease, but thinks that, if we give enough notice, owner would consider it.
- Rent increase percentage is known (Lauren Weston to find).

5:24: Lauren Weston shares upcoming events.

- Fall Harvest Celebration at Trailside Farm: Saturday, September 26, 11am-4pm:
- Permitting for Clean Water Series: Tuesdays, Sept 29, Oct 13, 27, Nov 10, 2pm-3pm

5:25: Next FCNRCD Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 21, 3pm-5pm at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans, VT.

- First strategic planning meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 23, 3pm-5pm.
- Second strategic planning meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 29, 3pm-5pm.

5:27: Karyn Rocheleau motions to adjourn; Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries.