

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2025

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Orenna Brand (Community Engagement Specialist), Morgan Pratt (Agricultural Programs Specialist), Sadie Preece (Natural Resources Technician), Richard Noel (Chair), Vicky Drew (Supervisor – on Zoom), Dan Pipes (Supervisor), Molly Magnan (Supervisor), Walter Hutcheson (Associate Supervisor), Sarah Larose (NRCS District Conservationist), Kia Olsson (NRCS Program Assistant), Karyn Rocheleau (Associate Supervisor), Julie Wright (Associate Supervisor)

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:

3:45: Richard Noel calls meeting to order. Lauren Weston begins recording meeting.

3:46: Sarah Larose shares NRCS updates.

- Critical Vacancies Round 2 to happen, likely this will be done around May.
- Local Led FY2026 underway, discussions with District Managers as to what is happening with applications in the pools and how they are ranking are happening to keep them informed.
- Local Led FY2027 proposal deadline has come and gone, all three counties in zone submitted proposals. Changes likely to come as to how Local Led is dealt with, due to administration changes and other adjustments such as ranking/categories, all practices being available, etc. more to come as we work through all the changes and the trickle effect of the changes.
- FY2026 EQIP, AMA, CSP applications being worked on, plans being finalized and ranked.
- Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP), big push for this pilot program, goal of 25% of total allocated funds to go to RPP, it is administered under EQIP, minimum of a 5-year plan, required to have soil testing done in the beginning and again at the end of the plan.

3:50: AmeriCorps Natural Resources Technician Sadie Preece introduces herself.

3:51: Richard Noel shares NRCC updates.

- Core services request for all 14 Districts and NRCC to the VT Legislature is \$948k. Does not include any one-time funding or COLA.
- State with adjustment to “no mortgage” rule is up for discussion soon. Has been added to the “miscellaneous” ag bill [H.942](#).
- Voted yes on approving purchase of American-made drone for VACD with designated grant funds.
- Discussion about [Act 181](#).

- Vetoed by Governor and overridden by legislature to pass in 2024.
- Many groups oppose to due new development regulations regarding road frontage. Town of Fairfield has submitted letter of opposition.
- District has not given feedback on legislation/policy as a District is recent history, but may be precedence previously.
- Opposition rally at the statehouse on March 24.

4:02: Vicky Drew has no VACD updates to share.

4:02: Morgan Pratt shares staff presentation.

- Biosecurity protocol will be finalized after final review from State Veterinarian Katie Levine and internal decisions about protocol. Most Districts do not have their own protocol and State protocol isn't sufficient for all District purposes.

4:09: Supervisors review January 29, 2025, meeting minutes. Molly Magnan motions to approve January 29, 2025, meeting minutes; Dan Pipes seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

4:10: Lauren Weston review FY26 Financials-to-Date. Dan Pipes motions to accept FY26 Financials-to-Date; Vicky Drew seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

- Cash flow is down; District is waiting for large payment from NRCC.
- Projections remain similar from past meetings.
 - Does not reflect upcoming changes due to NACD grant (FY27).
 - Does not include FY27 AgCWIP grant.
- Vicky Drew shares that, as treasurer, negative net income makes her nervous, but she is confident in the District Manager's expertise. District Manager confirms that projected numbers are realistic plus or minus \$10k.
- No statement to share from recently created RAMP account yet, but will be shared next month once a full month of purchases have been made. Chase account will be closed by end of fiscal year.
 - Treasurer reminds District Manager to take advantage of cash back in Chase account.

4:14: District Manager review updated draft of Procurement Policy made with VLCT template. Supervisors discuss financial checks and balances.

- Draft has been sent to VLCT lawyers but haven't heard back yet. District process is in alignment with federal law.
 - Treasurer Vicky Drew advises against generating own language.
- Discussion of financial checks and balances:
 - Supervisors consider mechanisms for second-level review of District Managers expenditure for items under \$10,000 not requiring formal procurement due to scale of purchase, such as price-limits which trigger second approval.

- Draft Procurement Policy outlines limits for Incidental Purchase Agents (\$500/month) and Minor Purchase Agents (\$2000/month).
- Proposal for District Manager's spending limits on purchases that have not gone out to bid:
 - Without approval: \$5k on credit cards
 - Approval needed for larger purchases.
 - Lauren Weston to create flow chart including how purchases should be paid for and when approvals are triggered.
- Supervisors would like to set up a Financial Committee with Vicky Drew and Karyn Rocheleau and potentially a volunteer consultant.
- District Manager shares that new Ramp software will take policies into account.

4:28: Kia Olson and Sarah Larose exit.

4:28: Supervisors enter Executive Session to discuss District Manager's annual performance review. Dan Pipes motions to enter Executive Session; Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

- Formal performance review is tabled until next month.
- Vicky Drew will meet with Lynda Ulrich to review feedback and invite other supervisors to attend if they are available.

4:53: Dan Pipes exits.

4:54: Supervisors exit Executive Session, no action taken, no votes needed.

4:55: Supervisors discuss upcoming Tree Sale.

- Orenna Brand will email supervisors to confirm who is available to help transport trees during the week of April 13.
 - Karyn Rocheleau, Richard Noel, and Dan Pipes have trucks. Vicky Drew and Richard Noel have trailers.

4:56: Lauren Weston seeks supervisor approval for contractor procurement for Archaeological Resources Assessment (ARA) for the Black Falls Brook Floodplain Restoration in Montgomery, VT. Richard Noel motions to select UVM Consulting Archaeology; Vicky Drew seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

- Lauren Weston sharing on behalf of Mel Auffredou.
- Analysis includes stratigraphic analysis, more advanced than District has previously contracted for.

- Additional context: RFP was released twice. Revised after the first round based on feedback from VDHP about scope of work and level of expertise in consulting group needed.
- District has worked with UVM Consulting Archaeology and Hartgen Archaeological Associates before.
- UVM Consulting's bid included supplying their own excavator and operator: added value and scope of work.
- District's procurement policy indicates that the District is not required to pick the lowest bid, but is required to pick the best value, which is represented by UVM Consulting Archaeology's proposal.

5:01: Supervisors enter into Executive Session to discuss sensitive natural resources and contractor project updates. Vicky Drew motions to enter Executive Session; Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

5:30: Supervisors exit Executive Session, no actions taken, no votes needed.

5:31: Lauren Weston shares PTO update; still on track to not have more than 200 hours to roll over at end of fiscal year in accordance with Employee Handbook and policy.

5:32: Lauren Weston discusses upcoming Tree Sale.

- Help packing orders is needed from April 27 through May 2.
- Lauren Weston to connect with Richard about refueling the reefer.

5:33: Lauren Weston shares upcoming events.

- Tuesday, March 17, 5-7pm: Vermont Conservation Plan (Act 59) Listening Session
- Thursday, March 19, 5:30-7pm: Act 121 Regional Webinar
- Friday, March 27, 1-3pm: Info Session: Financial and Technical Assistance for Flower Farmers
 - Vicky Drew recommends outreach to flower farm in Georgia, right by the library. Nick Martin is contact.
- Monday, July 13, all day: FCNRCD Board Retreat and 80th Birthday Party

5:34: Next FCNRCD Board Meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 13 from 3pm-5pm at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans, VT.

- Lauren Weston to check in with Lynda Ulrich and Dan Pipes.

5:36: Supervisors enter into Executive Session to discuss potential real estate purchase. Molly Magnan motions to enter Executive Session; Richard Noel seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

5:50: Supervisors exit Executive Session, no actions, no vote needed.

5:51: Meeting adjourns.