

## Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

October 17, 2024

In Attendance: Kate Wettergreen (Agricultural Programs Specialist), Orenna Brand (Community Engagement Coordinator & Field Technician), Richard Noel (Chair), Dan Pipes (Supervisor), Molly Magnan (Supervisor), Vicky Drew (Supervisor), Sarah Larose (NRCS District Conservationist), Travis Thomason (NRCS State Conservationist), Emily Boedecker (Consultant from Momentum Communications)

Conducted at St Albans City Hall, St Albans VT  
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:

3:05: Meeting called to order. Quorum present.

3:06: Richard Noel shares updates from NRCC Finance Committee meeting. They are working on speeding up reimbursements, and payments will now be due in 30 days upon receipt of deliverables. Vicky Drew shares that VACDED position will be posted early next week, three weeks behind schedule.

3:10 pm: Emily Boedecker, consultant from Momentum Communications partnering with Capacity Building Committee of VACD, introduces herself and leads discussion on the VACD/NRCC/NRCS/NRCDs relationship.

- Timeline: In early stages of “discovery” process, meeting staff and supervisors of NRCDs. Survey will be sent over email on Oct 28th. Will also gather information during November 19th VACD Annual Meeting. Will bring forward recommendations for systems changes in early 2025. Project goes through March 2025.
- Discuss vacant board seat to be filled by Linda Ulrich.
- Discuss what we are all proud of about Franklin County:
  - All: The well-paced growth of the District team. High amount of funding and grant application success. Still disciplined with our budget. Faith in District Manager Lauren Weston, including her leadership and ability to scale systems with growing team. Very competent as a team despite little support from VACD.
  - Richard Noel: Franklin County is highest maple-producing county in the state. Also high among agricultural producers. Borders major lakes, which creates many water quality issues needing solutions.
  - Molly Magnan: Lauren’s engineering background leads to data driven decisions. Easy to tell Lauren yes/no because she is very informed.
  - Vicky Drew: Proud of great work going into grant proposals and their high success rate. Likes to be able to learn about the conservation side of work. Lauren has ramped up community outreach. Challenge is to get community to attend. Also tackling big projects like Montgomery flooding. Diversity of scale. Supervisors are very connected to community.
  - Dan Pipes: Proud of tree sale, which has grown significantly and a highly visible event. Proud of Ag Guide.

- Kate Wettergreen: Proud of partnerships that reduce competition in grant applications.
- Sarah: Proud of growth, ability to support landowners, great collaboration with NRCS.
- What is working well in terms of services/support from “central entities” VACD/NRCC?
  - Vicky Drew: State-funded grants are facilitated by these “centralized entities.” This is a key function that supervisors state-wide might not realize.
- What are the challenges/opportunities for greater support?
  - Speed of reimbursement (being addressed).
  - Timeliness/accuracy of information related to ag programs in VACD: Information isn’t available at the speed we need it. For example, just got forms for PFP that are due at end of month. Things get stuck at VACD.
  - Need a central body with contracting knowledge who can be timely. Right now insurance comes through VLCT. No legal support from VACD to deal with lawsuits, negotiate contracts, advise on realistic compensation models, etc. Could develop avenues to use state attorneys since we are subdivision of state government.
  - Need for centralized accounting/bookkeeping.
  - Need for lessons learned/best practices to be shared across districts. Some DMs share when they have personal relationships.
  - Should move location of VACD Annual Meeting so more districts can attend.
- Hope consultants will come back with estimated cost along with recommendations.

4:00 pm: Travis Thomason, NRCS State Conservationist, presents on Locally Led Conservation Delivery Program.

- Vicky Drew wants supervisors to be included in Local Working Group meetings, and to hold separate board meetings devoted to LLCP. Important to have systems in place for supervisor input as process grows year to year.
- Moving forward with GIC and LC in FY26 despite zone realignment.

4:49 pm: Sarah Larose gives NRCS updates.

- Local Funding Pool October 31st sign-up deadline. So far have received about a half dozen applications after the August 23rd sign-up deadline that appear to fit in this pool. This later sign-up date is providing more potential utilization of the Local Fund pool funds.
- Working with DMs on putting together FY2026 proposal Local Funding Pool.
- Operating under a Continuing Resolution until 12/20/24.
- No Farm Bill currently.
- Staff are busy working with FY25 applicants to get conservation plans in place and ready for the FY25 ranking, currently have about 230 (combined Technical Assistance and Program Application).
- Preliminary advisory allocations, please note these are preliminary and could change:

# Preliminary Advisory Allocation

Program	Allocation
ACEP- ALE	\$2,608,858
ACEP-WRE	\$1,118,483
ACEP- IRA	\$3,044,227
AMA	\$132,000
CSP- Classic	\$1,450,000
CSP-IRA	\$1,500,000
EQIP	\$8,087,377
EQIP-IRA	\$16,538,465
EQIP- GWW	\$162,806
EQIP- NWQI	\$641,484
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$35,283,655</b>



Natural  
Resource  
Conserv  
Service

- Need to follow up with Phylaxia regarding district employee's office access, PIV card, and government vehicle usage, due to MOU/UCA being updated, have asked the question but have not had a response yet.

4:51 pm: Supervisors review minutes from September 26th, 2024, meeting. Vicky Drew makes a motion to accept minutes, Dan Pipes seconds, all approve, motion carries.

4:52 pm: Molly Magnan gives update on board elections. She hasn't gotten 25 signatures yet. Due Nov 8th, 2024.

4:53 pm: Kate Wettergreen reviews FY25 financials (Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss by Month, and Bank Statement). Board accepts.

- Supervisors would like more information on large payments to Fitzgerald Environmental and VLCT.

4:56 pm: Kate Wettergreen provides update on the new office space at 431 Franklin Park West.

- Signed lease was received this morning, and the team visited the space.
- Need approved budget for computer monitors and conference room tables and chairs.
- Lease begins November 1, 2024, and move-in will begin in coming weeks.

5:03 pm: Next meeting is scheduled for November 14th at 3:00 pm at the new office. Vicky Drew, Lauren Weston, and Kate Wettergreen are planning to attend the VACD Annual Meeting on November 19th and 20th. Dan Pipes may join.

5:06 pm: Richard Noel makes a motion to adjourn the meeting; Vicky Drew seconds, all approve, motion carried.