

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

June 21, 2022

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Richard Noel (Chair), Carissa Stein (Supervisor), Molly Magnan (Supervisor), Vicky Drew (New Supervisor), Sarah Larose (NRCS District Conservationist)

Conducted at State Police Barracks in St. Albans.

Minutes recorded by Lauren Weston

Minutes:

9:13 am: Meeting called to order with quorum – Richard Noel, Molly Magnan, Carissa Stein.

9:19 am: Discuss appointing Vicky Drew of Georgia, VT to Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors. Carissa Stein makes a motion to appoint Vicky Drew; Molly Magnan seconds. All approve, motion passes. Additional conversation about requirements of Supervisors with respect to land ownership in the county and voting procedures. Vicky is taking over Adrian Rainville's term which is set to expire in 2025.

9:20 am: NRCS update from Sarah Larose.

- Local Work Group information, local resource concerns and priority practices, submitted to State Office, Sarah attending a meeting on 6/30/2022 to finalize information for FY2023.
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), need to increase outreach, program is underutilized in VT. FY22 had to send back monies, not enough applications to use up the monies allocated to state, this affects Technical Assistance dollars as well.
- Soil Conservation Technician interviews held for St. Johnsbury and Morrisville on 6/10. 5 interviews set up, 2 no shows, 3 interviewed. Hoping to make a selection soon.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program – Conservation Innovative Contract (EQIP-CIC), not all funds allocated for this were used up, funds moved to regular EQIP to fund remaining Beginning Farmer applications.
- Round 2 pre-approvals and CSP pre-approvals are now being moved forward, wrapping up Round 1 pre-approvals that has a July 1st obligation deadline.
- working on cleaning up contracts, and planning for FY2023.
- 3 new employees started 6/6, Liza McLatchy the pathways engineer, Claire Jensen the pathways soil con, and Renee Bolduc Soil Conservationist who replaced Carissa Stein, all seem to be settling in well, working to get them all trained.
- Effort to acquire more space ended up nowhere, FSA unable to give up any of their space. A re-measuring of the space/building will be done in mid-July, not sure what this involves, will provide more information when it becomes available. Will be looking to clean up the NRCS space, i.e. get rid of unused filing cabinets and equipment.

Group discussed future possibility of getting the District their own office space in the semi-distant future as funds allow.

9:40 am: Update from Richard Noel about NRCC/VACD. Finance Committee report out is that the bank NRCC uses is undergoing a transition that is affecting clients. Lauren Weston shared the Appropriations Memo from Jill Arace regarding the funds to be distributed to NRCDs and NRCC based on the recent legislative lobbying efforts undertaken by VACD.

9:56 am: Lauren Weston updated Board that IRS has issued a mileage reimbursement update: **IRS Updates Mileage Reimbursement.** The IRS recently issued a mid-year correction to their standard mileage reimbursement rate. **The new rate will be \$0.625 per mile, an increase of \$0.04 per mile over the current rate.** This change will take effect July 1, and be in effect for the remainder of 2022. Additional discussion about the need for increased per diems at the State level for committee members. <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/32/015/01010>

10:04 am: Board reviews and votes on 2022 May 22 Board Meeting Minutes. Carissa Stein makes a motion to approve both sets of minutes; Molly Magnan seconds. Vicky Drew recuses herself because not present at that meeting. All voting Supervisors approve, motion passes.

10:07 am: Sarah Larose exits meeting

10:09 am: Lauren Weston review FY22 Finances to date through end of May. Molly Magnan makes a motion to approve Profit and Loss and Balance Sheets; Carissa Stein seconds. All approve, motion passes.

10:14 am: Board reviews and discusses Board Member position description; decide to each review before July Board meeting and sign and return descriptions to Lauren Weston. Discussion regarding requirement for Supervisors to not be employees of the Federal Government – this must stay as it's part of Vermont Statute: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/10/031/00720> . Edit to make for description is to remove the list of current supervisors from the position description.

10:36 am: Lauren Weston shares about two upcoming District hosted events – Lake Carmi Water Quality Project Kickoff Meeting on June 29 <https://www.franklincountynrcd.org/post/lake-carmi-bmp-project-kickoff-meeting> , and Harnessing the Vermont Ripsower on July 19th at Does' Leap <https://www.franklincountynrcd.org/post/july-19th-at-does-leap-harnessing-the-vermont-ripsower>

Also shares about recently released Guide to Assistance for Agricultural Producers of Vermont <https://www.franklincountynrcd.org/agproducersguide>. Discussed that it should be shared widely and previous efforts had been attempted by others.

11:31 am: Board reviews staffing for FY23. Supervisors discuss keeping Kate Wettergreen on following her AmeriCorps term end date in mid-August at a rate of \$18.64/hour and benefits to match other District staff. Vicky Drew makes a motion to approve job offer to Kate Wettergreen at this rate; Carissa Stein seconds. All approve, motion carries.

11:40 am: Board discusses potential educational stipend for District staff. Determined not to act at this time, but continue to craft a policy that is fair and equitable for all staff moving forward.

11:47 am: Board discusses existing FCNRC staff rates and wages for upcoming FY23 based on anticipated FY23 budget. Motion to increase hourly wages of Lauren Weston, Katy Dynarski, and Megan Walker each by 10%. Results in Lauren Weston's hourly rate to be: \$26.25; Katy Dynarski's to be \$21.84, and Megan Walker's to be \$20.50 starting with the pay period beginning June 26th, 2022. Carissa Stein

moves to approve this motion, Vicky Drew seconds. All approve, motion passes. Lauren Weston to notify other staff of wage increases.

11:49 am: Scheduling next District Board meeting at the St. Albans Police Barracks for July 26th from 9 am to 11 am.

11:51 am: Carissa Stein makes a motion to adjourn the meeting; Molly Magnan seconds. All approve, motion passes.