

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

May 12, 2025

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Orenna Brand (Community Engagement Coordinator & Field Technician – on Zoom), Richard Noel (Chair), Vicky Drew (Supervisor), Lynda Ulrich (Supervisor), Molly Magnan (Supervisor – on Zoom), Sarah Larose (NRCS District Conservationist)

Conducted at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans and on Zoom
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:

3:11: Meeting called to order. Quorum present.

3:14: Richard Noel gives NRCC update.

- \$24,850 request for Wescott Brook project – final design for berm removal and floodplain reconnection
 - o Finance Committee meeting on Friday – Richard will let us know how it goes
 - o \$200,000 in applications across multiple District's projects
- Sarah Larose wonders if we pay attention to Lake Carmi Facebook group, man posting about run-off on his land - Sarah will connect with Lauren in case any outreach would be beneficial
- Lauren Weston gives legislative update: update as of Friday, NRCC allocation is set currently at \$612k in core funding, same as before, and another one-time capital request of \$250k – Lauren requested truck and shed for this pool
 - o Getting harder for FCNRCD to use NRCS trucks
 - o Truck is our number one need, but Richard urges us to narrow in on size/model
- Orenna Brand will confirm if all of our State Representatives and Senators get our annual newsletter

3:24: Vicky Drew gives VACD update.

- No meeting since last District board meeting and Vicky can't go to the next meeting
- Capacity building info to be shared to board
- Next VACD board meeting meeting is Thursday May 22 at 10am – can Richard go instead of Vicky
- Jeff Farber has retired and that position is not being replaced, his role is getting split between other people

3:32: Sarah Larose gives NRCS update.

- Emily Lugthart no longer with the agency.
- Chris Evans will be doing a detail with VT NRCS M&S
- Return to office, additional folks may be occupying our space from other USDA agencies
- Local Led all three counties (Franklin, Grand Isle, and Lamoille) submitted separate proposals, waiting to hear if they were approved
- State Tech meeting May 14th, local led pool proposals to be presented

- Working through pre-approvals
- Reorganization plans on hold due to a recent court order directing agencies to pause
- IRA money still up in the air as to whether it will be reallocated back to the states
- Construction/field season, working hard to get conservation on the ground!

3:43: Supervisors review meeting minutes from 2025 March 19 Board Meeting

- Advisory committee for AgCWIP across Districts – Kate Wettergreen will likely apply
- Emily Nummer is now on maternity leave
- Motion approved: Vicky Drew, Lynda Ulrich, all in favor
- Typo edit: Change “CFO” to “LFO” in March 19 meeting minutes

3:50: Tree Sale Discussion

- Future locations: Lynda Ulrich suggests Tractor Supply parking lot
 - Reach out to Joe Flynn regarding Field Days site continued use, nothing is coming in there for another few years
- Airport Buildings may be a possibility– Lynda Ulrich has connection
- Inquire with Collins Perley, BETA
- Lauren Weston will bring tree sale finance numbers in June
 - 14,000 stems
 - 700 extra balsam firs
 - Nothing going to waste
 - Trout went well – one guy got shorted but an additional truck filled his pond
- Any farmers with big barns that they’re not using for future tree sale?
- Magnan Bros recently purchased land that came with some barns and buildings, Lauren Weston should talk to Mark and Peter Magnan. Some concern that the land is under a Vermont Land Trust easement regarding potential purchase.

Supervisors review Finances to date.

- Lauren Weston shares that right now things look good financially
- Question: do we keep looking for a building to purchase, given the uncertainty of the times
 - If we do, should we look for something big enough to rent out to someone else and make income?
 - Sarah asks: do we want to retain our space in NRCS? Lauren would like to keep one cubicle at the very least. Discussion about if MOU and UCA with NRCS was ever updated related to the FCNRCD’s move to their own building.
- Lauren Weston realizes she only sent along Profit and Loss, will follow up with additional financial reports.
- Lauren Weston will include Credit Card statements in financial reports moving forward.
- FCNRCD will be working with Structural Integrity on financial procedures, including plan for using credit cards and getting approval for purchases, as needed.

4:16: Summer intern

- CCV student Wyatt French is interning 80 hours this summer for FCNRCD – no cost to District.
- Lauren Weston requests discussion about potential to have paid full time intern June-August
- This person would assist with tree planting maintenance, events assistance, other summer field work

- Lauren feels like her staff can handle taking on more of her own workload, but the team needs help with capacity to get field work done this summer
- FCNRCD will advertise the position and have short turn-around period
- Hourly rate will be \$20 with no benefits
- Good resume-building opportunity for someone.
 - o Sarah Larose, Richard Noel, Molly Magnan will help read resumes and interview, as needed
- Lynda Ulrich makes a motion to advertise an intern position for \$20/hr for the summer with a defined start and end timeline, Richard Noel seconds, all approve, motion carries.

4:31: Black Woods Association Procurement

- Have funding for final design for shoreline improvement project in Black Woods Association on Lake Carmi, community lot for lake access --> good public visibility
- Streambank stabilization with natural materials
- Funded by the CWSP
- Three proposals: Watershed Consulting, Fitzgerald Environmental Associates, Dubois & King
- Board reviews bids – costs, expertise, familiarity with project area
- Motion: Vicky Drew makes a motion to select Fitzgerald Environmental Associates as they were the lowest bidder, FCNRCD has worked with them before, they have experience in the Lake Carmi area and with this project in particular (previously completed the 30% design for this project and have met with landowner before); Lynda Ulrich seconds, all approve, motion carries.

4:40: County Ongoings

- Lake Carmi Alum treatment public outreach meeting on Wed May 21
 - o Lauren will send around zoom link/recording
- Vicky Drew suggests that we should elevate visibility of the Hard'ack food forest once it gets going, would also like to volunteer to plant

4:43: Other Events/Meetings

- Summer events:
 - o May 27th 4:30 pm– Soil health for gardens at Hard'ack
 - o June 5th 10 am to 1 pm – Riparian Buffer Workshop in Montgomery and Berkshire
 - o June 17th 5-7pm: Morgan Hill Farm tour (Grand Isle County)
 - o July 11th 10 – 11:30 am – Loan Programs for Agricultural Producers
 - o July 17th – Composting workshop for home gardeners
 - o Friday August 8th – 10 am to 2 pm: Field Day at Does' Leap Farm
- Plus more!

4:49: Schedule June board meeting:

- Getting bids for contractors for Trout Brook Dam Removal: Public Bid opening on Tuesday
 - o Engineering firm is going to do all of the bid review, and contacting references, but will need board review over Zoom, so will schedule something
- Zoom: Monday May 19: 3:30pm
- Next full Board meeting proposed timing: Thursday, June 12 from 3-5
 - o Lauren will get in touch with Molly and Dan to see whether this time works

5:03: Molly Magnan exits.

5:09: Board Development

- Purchasing own office is priority – we should enter into an agreement with a realtor
 - o PJ Poquette for business real estate
 - o Could also put something out to whole email list to see if any of our supporters want to sell us land/buildings
 - o Lauren to draft some language and send it past Lynda Ulrich and Vicky Drew before sending out
- Lynda Ulrich would connect with FCNRCD staff for mentorship
- Staff: have them rotate through board meetings to get to know the board (2 times per year per person)
- We should revisit Strategic Plan and decide what we want to prioritize
- RCPP – Vicky Drew would help support
 - o Sarah Larose thinks things are moving in that direction for more funds to be funneled towards RCPP in the future
- We should write a letter to VACD asking them to develop a Board Orientation program
- Board Bylaws – can't find them, but they exist somewhere
 - o Ask VACD to develop SOPs for boards.
- Lauren Weston to connect with Michelle Monroe to meet with FCNRCD board about coming to speak about capacity building
- Need finance committee to come out of Structural Integrity work – meeting quarterly at least

5:31: Adjourn – Richard Noel makes a motion to adjourn, Vicky Drew seconds, all approve, motion carries