

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

May 19, 2021

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Brodie Haenke (Conservation Specialist), Katherine Helmer (ECO AmeriCorps Member), Carissa Stein (NRCS Conservation Planner) Richard Noel (Chair), Phil Parent (Vice Chair), Eileen Trudell (Secretary), Molly Magnan (Supervisor)

Conducted via Zoom online meeting platform

Minutes recorded by Brodie Haenke and Lauren Weston

Minutes:

9:35 am: Meeting called to order.

9:36 am: NRCS Update. Carissa Stein: Wynea Buford is moving to the Vermont State Office and Sarah Larose is the acting District Conservationist, but could not make this meeting. NRCS just finished their second round of ranking, the first round is still being funded. There were more high tunnel applications than they can fund (interest from homesteaders, specialty crops producers, season extension), round 1 farmstead applicants won't be informed until later in the season if additional projects are funded.

There will be a third round of EQIP; CSP applicants should have applied already; there will be one more round of AMA. Contracts for round 1 EQIP projects are being made now. Vicky Drew – State Conservationist is retiring in Jul. We do not know when the next NW Zone DC will be selected, but Sarah Larose will be acting for two months.

Richard Noel: Are high tunnels being pushed by NRCS or is there just a high demand?

Carissa Stein: Lots of folk coming in for high tunnels from word of mouth and from general interest of smaller growers. There are niche markets and gaps in our local food system that high tunnels can help fill in the gap and create a more controlled environment for crops like raspberries. There is more interest in irrigation as well for high tunnels and because of changing climate patterns and periods of 10+ days without rain.

9:44 am: Need to approve minutes.

Lauren Weston: Do we need to approve minutes if we didn't have a quorum?

Richard Noel: Not sure, but we generally still approve the minutes, but only can be approved by the members who were there.

March 10, 2021 minutes: Richard Noel moves to approves the minutes, Molly Magnan seconds, all approve, Minutes approved.

April 7, 2021 Minutes: Richard Noel moves to approve the minutes, Philip Parent seconds, all approve, Minutes approved.

9:47 am: Balance Sheet and Financial Review.

Lauren Weston: Our assets match our liabilities and equities.

Richard Noel: Looks at net income on profit and loss, and we're in the positive.

Lauren Weston: I have an idea of what financial sheets the board wants to see for end of fiscal year reporting, but if anyone has any suggestions let me know. Richard Noel makes a motion to accept the Financial Report, Molly Magnan seconds, Philip Parent seconds, all approve, Fiscal year to date financials approved.

9:52 am: Procurement Policy.

Lauren Weston: The District is required to have a procurement policy. The draft presented today was made with examples from other Districts and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. Procurement policy is divided into tiers on amounts being contracted out. VACD needs to review this as well and the Board will then move to approve. Also includes guidance on hiring small, locally owned, women owned, minority owned, and DBEs.

Financial Policies and Procedures:

Lauren Weston: Would like to increase threshold for Board of Supervisors approval for grants and expenses from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Richard Noel makes a motion to approve, Molly Magnan seconds, all approve, updated Financial Policies and Procedures approved.

10:05 am: Discussion of Dam Contract language for Jeff Corey Excavating.

Changes to be made to contract:

- Clarity on "General Conditions" terms
- Clarity on who approves Certificate of Final Completion and Acceptance of Work – FCNRCD or Engineer?
- Add in mention of Floodplain Permit (unless exempted)
- Determine what amount (1%) is appropriate for daily extension past calendar contract timeframes
- Add in language for earlier start date if weather is appropriate
- Add in language to clarify willow planting work might not be necessary
- Update Agreement Active Date to ensure it is before the grants are done

10:18 am: Richard Noel makes a motion to approve the Johnson's Mill Dam Contract for Jeff Corey Excavating, Inc. as long as it is amended as discussed, Molly Magnan seconds, Philip Parent approves, Eileen Trudell approves, all approve, motion carries.

10:20 am: ECO AmeriCorps Housing Network. ECO AmeriCorps would like to better assist new members find safe and affordable housing because their stipend. They are asking participating host sites to use their networks to help ID affordable housing sites. Request for Board members to help share this announcement with their community to recruit landowners for this network.

10:25 am: Katherine Helmer, current ECO AmeriCorps member, will be spending the winter in France teaching English and the entire District staff and Board wishes her well and is thankful for her service.

10:29 am: Tree planting review: 9000 stems, 300 customers, lots of lessons learned! Total sales: ~\$38,000 in sales, net profit expected to be around \$10,000 and \$12,000 before staff time accounted for here. Trout sale: Only had rainbow trout this year. Future lessons: want to move the tree sale order due date up to avoid coordinating too much with tree nurseries and customers when we run out of stock. More in depth financial analysis coming in June/July to be shared with Board.

10:40 am: Agricultural Water Quality Events. Lauren Weston: Does the board have any ideas for an event that might benefit farmers based on their awareness of needs in the region. Board: low or no till visits, manure injection, keyline plow, grassed ditches, two tier ditches, etc. Some discussion of Guy Choiniere's farm as a potential host site – previous host for other site visits throughout the years.

10:47 am: Payment for Phosphorus pilot program. The Magnan Farm on Maquam Shore will be part of the new program with VAAFM. They will be cover cropping, no-tilling, and manure injection on those fields as they have been all along and will be paid for those practices. Lauren Weston: The District may be assisting the Agency with assisting farmers enter their data for this program in the future once the program moves beyond the pilot phase.

10:55 am: Other upcoming projects: Brodie will be meeting with the Bakersfield Conservation Commission and the Bakersfield Town Selectboard meeting to discuss a study on the Browns Pond Dam to assist the landowner and other stakeholders with decision making.

11:01 am: Setting next Board meetings. Wednesday, June 23 @ 9:30am on Zoom and July 21st @ 9:30am on Zoom. August meeting will be in person. Eileen Trudell could host a field meeting perhaps in coordination with visit to Johnsons Mill Dam Removal project site. Starting in the fall – afternoon or evening meetings might be necessary. Perhaps have 1 in-person meeting per quarter and other monthly meetings stay on Zoom meetings for convenience.

11:05 am: Meeting adjourned.