

## Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

October 9, 2025

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Orenna Brand (Community Engagement Specialist), Richard Noel (Chair), Vicky Drew (Supervisor), Lynda Ulrich (Supervisor – on Zoom), Molly Magnan (Supervisor), Dan Pipes (Supervisor), Walter Hutcheson (prospective 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:

3:05: Meeting called to order. Quorum present. Meeting is being recorded.

3:06: Lauren Weston shares that there are no NRCS updates from Sarah Larose. The federal Government is still shutdown.

- Mike Dickhaut, VACD Conservation Planner in the NRCS St. Albans field office, has been helping the District with field work.

3:06: Richard Noel shares that there are no NRCC updates.

- Lauren Weston registered Richard Noel for the VACD Annual Meeting on November 6.

3:08: Vicky Drew shares that there are no VACD updates.

3:09: Supervisors review September 11, 2025, meeting minutes. Vicky Drew motions to approve September 11, 2025, meeting minutes with correction; Dan Pipes seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

- Vicky Drew points out typo (“suing” instead of “using”) in the following section related to: “Supervisors discuss 2026 healthcare options and budget”
- “Board discusses option C. Lauren Weston expresses concern about employee retention with losing the full amount of the stipend which many employees have been suing [using] as additional income and advises that reducing staff would not save money due to billable rate reimbursements nature of grant-funded projects.

3:09: Lauren Weston reviews FY26 Financials to Date. Dan Pipes motions to accept FY26 Financials to Date; Vicky Drew seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

- Includes updated health insurance numbers and potential COLA, which is still up for discussion.
- Vicky Drew asks about links to purchase receipts for credit and debit cards, Lauren Weston explains that this is all accessible via QuickBooks. Lauren Weston and Vicky Drew to resume financial check-in meetings before next board meeting.
- Vicky Drew, Richard Noel, and Lauren Weston have check-writing authority.

3:22: Lauren Weston reviews Closed FY25 Financials. Vicky Drew motions to accept Closed FY25 Financials; Richard Noel seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

- Closed FY25 Financials have been reported to NRCC and the State.

- Lauren Weston to update with Orenna Brand's credit card as shown in the financials.
- Supervisors discuss what funds are available for building purchase, how much to keep in the bank as cash reserve for operating expenses, and whether to move funds into a CD or other investment account. Lauren Weston to follow up with Lynda Ulrich about a Morgan Stanley account.

3:29: Supervisors discuss potential purchase of Soule House & Carriage Barn property in Fairfield.

- 5-acre property with house, carriage barn, and several outbuildings including an old barn
- Financial and legal considerations:
  - Lauren Weston has discussed financing options with People's Trust Company bank, NRCC, and VLCT.
  - District cannot hold mortgage but can pursue municipal loan.
  - Districts have statutory authority to own property and generate income, but should not directly compete with private enterprise.
  - Board agrees legal counsel should be retained to advise on risk and ownership options on a property by property basis as needed.
- Discussion:
  - Considerations of potential costs of new construction, vision for agriculture in 10-20 years, likelihood of retaining property value, community support, income viability, labor and effort that would be required to oversee a new build vs moving into an existing building.
- Next steps:
  - Lauren Weston to reconnect with the realtor to determine current status
  - Continue gathering information on costs, renovation needs, and grant opportunities.
  - Explore legal counsel options to review potential purchase or business arrangements.

4:10: Orenna Brand gives scope of work presentation.

4:22: Lauren Weston provides updates on Trout Brook Reservoir Dam removal. Sediment upstream of dam is currently too wet to remove; received a permit extension to October 24.

4:25: Supervisors discuss Lauren Weston's annual leave plan.

4:28: Lauren Weston reviews FY25 reporting.

- Vicky Drew would like to display annual report at StoryMap on District website.
- Lauren Weston encourages supervisors to watch her appearance on Northwest Access TV. Lauren to send out link. Vicky Drew suggests putting clips/highlights on the website.
- Lauren Weston to send Molly Magnan talking points for legislative briefing.
- Lauren Weston recommends supervisors read through complete list of successes shared.

4:41: Lauren Weston provides staffing update and requests that Viva Goetze's intern position be converted to Full Time (FT) effective January 1. Dan Pipes motions to approve request to extend FT position offer to Viva Goetze effective January 1, keeping her at her current rate until January 1; Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

- Supervisors review financial projections. The current budget can support this change. Lauren Weston shared analysis of staff hours by grant.

- Dan Pipes notes District's shrinking financial buffer and that impacts from shifting federal and state funding priorities may be felt in the next couple years.
- The board reiterates the importance of building equity through property ownership as an additional financial asset.

4:55: Lauren Weston shares upcoming events.

- October 14 – Farmer Thank You Dinner in Grand Isle County
- November 6 – VACD Annual Meeting
  - Vicky Drew to ask Lynda Ulrich if she can attend.
- November 18 – Legislative Briefing (on Zoom)

4:58: Next FCNRCD Board Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 20 from 3pm-5pm at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans, VT.

5:00: Dan Pipes motions to adjourn; Molly Magnan seconds. All in favor; motion carries.