

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

February 23, 2022

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Richard Noel (Chair), Phil Parent (Vice Chair), Molly Magnan (Supervisor), Carissa Stein (Supervisor).

Conducted at St. Albans State Police Barracks

Minutes recorded by Lauren Weston

Minutes:

9:13 am: Meeting is called to order.

9:14 am: NRCS update conveyed by Lauren Weston based on previously emailed update from Wynea Buford, Acting Northwest Zone District Conservationist. Travis Thomason is the new VT NRCS State Conservationist. Sarah Larose will be reporting on March 28th as the Northwest District Conservationist. There are open funding opportunities through NRCS. Choiniere Family Farm recently received the Hugh Hammond Bennet award.

9:16 am: Richard Noel provided update from Natural Resources Conservation Council Finance Committee meeting including that a lobbyist has been hired to assist with the NRCC/NRCDs appropriations request.

9:17 am: Lauren Weston provided overview of the contents and specifics of the Appropriations Request including documents shared previously by VACD Executive Director Jill Arace. Lauren Weston shared that the funding request includes: (1) Base Funding of \$1.5 million for NRCDs and NRCC to be requested annually, (2) one-time \$248,000 request for capital investments, (3) one-time \$2.1 million request to fund a three-year Agricultural Resource Specialist Training Program for District agricultural staff. Richard Noel provided an update that Franklin County has a new legislator in Montpelier with land stewardship experience and may be a good future ally and someone we should try to connect with – Wayne Laroche.

9:25 am: Richard Noel discussed that in previous decades, the Franklin County NRCD raised some of its own funds by hosting programs that were fee-based such as assisting landowners with Current Use paperwork, starting up a Nutrient Management Planning service with Paul Stanley, and hosting a more profitable annual tree sale.

9:27 am: Molly Magnan inquired about partnerships between the Franklin County NRCD and the St. Albans Watershed Association. Lauren Weston replied that the District would be very interested in developing that relationship but at this time have not been able to make a connection. Molly Magnan offered to assist with that relationship building.

9:33 am: Group discussed that former USDA Farm Service Agency leader, Paul Remillard, is now working for Friends of Northern Lake Champlain and Franklin County Economic Development Corporation.

9:36 am: Review of 2021 January 20th Board Meeting Minutes. Phil Parent makes a motion to approve; Carissa Stein seconds. All approve, motion passes.

9:45 am: Financials reviewed by Board. Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss for fiscal year 2022 through end of January 2022 are discussed. District is on a strong track financially. Discussion around bank and

check fees – Bank account at People’s Trust Company does not have any fees; District currently purchases checks from Memphremagog Press. Carissa Stein makes a motion to approve financial reports as shown; Molly Magnan seconds. All approve, motion passes.

10:08 am: Group discussed quote from Madison National Life Insurance Company for life insurance, short term disability, and long-term disability insurance plans. After Lauren Weston described the different plans being offered, Board members settled on the following plans: Life Insurance coverage at \$10,000 for \$76/year; Short Term Disability coverage at 60% of basic earnings up to \$500/week for \$494/year; and Long-Term Disability coverage at 60% of basic earnings up to \$3,000 a month for \$639/year for a total of \$1209 per year for all 3 insurance plans for all 3 full time District staff. Carissa Stein makes a motion to approve; Phil Parent seconds. All approve, motion passes. Lauren Weston will follow up with the insurance broker to implement.

10:19 am: Lauren Weston coordinated with Board members to plan for a staff training day at two dairy farms to learn more about dairy barns and farm operations in a welcoming environment.

10:23 am: Board discusses next meeting date – Tuesday March 22nd from 9 to 11 am at the St. Albans Police Barracks so that additional guests can join to discuss agricultural ditch networks.

10:34 am: Lauren Weston shared that there are two upcoming public events that may interest the Board members – Local-Led Public Meeting at Valley Dream Farm on March 22nd in collaboration with the Lamoille County NRCD and Grand Isle County NRCD. Additionally, March 23rd is the Ferment on the Farm event at the Choiniere Family Farm which is being cohosted by the District and Composting Association of Vermont.

10:57 am: Lauren Weston described all pending grant agreements and contract obligations for upcoming potential and secured grants and projects. This list includes: Marsh Brook Block Grant (\$39,650); Lake Carmi Stream Bank Stabilization Block Grant (\$6,300); Dead Creek Bridge Removal Block Grant (\$12,100); Multi-Year Habitat Monitoring at Johnsons Mill Dam Removal (\$25,000 + \$14,000); Franklin County Restoration Connections BioBlitz (\$13,612); Tree Planting Monitoring and Stewardship Training (\$4,000); Rock River Tree Planting (\$6,825); Windbreak (\$1,200); Franklin County Dam Scoping (\$3,000); Lake Carmi Best Management Practices Analysis (\$30,000). Richard Noel makes a motion to approve all grants and amounts as listed; Carissa Stein seconds. All approve, motion passes.

11:14 am: Lauren Weston described additional potential forthcoming grants and projects that the District has already applied for but will not be notified about for several months. Discussed the future funding strategy of the District as well as the skills and interests of the staff members related to the current and proposed projects on the docket.

11:24 am: Richard Noel makes a motion to adjourn the meeting; Carissa Stein seconds. All approve, motion passes, meeting is adjourned.