

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

March 27, 2024

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Richard Noel (Chair), Carissa Stein (Supervisor), Vicky Drew (Supervisor) on Zoom, Molly Magnan (Supervisor) arrived at 3:17pm, Dan Pipes (Supervisor), Sarah Larose (NRCS District Conservationist)

Conducted at Northwest Regional Planning Commission, St. Albans
Minutes recorded by Lauren Weston

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:

3:06 pm: Meeting called to order. Quorum present.

3:07 pm: Sarah Larose gives NRCS update

- Here is the NRCS update:
- Jimmy Young, Soil Conservationist in the NELDP (New England Leadership Development Program)
- working through Round 1 CSP pre-approvals, NWZ on target in meeting approval deadline of 3/29.
- EQIP ranking deadline 3/29, staff are working through applications and rankings to meet this deadline.
- RCPP 2132 ranking deadline moved to April 5th due to CD/CART system constraints when an application has multiple applications for different programs being assessed at the same time.
- Luis Aponte is the new Assistance for State Conservationist for Partnerships.
- Keith (pronounced Faith with a K, she/her pronouns) Cortes, is the Acting State Conservationist for Field Operations.
- Toby Alexander is Acting State Resource Conservationist
- Brandon Carpenter is Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Programs.
- Joe Buford is Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy.
- Tina Donovan is Acting State Programs for Quality Assurance Reviews
- Two new positions being advertised for applicants – CSP Coordinator, and RCPP Coordinator.
- Caitlin Silber officially started as the NRCS Program Assistant on 3/24.
- Lauren Gibson is giving a Pollinator Habitat training April 7th, location is in Swanton at Bee's on Broadway.

3:11 pm: Richard Noel shared about the new AgCWIP funding from the State to NRCC and the Districts - \$2.5 million. NRCC may be looking to switch the banks they are using. Richard Noel stated that it may be unclear if a District could get money from a private party to purchase real estate without a mortgage due to our statute.

Vicky Drew Shared that the VACD Governance Committee met but she was unable to attend. This group is working on a discussion around our statute.

3:17 pm: Molly Magnan joined the meeting

3:22 pm: Board members provide updates about possible office spaces. Dan Pipes shared about the St. Albans Armory and possible PCB remediation needs as well as the scale of the building. Molly Magnan shared about a possible farmhouse she is aware of that may be able to be rented. Vicky Drew shared that she has not yet connected about zoning rules in Georgia regarding her own property. Dan Pipes will reach out to the zoning administrator in Fairfield.

3:45 pm: Supervisors review minutes from February 29th, 2024 meeting. Carissa Stein makes a motion to accept minutes, Vicky Drew seconds, all approve, motion carries.

3:47 pm: Group discusses possibility of a summer meet up with the Board, staff, and NRCS staff. Lauren Weston will send Dan Pipes some possible dates.

Next Board meetings – April 30th at 3 pm at the Field Days to help with the Tree Sale. May 30th at 3 pm for a regular board meeting.

3:50 pm: Lauren Weston reviewed progress made on Strategic Plan goals so far in 2024.

Internal

- Have updated handbook, attended harassment training, working on checklists and policies and protocols
- Working on finding new office space
- Participated in various legislative appropriations efforts (breakfast, day at the State house)
- Renewed CD, will look into credit cards – Capital One
- Drafted skill matrix and job description templates
- Continuing Quarterly check ins with all staff
- Reviewed benefits
- Will need to create compensation philosophy
- Have hired additional staff to share workload (Meryl and Julietta)
- All programs have 2 staff working on them except some of the admin tasks Lauren does – will need to address that
- Will continue implementing standardized project tracking protocol
- Have transitions files to online server and Trello for task management
- Need to continue working on SOPs

External

- Continuing to learn about agriculture
- Working with Scott Magnan on data management for farmers
- Made Farmer Spreadsheet to track barriers
- Hosting LWG events
- Managing the FWA
- Need to work on Natural Resources Assessment
- Working through several watershed clean water projects
- Using staff feedback to shape future projects
- Collaborating very well with partners to ID projects
- Plans to steward past planting and project sites
- Purchased maintenance tools
- Working on continued outreach and monitoring for Dam site

- Going to training for CWSP O&M
- Assisting producers with NMPs
- Met multiple times with VHCB
- Continuing Partners Meetings
- Piloting Farm Teams with Blackmore Farm
- Working with conservation commissions in partnership
- Coordinating VAWQP regional meetings
- Enhanced social media presence – can continue to do more
- Attending more events from others

4:15 pm: Dan Pipes and Sarah Larose Left

4:30 pm: Project of the month – Tracking Field Trip with Montgomery Elementary School and various stations

4:35 pm: Lesson Learned: Soil Health planning is complicated and takes a lot of experience.

4:44 pm: Chatted about tree sale logistics.

4:48 pm: Board chatted about upcoming things going on in the County – earth day, conservation commission pollinator talk, bug club for kids in Fairfield, projects in Georgia by FNCL, grey water systems and housing in Highgate, Montgomery flood study.

5:18 pm: Carissa Stein makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, Molly Magnan seconds, all approve, motion carries.