

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

August 14, 2025

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Orenna Brand (Community Engagement Specialist), Richard Noel (Chair), Vicky Drew (Supervisor), Molly Magnan (Supervisor), Dan Pipes (Supervisor), Lynda Ulrich (Supervisor), Sarah Larose (NRCS District Conservationist), Kerry Brosnan (Natural Resources Planner), Tim Smith (Franklin County Industrial Development Corp. Executive Director)

Conducted at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans
Minutes recorded by Orenna Brand and 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:

1:30pm: Meeting called to order. Quorum present. Lauren Weston records meeting to comply with Open Meeting Law requirements.

1:32pm: Tim Smith introduces himself and provides information about Franklin County Industrial Development Corp. (FCIDC) industrial park development.

- FCIDC purchased 93 acres of land at St. Albans Town Industrial Park (near Ben & Jerry's, Purpose Energy, etc.); were planning to build 15k sq ft spec building on 2.5 acres but stopped when interest rates skyrocketed; now looking for interested parties to join; premature to come up with any numbers.
- In talks with UVM to build regional tech hub; jointly applying to Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant which would leave FCIDC with only 20% of construction costs, allowing them to keep rents low, ~\$8-10/sq ft.

1:40pm: Lynda Ulrich joins.

- Additional lots may be for sale; city water, sewer, gas, power, etc. already in place.
- Other possible opportunities:
 - o Land for sale in Georgia: \$65k/acre, no septic/perc test, all sand. Could take 2-3 years to be developable. Hasn't gone before Georgia Development Review Board yet. Potential for \$5k/acre rebate for permitting or engineering process.
 - o Messenger Building: bought by St. Albans City. Already set up as office.
 - o Lynda Ulrich: 2 unoccupied buildings on Jewett Ave or Champlain Commons near Hudak Farm? Camper World building?
 - o Beta building: office space in front of building is available for rent/lease (owned by Pat Malone); Tim Smith is happy to walk us through there anytime.
 - o Scott Magnan's Barn/land
- FCNRCD is eligible for municipal loan from People's Trust Company.
- Building/land purchase could be income generating if there is space to rent out to other businesses/organizations.
- Lynda Ulrich encourages District to keep long-term vision in mind re: staffing/square footage needs. Discuss at next strategic planning meeting.
- FCNRCD's requirements for land/building purchase:

- Event space
- Minimum 5-10 acres with existing outbuildings or space for outbuildings
- 3-4k sq ft
- Internet
- I-89 corridor (within 10 minutes of exit)
- ADA compliant
- Follow-ups:
 - Richard Noel to inquire about Camping World building.
 - Richard Noel will contact Corey Parent.
 - Vicky Drew will contact realtor.
 - Lauren Weston to forward supervisors newsletter announcing intention to buy property.

2:12pm: Vicky Drew provides VACD updates.

- Next board meeting is Thursday, August 21, 2025, from 10am-12pm. Lauren to send supervisors calendar invite.

2:14pm: Lauren Weston shares NRCC and advocacy updates.

- Richard Noel, Lauren Weston, and Kerry Brosnan attended Advocacy Training in Thetford, VT, on Monday, July 28, 2025; worked with Action Circles and board members to determine shared approach to advocacy during current/upcoming legislative session; decided to focus on educating legislators about work of Districts rather than asking for money.
 - District will co-host legislative briefing with Grand Isle County and Lamoille County NRCDs discussing Local Led Conservation Action Plan.
- Lauren Weston discusses NOFA-VT Farm Security Fund advocacy event request. Vicky Drew makes motion to proceed with support for Farm Security Fund and to participate in event with NOFA-VT; Dan Pipes seconds; all in favor. Motion carries.
- No supervisors oppose VACD signing Working Lands Enterprise Initiative letter of support.
- Lauren Weston discusses opportunity to appear on Northwest Access TV show. Supervisors are on board and encourage staff to consider what desired outcomes of TV appearance should be.
 - Sarah Larose suggests contacting [Across the Fence](#) for additional coverage. Lauren Weston or Orenna Brand to reach out.

2:21pm: Sarah Larose provides NRCS updates.

- Critical vacancies will be filled, timeline uncertain; Northwest Zone receiving a program assistant and Rutland Office receiving an engineer; agency is struggling to maintain engineers in general.
- August 22 is the fiscal year application deadline for the Local Fund Pool.
- Need to start thinking about the Local Fund Pool for FY27. Lack of engineers may make it difficult to pursue future infrastructure projects.
- FY25 contracting was completed across the state in July.
- Working on FY26 planning, renewals, field checks, etc.
- Active push to get TSPs to do CNMPs as a way to offload some work from engineers.
- Phyliscia Moore and Luis Aponte will be working to update MOU and UCA agreements with Districts.

2:33pm: Supervisors sign three CREP contracts. Lynda Ulrich makes motion to sign CREP contracts for Rico, Trombley, and Bouchard; Molly Magnan seconds; all in favor. Motion carries.

- Lauren Weston to ask Ali Malone to send maps with future CREP contracts.

2:36pm: Supervisors review June 30, 2025, meeting minutes. Vicky Drew motions to approve June 30, 2025, meeting minutes; Dan Pipes seconds. All in favor; motion carries.

- Lauren Weston reminds supervisors about board retreat scheduled for July 13, 2026. Supervisors suggest strategic planning session, ropes course, facilitator, and field site visits.

2:41pm: Lauren Weston presents two motion requests from Mel Auffredou, Senior Natural Resources Planner.

- "This is a request for the FCNRCD Board to provide Mel Auffredou, Senior Natural Resources Planner, with signatory authority under the Franklin County Natural Resources Conservation District. If this motion is supported, Mel Auffredou would gain the legal right to sign documents on behalf of the FCNRCD. Signed documents, such as federal or state permit applications, would therefore be legally binding on the organization. The board may determine the scope of Mel Auffredou's signatory authority by stating whether it applies broadly or is limited to certain transactions (e.g., permit applications, subcontracting, etc.).
 - o Dan Pipes motions to provide Mel Auffredou with signatory authority for the purpose of purchasing ethanol to preserve macroinvertebrates; Vicky Drew seconds; all in favor. Motion carries.
- Request for a letter of support to attend the Vermont Local Government Institute for 44 hours. Class is free but time will be paid for by District as professional development.
 - o Lauren Weston comments that it would serve the District as a whole to have more staff with administrative and leadership capacity.
 - o Lauren Weston to inform all staff about this opportunity and inform the board if any others are interested over email.
 - o Lynda Ulrich motions to approve Mel Auffredou's attendance at the Vermont Local Government Institute and to sign the letter of support; Molly Magnan seconds; all in favor. Motion carries.

2:50pm: Lauren Weston reviews FY25 financials and FY26 financials to date.

- Structural Integrity contract: moving forward with contract; received funding from WUV to cover majority of the work.
- Preliminary/draft FY25 close-out: ended with \$81k net in the bank.
 - o Supervisors ask for comparison to previous year; FY24 ended with 100k.
 - o Lauren Weston and Vicky Drew to determine potential funds available for building or land purchase.
- FY26 financials to date: projected \$89k net profit by the end of the year; increased health insurance premiums not yet included in projections.
 - o Starting in January 2026, employees making over \$62k/year will not be eligible for state health insurance tax subsidies. District needs to reconsider small employer plan or risks losing staff.
 - o Possible to use net profits to purchase employer plan but could impact long-term property purchase plans.
 - o Lauren Weston and Vicky Drew to form a committee to determine best course forward, and desired financial buffer (3-6 months).
- Sarah Larose, acting as Franklin County Field Days board member, mentions the potential purchase of property on Route 105; could fit into 3-5 year plan to rebuild Field Days business with potential partners including FNLC, FCNRCD, etc.
- Dan Pipes motions to accept FY25 and FY26 financials to date; Lynda Ulrich seconds; all in favor. Motion carries.

3:11pm: Lauren Weston discuss staffing levels for FY26.

- Lynda Ulrich motions to keep intern Viva Goetze on at \$20/hr until concerns about health insurance premiums are addressed; Molly Magnan seconds; all in favor. Motion carries.
- Lynda Ulrich motions to apply for VHCB AmeriCorps member; Dan Pipes seconds; all in favor. Motion carries.

3:27pm: Lauren Weston reviews her annual leave plan.

- Will still reach below 200 hours before next fiscal year.
- Needs to create formal plan for Acting District Manager coverage during time off.

3:27pm: Next FCNRCD Board Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 11 from 3pm-5pm at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans, VT.

3:32pm: Lauren Weston reviews upcoming events/meetings.

- Aug 23: 10-11:30 Marsh Brook Stream Walk
- Aug 26: 2:30 – 6 pm – IPM for gardeners
- Aug 27 – VAWQP/FWA Summer Meeting – 10:30 – 2!
- Sept 7 – 10 am to 12 pm - Compost Event

3:33pm: Dan Pipes motions to adjourn; Lynda Ulrich seconds; all in favor. Motion carries.