

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

September 23, 2026

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Vicky Drew (Chair), Dan Pipes (Vice Chair), Karyn Rocheleau (Supervisor), Lynda Ulrich (Supervisor), Walter Hutcheson (Associate Supervisor)

Conducted at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, 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:

3:11: Vicky Drew calls meeting to order. Vicky Drew, Karyn Rocheleau, Dan Pipes present towards quorum.

3:12: Dan Pipes begins presenting about how to measure success related to strategic planning: qualitative vs quantitative.

3:13: Lynda Ulrich and Walter Hutcheson join.

3:14: Board discusses where community engagement fits into the process. Question asked: Should we work through a SWOT, where does risk and threats, and opportunities come in?

- Possible Data to consider related to Quantitative success
 - NRCD Employees (time on the job? What else?)
 - Soil health, water quality – what are the outcomes that we want to achieve
 - # of projects doesn't necessarily mean anything if we're not getting outcomes done
 - Example: should we explore invasive species projects – it could take up a lot of resources, and when could it be useful
 - Example: if we solve the flooding problem in Montgomery, that would feel like an accomplishment
- Thinking about internal vs external metrics – these will likely be different
 - Could be dependent upon which pillar we are looking at
 - We need to make sure we're capturing the impact on our community
 - We need to be adding value to our community – not just sustaining our organization; people feeling the impact

Reviewed the mission statement

- Should we work in buckets from the Mission Statement:
 - Natural resources
 - Water quality
 - Soil health
 - Working landscape

- Or what we previously discussed at last meeting
 - Communications and community engagement
 - Natural resources
 - Agriculture + working lands
 - Internal organizational capacity

Back to the slide show: Quantitative Metric Considerations

- Should we compare employee output/input per project?
- If so, how do we weigh field time vs computer/formal meetings/research, etc.?
- Weighting criteria can be informed by an organizations vision and values
- Purpose behind this: we're going to say --- this was a successful project based on x, y, z metric – implied impartially

We have to evaluate each pillar quantitatively and qualitatively – it applies to every one of the categories from the mission statement

- Need to figure out: What is the priority? What are our stated priorities of work?
- Qualitative Metrics
 - Real challenge is the emotion-based metrics
 - It's hard to be dispassionate when talking about people's careers and programs and projects and "this is the way we've always done it"
 - What matters to FCNRCD could be meaningless to another
 - Things to consider: mission, values, vision, culture
- Possible discussion points for metrics
 - Is the project attainable, repeatable, sustainable?
 - Is this something we consider prior to grant applications
 - How do we determine when a project should/should not be attempted again? Who makes that decision?
 - How do we identify new projects?
 - Not sure that the board has participated in this before
 - How are we coming up with these ideas?
 - How are we getting successful grant applications

This is a space for conversation with the board being a representation of the public and the organization being staffed by "experts"

- What can the board bring to the table
- And how does the board support the staff and not slow them down
- The board is for hard decisions, things unclear on
 - Natural Resources Assessment + Locally Led/ Local Working Group process is where it might be helpful for the board to truly engage with building institutional knowledge and culture

Possible Qualitative Metrics

- Employee retention
- Community engagement
- Customer satisfaction
 - Farmers and landowners feeling supported
 - They have someone to turn to
 - They know we've got their back
 - How do we measure the general feeling
 - Maybe it's about referrals and word of mouth, recommendations?
- What else?
 - For example – the 80th birthday party – this checks all those boxes
 - What are we known for, what do we do best
 - Customer satisfaction could be a huge thing to define
- Board shouldn't be micromanaging
 - Board's job is to ask the right questions and figure out if those answers make sense
 - Review finances regularly
- What makes us successful, where should we be going?

Next Strategic Plan topics

- Two hour brainstorming sessions
- We have done well with a standalone mission statement
- Values/vision: are they necessary? What do we gain from having them?
- What is our priority for strategic planning discussions

Proposal:

- Like to come up with some very clear goals to focus on, may be an extension of what we've already done – we're in a different place than 3-4 years ago when we did the last strategic plan
- SWOT analysis – would we benefit from this? Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats.
- Lynda Ulrich shares her experience – rate the top 10 things we must put energy into, with staff.
 - Let's make an exhaustive list of all the things we need to care about
 - Revenue diversification
 - Workforce
 - Public policy
 - Etc.
 - Board then gives support to the top 10 things (tools for the toolbox)
- Board should increase involvement in Natural Resources Assessment, Local Working Group. Board members are proxies for the community.
 - Right now, it does feel like Lauren Weston as District Manager is on an island sometimes

- Could share more about projects with Board by linking to projects for the board as they go through
 - Broader sense of collective success and/or accountability
- Board members are all going to be limited in their knowledge base
 - Create language and structure around this
 - Problem solving ability
- How do we know that we've already done a good job: many employees; how many have remained with you, how many landowners, farmers contact you as a primary resource, good views on the tree sale
- Suggestion: Send links again for Conservation Action Plan, existing FCNRCD strategic plan, Natural Resources Assessment, program data, financial information, staffing, community feedback, partner feedback.
- Board – go out and talk to people/partners/etc. OR send a survey through enewsletter
 - Possible folks/groups to talk to: Paul Stanley, Jeff Sanders, Heather Darby, Greg Bouchard, VACD, NRPC
 - SWOT – we could do individually in between meetings
 - Lauren Weston could come up with initial for board to review
- The 4 pillars – those are the scope of work that the district accomplishes and we want to hone in on goals and strategic vision.
- October meeting: Natural Resources --- include Staff.
 - Make sure we understand what we're already doing
 - Are we doing what we should be
 - What is the measure of success
 - Then that can guide – what are those projects that feed in to accomplish this particular pillar?

4:40 pm- Vicky Drew left, conversation continued

- Lynda Ulrich shared their Fishbone approach from dental clinic
 - Quality of Care
 - Happiness
 - Sustainability
 - Then prioritize all of the details and what to work on
 - Then staff meeting to review it twice a month, focusing on priorities, but could also talk about anything else
 - Check in regularly
 - This is a tactical approach – this is not a strategic plan, this is the reverse approach.
 - Categories, then below
 - We need a master list of what we need to be concerned about (staff generated) – tactics

- Concerns list – kind of SWOT-ish
- For next meeting
 - o Come up with concerns list
 - o Staff – SWOT analysis
 - o Give the board something to respond to
 - o Will help the board to understand the baseline and guide the questions they can ask
- Long term goal: get an updated strategic plan document

5:10: Lynda Ulrich motioned to adjourn, Dan Pipes seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

- Suggestion: have a structured portion, then a discussion portion

Next FCNRCD Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 21, 3pm-5pm at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans, VT.

- Second strategic planning meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 29, 3pm-5pm.