

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2019

In attendance: Doug Lantagne (Supervisor), Jeannie Bartlett (Manager), Richard Noel (Treasurer), Eileen Trudell (Supervisor), Molly Magnan (Prospective Supervisor), Brodie Haenke (Conservation Specialist), Eliza Letourneau (Conservation Technician), Wynea Buford (NRCS District Conservationist)

50 S. Main St., St. Albans, VT 05478

minutes recorded by Jeannie Bartlett

Minutes:

9:48 Meeting called to order. Introductions all around. Brodie provides update on the Nutrient Management Class. Discussion of different ways of getting a Nutrient Management Plan.

9:54 Update from NRCS by Wynea. Final rule for CSP has been closed, other programs are still in rulemaking. NRCS's priority program now will be CSP (Conservation Stewardship Plan.) Applications are being taken now. NRCS is working to change culture from signing up for a program to signing up for a Conservation Plan. This will move the assessment and planning to the front-end, and the paperwork and contracting to the back-end. CSP obligation will be in June; EQIP will be more in August or September, but they don't have program rules yet. Staff are learning new "Conservation Desktop" planning and contracting tool. There are a lot of changes with the Farm Bill and with new tools, so staff and customers will have to adapt to a lot of change – but it's all to make programs more customer friendly.

9:58 NRCS will be permitting waivers for all practices. Waivers give participants permission to begin implementing a practice and might still get paid, but having the waiver does not guarantee that they have a contract.

10:00 Richard explained that on his farm, CSP paid him for conservation work he had done on his own dollar a decade ago. Those practices brought him up to a certain threshold, that he now got paid for. CSP's aim is to reward the participant for being a good steward of the land.

10:05 Jeannie gave an update on her teaching at Middlebury College

10:06 Update on Grand Isle NRCD staffing.

10:09 Discussion of consequences for violating RAPs. Richard discussed value of a grassed waterway.

10:15 Discussion of NW Winter Farmers Meeting tomorrow. It is on despite the expected snow.

10:17 Review of the minutes. Agreement that Jeannie will still reach out to the other Board prospects. Doug makes a motion to approve the minutes as printed, Richard seconds, approved. Follow-up items discussed.

10:22 Discussion of financials. Richard advises not to overextend ourselves and take on projects we can't finish. He witnessed that in Highgate. Reviewed to Board's satisfaction. Board approves balance sheet.

10:25 Molly Magnan introduced herself. She teaches Physics and Environmental Science at BFA. She met Brodie at a class through Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, and Brodie guest taught about water quality monitoring one day.

10:32 Discussion of when to schedule the Board meetings to accommodate Molly's schedule. Commented that afternoon meetings would be even harder for active farmers. For those Board members currently present, 3pm works. Next meeting scheduled for Thursday March 26, 3-5pm and again Thursday May 7th, 3-5pm.

10:42 Doug makes a motion to approve Molly Magnan as a supervisor to the Board. Eileen seconds. Motion carries.

10:47 Doug makes a motion to appoint Richard Board Chair. Eileen seconds. Motion carries.

10:48 Richard makes a motion to appoint Doug Board Treasurer. Eileen seconds. Motion carries.

10:51 Doug makes a motion to appoint Phil Parent Vice Chair. Eileen seconds. Motion carries.

10:56 Jeannie provides brief update on Act 76 and Clean Water Service Providers.

10:58 Richard brings up carbon sequestration and payment for ecosystem services. Eliza shares about the Payment for Ecosystem Services Working Group. Focused around carbon sequestration, flood mitigation, and water quality. Report submitted in January asked for more time to research both how to measure ecosystem services and how to set up a system to pay for them. Richard asks how do we measure ecosystem services? Eliza explained that that is exactly where the Working Group is at – research on existing and developing technologies for measuring ecosystem services.

11:03 Molly shared about Indigo Ag and the Terraton Challenge. Their method is looking at soil types, infrared imagery. They will pay farmers to do practices that store carbon. She's not sure they have the technology to measure whose farm is measuring or storing more carbon – it's something they're funding research in.

11:12 Discussion of carbon sequestration in forests, and logging and forestry practices.

11:16 Meeting adjourned.

Follow up: