

Franklin County NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2025

In Attendance: Lauren Weston (District Manager), Orenna Brand (Community Engagement Coordinator & Field Technician), Richard Noel (Chair), Vicky Drew (Supervisor – on Zoom), Lynda Ulrich (Supervisor), Molly Magnan (Supervisor), Walter Hutcheson (Prospective Associate Supervisor), Kent Henderson (Prospective Associate Supervisor), Sarah Larose (NRCS District Conservationist)

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

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:

3:04: Meeting called to order. Quorum present.

3:05: Richard Noel provides updates from NRCC Finance Committee meeting on March 29th, 2025.

- Potential creation of AgCWIP Advisory Team to help Emily Nummer create trainings and processes for Districts. Lauren Weston advises Richard Noel to seek clarification around who would serve on this advisory committee, NRCD staff or supervisors.

3:15: Vicky Drew provides VACD updates.

- Michelle Monroe will assume ED decision-making responsibilities soon.
- Jeff Farber's position will not be filled immediately after his departure.
- Capacity building consultants will unveil their recommendation to District staff and supervisor on April 1st, 2025, at 10:30am. Recommendations will likely include HR staff to support Districts.
- Michelle Monroe will follow up with DMs.

3:15: Molly Magnan joins.

3:21: Sarah Larose provides NRCS updates.

- FY25 approvals announced by end of day.
- Fate of IRA funds still unknown.
- All trainings are paused.
- 13 fired probationary employees are back but on administrative leave.
- St. Albans office is doing great work and filling gaps in other offices.
- Michelle Monroe will be at May NRCS staff meeting.
- St. Albans building is not slated for closure.

3:25: Supervisors review minutes from February 27th, 2025, meeting. Lynda Ulrich makes motion to accept meeting minutes. Molly Magnan seconds. All accept. Motion carries.

3:26: Lauren Weston reviews FY25 financials to date (Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss by Month, and Bank Statements, position-specific funding). Molly Magnan makes motion to approve. Lynda Ulrich seconds. All approve. Motion carries.

- District is fully staffed with return of Kerry Brosnan.
- Almost all staff are participating in the 401(k) program.
- Kent Henderson shares that LCBP/NEIWPC has been paying invoices quickly.
- July pay increases will be negotiated in June, as possible

3:48: Orenna Brand and Lauren Weston present Local Led Conservation updates.

- Local Led funding pools are restricted to five conservation practices this year, much less than in past years. In future years, RCPP may make more sense than Local Led for FCNRCD to pursue.
- Priorities identified in survey may not align with funding needs of farmers. What is the unmet need in the farming community, and how does it align with survey data?
- Molly Magnan advises prioritizing practices that make it more affordable to produce milk and help with the bottom line.
- Kent Henderson inquires whether CFOs that have reached their cap under the Farm Bill are being denied funding.
- Potential grazing-focused pool would likely fund smaller farms.
- Once we receive data from NRCS, Lauren Weston will send out Conservation Needs Assessment, Appendix D, and three options for funding pool. Supervisors will approve over email.
- Need to increase percentage of farmers participating in survey/data collection – will be performed using paper surveys during kitchen table talk meetings in the future.

4:23: Sarah Larose provides FY25 Local Led funding pool update. Pool was focused on wildlife and forestry.

- \$1.3+ million will be expended out of \$1.5 million.
- \$8.7 million worth of projects was ranked within this funding pool.
- Lauren Weston asks if it is a conflict of interest if a Board member benefits from a funding pool. It is not a concern to Sarah Larose because of the robust levels of review at various levels.
- In future years, focus may shift to farmstead projects and utilizing RCPP over Local Led funding pool.
- Kent Henderson recommends attending State Technical Committee meetings.

4:28: Vicky Drew exits.

4:31: Sarah Larose exits.

4:32: Lauren Weston provides Lake Carmi activity update. Supervisors do not recommend subcontracting with FWC for boat greeter and water quality sampling program components; would like FCNRCD to continue to work as a partner in Lake Carmi area with FWC staff and board as well as other organizations.

- District will continue to work in partnership with FWC and share feedback about water quality sampling program.

4:42: Supervisors discuss next steps for Board development.

- Lauren Weston to confirm whether associate supervisors can serve on NRCC Finance Committee.
- Current supervisors would like to see a spectrum of ages on the Board.

- Walter Hutcheson and Kent Henderson are still considering whether to commit to associate supervisor roles.
 - Walter Hutcheson is interested in public education and outreach. Lauren Weston to connect and send District publications including newsletters, Tree Sale materials, and Local Led materials.
- Supervisors recommend developing “conservation fair” to coincide with Tree Sale and finding event partners who can offer provide food and drink.

4:55: May FCNRCD Board Meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 12th, 2025, from 3-5pm at 431 Franklin Park West, Suite 100a, St. Albans, VT.

- In lieu of April meeting, Supervisors are encouraged to volunteer at Tree Sale.
 - Tagging trees in the office: April 4th – April 25th.
 - Sorting trees at Field Days: April 28th – May 3rd.
- Lauren Weston to share tree planting dates and locations with Supervisors.

5:12: Meeting adjourns.