



**Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District
Board of Supervisors Meeting
Minutes**

**Date: 18 September 2024
Time : 1 - 4 PM**

Location: Berlin Office

In Person @ WNRCD Berlin Office:
617 Comstock Rd, Suite 1, Berlin, VT 05602

[Video Conference Link](#)

Attendance

Present (In-Person): Dan Koenemann, Macie Broussard, Russ Barrett, Rich Turner, Pat Richardson, Paul Hartshorn, Nancy Everhart, Jeff Cueto (Quorum)

Absent: Rick Hopkins, Marybeth Whitten

Supervisor Sharing

There was no supervisor sharing.

Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

[Formal Minutes](#) - August 21, 2024

Nancy noted that her name was misspelled on the minutes from the August meeting. This must be corrected. A comment was also made about file access. It was requested that perhaps a folder be designated for each meeting and access be given to it.

Paul moved to accept the August minutes with corrections. Rich seconded. All in favor.

NRCS & NRCC Updates - Marybeth Whitten/Rick Hopkins

Neither were present, so no updates.

Financial Updates - Pat

We are still running with the approved budget from July. She provided a handout that included the FY2024 report for those who wanted it. She had July and August actuals available. There is a large jump in July (20K). This is related to a VACD Core Services deliverable. Looks like they paid us twice, an auto payment and then a payment as a result of an invoice. Pat is waiting to see if they reach out to us.

Another large deposit was AgCWIP. This is a result of our reporting and an advance of funds per our agreement. This is the bulk of the receipts for July.

Nothing interesting with respect to personnel. There is a bump in employer contributions. MVP was hacked and their accounts receivable was the biggest issue. Oat has had trouble getting Adelaide taken off of the account. We should get credited back for this. It has been a paperwork battle to get control over our account.

Project expenses have largely been to Stone Environmental through the Hands Mill Dam removal and the Flood Resilient Communities Fund.

Our net income for July is 100K. We are in the hole for August. But net for the quarter to date is 88K positive. We see bumps based on timing of agreements, so it's hard to do a cash flow projection.

Paul moved to accept the report. Nancy seconded. All in favor.



Project Updates

Macie: Reported on the Envirothon. Provided the annual report from 2024. Listed the team winners and results. It took place on May 14. There were 25 students and 20 volunteers. Two of the schools and three teams withdrew before the competition. Some of the issues were with the location; it was hard to get to. There was also a bad storm on training day so schools couldn't get there. This produced drop-outs. Vermont did not send a school to the national competition. Last year the Envirothon was partly funded by LCBP. They funded supplies and kits for the teams. Macie is closing out that grant this year. She needs to work with VACD to make that happen. VACD has been invoiced for about 20K to cover last year's expenses. We are waiting for the check.

For this year Macie has been working with Remy and doing outreach to schools. They are redoing the work plan because it is a pre-covid model. Envirothon has accepted a \$45 billable rate. Macie also drew up a budget using a \$60 billable rate to see what the committee will accept. Based on expenses, we would need to make up about 10-15K from other granting sources.

Nancy asked about the billable rate. The committee must accept the billable rate and they have agreed to \$45. Macie said it has been a hassle to get the billable rate changed by the committee. Macie is working on a meeting with them.

Pat asked how word gets out to apply and participate. Macie said through science teachers, word of mouth, direct emails, and front porch forum. Ten teams has been the average prior to covid. A school could have multiple teams. Homeschools are invited too. Macie is hoping to work with other districts to do some outreach. We rely on them to do some outreach even though we are the host. In the current work plan, the outreach hours are too low. So those have been proposed to increase to do more targeted in-person outreach.

Macie is open to host location ideas

Last year the location was donated (Castleton). For this year we are looking at VTC in Randolph. The location needs indoor space, electricity, bathrooms, etc. There needs to be available a site to dig a pit for soils and running water for the aquatic section. Some of the previous locations don't want to participate anymore. We need a rotation of at least 4 years so students never see the same location twice.

Last year, a UVM marketing class helped to do some of the advertising. They made social media. We have found making multiple accounts tends to just water down the reach. Buy in from the school is key. If the school has someone who promotes it we tend to get a team. We are in conversation with a teacher to draft an outline curriculum to make it a lighter lift for the teachers who do participate so they have the outline.

Dan: Reported on the Tree Sale. The tree list will be very similar to last year. It worked so we don't want to change too much. Any species that sold out, Dan increased our purchase amount by 10%. Hopefully we can sell more of these. We are doing some trial new additions. We will trial ostrich ferns (20 plants), and native wildflower mix. Dan is running the wildflower mix by the State botanist. The State botanist also told us we should not sell plum because it is a state listed species and there is concern over genetic contamination. So it was removed from the list.



One thing you will note is that the tree sizes are smaller this year. This is a supplier side issue. There is a national tree shortage. In many cases we can only purchase smaller trees for the same prices as last year. Dan has tried to keep our prices stable, especially given the size difference. In some cases prices will go up because of the huge increase in supplier prices. Nancy asked for educational materials, handouts. Macie added that this is something we will be working on this year. We received a lot of feedback about this last year. We are looking to add a how-to-plant info packet in with the bundles so people have info on how to plant. We want to give as much information as possible because people have questions. Online materials are not enough. Physical instructions are better. We also plan to do a species highlight of the week in advertising, especially to push low selling species.

Russ asked if there were statutory limitations on us selling merch? We could buy lots of shirts and hats and sell those too. Anything we don't sell we can just keep and sell later. Dan said not that he knows of. We actually propose restrictions on selling merch this year. We tend not to sell a lot and it is a hassle to keep track of sales day-of. We are proposing instead to add a free sticker and magnet for orders over a certain amount.

We are hoping to work on the following timeline. Have trees secured and ordered: September 30. Have the brochure live: early November. Go live with sales: December 1. Packing: May 5-9. Tree pick up: May 10.

There was a suggestion to maybe add red oak. It grows better in Vermont. The issue though is that it is strongly masting. So white oak is better for wildlife because it has a regular fruit set.

Updates on Agricultural Conservation Specialist Hiring

All told, we received 70 plus applicants for the position. We narrowed this first to nine candidates then to seven. We have received confirmation of six interviews. Dan, Macie, Rick, and Nancy will participate in the interviews. We hope to offer someone a job by the end of September with a start date in mid October.

Supervisory Union Shuffle

Table for next time when Rick is present.

Nominations for Supervisory Union Representative and Alternate

Table for next time when Rick is present.

Employee Handbook Revisions

[Existing Handbook](#)

[Proposed Amendment](#)

Table for next time when Rick is present.

Stipends (Supervisors) and Mileage Compensation (Board)

The basic questions we need to answer are: Are we fundamentally in favor of supervisor stipends and mileage compensation? At what rate should the compensation occur at? The State rate is set at \$50 minimum, but we could do more. White River NRCD does \$150. If we are in favor, should the payments be disbursed quarterly, semi-annually, annually?

It was noted that historically a stipend was offered, along with mileage. The amount was historically \$25. But it has been 3 or 4 years since that has happened. There was a form that used to be sent out asking for who wanted it. Basically, the district manager stopped sending this form out so the stipends stopped being disbursed.



In the past Winooski NRCD had discouraged asking for the per diem. This was to retain more money for the District operations. But maybe offering a per diem would attract other board members, people who need to take unpaid time off from work or need childcare.

Do we need to check the supervisor's handbook? Districts have the option to offer the per diem or not. Do we want to offer the option and then individual board members can decide if they want it (or not)? Nancy said \$50 per meeting seems reasonable, along with mileage.

Compensation would include participation at board meetings but also other District activities like the Tree Sale. The stipends would be paid semi-annually (two times per year). It would be up to the district manager to keep track of attendance and get mileage information. Pat noted that anyone receiving more than \$600 would require tax paperwork to be completed with her.

Paul moved to offer \$50 per meeting, plus mileage. Rich seconded. All in favor.

Nancy VACD Board Updates

Nancy is co-chair of the capacity building committee. The current goals and work are to see how VACD and the Districts can work better together. They have hired a consultant to help with this.

Jill Arace is also retiring, so it is a good time to be asking these questions. They will be reaching out to district managers and supervisors to attend meetings. November 19 and 20 will be a time for discussion of preliminary results of these meetings.

Jill is leaving at the end of 2024 or early 2025. Her position should be posted soon. She will stay around to help for another year or so.

Board Meeting Schedule

Dan asked the Board to consider changing the day or time of the board meetings. The VT Dam Task Force Meets at the current board meeting time and Dan needs to be at those meetings.

Dan proposed to shift to 10 AM meetings on the third Wednesday of the month (same day, different time).

Rich moved to make this change. Paul seconded. All in favor.

Meeting Ended