



Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District Board of Supervisors Meeting

Official Minutes

Date: 15 July 2026

Time : 10 AM - 1 PM

In Person @ WNRCD Berlin Office:

617 Comstock Rd, Suite 1, Berlin, VT 05602

[Video Conference Link](#)

Contact District Manager, Dan Koenemann (daniel@winooskinrcd.org) with Questions

Attendance and Agenda

- Guest Introductions
- Adjustments to the agenda

In-Person Attendance: Rick Hopkins (Board of Supervisors, Chair), Russ Barrett (Board of Supervisors, Vice-Chair), Nancy Everhart (Board of Supervisors), Rich Turner (Board of Supervisors), Henry Harris (Associate Supervisor), Jeff Cueto (Associate Supervisor), Dan Koenemann (District Manager), Lucas Goldfluss (Conservation Specialist), Kara Winslow (Agricultural Specialist), Heather Murphy (Agricultural Specialist), Delaney Hindel (Summer Intern, Vermont Law School).

Virtual Attendance: Marybeth Whitten (District Conservationist, USDA-NRCS), Dan Hemenway (Associate Supervisor), Ella Mighell (Guest, Proposed Supervisor), Jean Hamilton (Guest, Proposed Supervisor)

Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- Official Minutes - May 20, 2026
- **ACTION ITEM:** Approve Minutes
Jeff noted that there was a typo in the draft minutes from May. Dan Hemenway's name was misspelled. He should also be under the virtual attendance category.
Nancy moved to approve the minutes, with the corrections. Rich seconded. All in favor.

New Board Members

- Ella Mighell (Supervisor or Associate Supervisor) - Questions and Discussion
- Jean Hamilton (Supervisor or Associate Supervisor) - Questions and Discussion
- Reminder
 - **Rick Hopkins:** Chair
 - Term End: 2027
 - **Russ Barrett:** Vice Chair
 - Term End: 2026
 - **Rich Turner:** Treasurer
 - Term End: 2029
 - **Paul Hartshorn:** Secretary
 - Term End: 2028
 - **Nancy Everhart:**
 - Term End: 2030



- **ACTION ITEM:** Vote on new supervisors
 - Proposed - Ella to replace Paul
 - Proposed - Jean to replace Rich
 - Proposed - Rich to become Associate Supervisor

Dan explained the situation, which is that there are two existing supervisors, Paul and Rich, who are looking to step down. Dan noted that the different positions have different expiration dates for their terms. What had been proposed in the minutes was arbitrary. We have been looking for potential replacements, in some cases for years. Both Ella and Jean had expressed interest in becoming supervisors.

Ella said that she was interested in this position because she was excited to be able to help the community and sustainable agriculture in particular. Jean said that she is honored and happy to learn about this and wants to make a hands-on impact in the State.

Nancy moved to accept the proposal as proposed in the agenda. Russ seconded. Rick commented that he is happy both Ella and Jean are here and ready to contribute to the District. Dan will update the District information page and website after the vote. All in favor.

Having elected two new supervisors, it was suggested that we reexamine our Board meeting times. We currently meet every other month on the third Wednesday of the month at 10 AM. Henry Harris proposed that before or after working hours are best. Jean said that, if we are doing after-work meetings, that a 4 PM start time is the best. But Jean preferred working hours, and could make the morning work. Dinner is the hardest time. Ella indicated that she intends to come in-person for the September meeting, summer is just a hard time.

In the end, it was decided that we would keep the meeting time that we currently have.

Financial Updates - Pat

- **ACTION ITEM:** Approve Financials

Pat indicated that these financials were mostly in ink, but there were some close out tasks for FY26 remaining. We see income from towns and the tree sale. We also see interest income of \$1,300 which is great. This is from the CD. The skidder rental has picked up this year as well. We also have some small speaking stipends or funds associated with organizing some listening sessions. We also received a \$12 donation.

We have \$606K in receipts. We are a little over on our wage budget. And similarly, a little over on our payroll tax budget.

Employees have opted for health care stipend and this is on-budget.

The tree sale expenses, without personnel, were approximately \$12K. Staff time was about \$5K. We are under budget on insurance because of Dan reclassification.

Our total operational expenses were \$34K. We had an income of \$74K. Carry-over funds from the prior year has helped us a lot this summer.

Jean asked about the contractual expenses, and why the budget and actual expenses were so different. Dan explained that big construction projects, such as the road improvements on Enos and Partridge Hill Roads, the Woodchuck Hollow Road culvert replacement, the Rouleau Pond Dam removal, did not take place in FY26.



The CD ends next month. Pat asked if the Board wanted to roll over the CD when that happens. Rick asked about liquidity. Pat said that the CD is accessible. We can pull money any time without penalty. The CD earned 900 dollars last year. Nancy thinks this makes sense, no reason not to roll it over. The CD length is six months.

Once we get into the budget for next year, Dan and Pat need to talk about what can be carried over from existing grants into next year.

Pat gave her opinion that we are in a very good financial position, and have been for the past two years.

Nancy moved to approve the financial update and extend the CD. Russ seconded. All in favor, with Jean and Ella abstaining.

FY27 Draft Budget and Workplan Review - Dan and Pat

- FY26 Granting Review
- FY27 Draft Budget
- FY27 Draft Workplan
- Professional Development Allotment?

Dan and Pat walked through the documents. Dan explained the grants that the District applied for in 2026. The numbers seem large but we were very fortunate to be awarded about 1 million dollars in grant funds.

This, along with our active awards, were used to build our workplan for the coming year. The work plan is ambitious.

Given the workplan, and what we believe we can accomplish, Dan and Pat built the budget. Some items we had wanted to include are professional development for staff. Pat has included \$1,500 for professional development per person. This is an allowance, not a stipend. We will give it a try this year and see how it works.

Rick asked about a cushion for pay, since the scale is going up with the State. We want to make sure we can keep covering staff salaries. We are comfortable right now, but can reassess in January. Our overall budget net of \$13K doesn't provide a lot of wiggle room. So we cannot be too loose. We are running just on the edge of solvent, which is what we should be doing.

Dan and Pat will meet and revise this budget and offer a tightened up version in September.

Nancy moved to approve the draft budget and review the revised version in September. Russ seconded. All in favor.

NRCS & NRCC Updates - Marybeth Whitten/Rick Hopkins (11:15 AM)

NRCS Updates

Marybeth promised she would be brief! She did finally get all the materials for the civil rights training. That will happen in September. She will send the materials out ahead of time and Dan will circulate them.

There is a new chief of USDA-NRCS, Colton Buckley. Has a good agriculture background. He has changed up a few things. There is a new motto "Keeping working lands in working hands". There are seven priorities for the service now. They are largely the same as the current five priorities.

Central Zone has some personnel changes. Sara is moving to Williston and Johan is moving to Berlin. It is an equal swap.

This cycle, Chittenden and Washington Counties got 11 CSP contracts, 3 were in Chittenden and 8 in Washington. NRCS is actively working to obligate those funds. The deadline for these is end of month. Central Zone is backed up on EQIP and that is the priority.



Pam Stefanek from Otter Creek has retired. The Otter Creek Board has interviewed and narrowed down from 14 applicants to 2 people. The Board will meet with them to make a selection. There will be a new Otter Creek DM soon we hope.

It was just announced that Winooski NRCD has a tentative award of 800K for grazing local fund pool!

NRCC Updates

Rick is no longer the Central SU representative. He is the alternate. White River now sends the Central SU representative to council, Kate Willard. After two years it will cycle back to us if we want it. Rick was with the NRCC finance committee meeting this morning. NRCC received \$912K from the legislature. Most of this will go to the various districts for core services. The legislature also eliminated the restriction on Districts for securing mortgages. The VACD lobbyist helped with this. Michelle was also very active at Statehouse this past year.

NRCS Civil Rights Training - Marybeth Whitten

Pushed to September.

NRCS Space et alia

- Internet in Berlin office
- Laptop for Lucas
- New office space

A few updates from NRCS. The private internet that we have in the Berlin office is not permitted. We need to cancel and remove that.

Lucas had been issued a Federal computer. That computer reset around the time of the government shutdown. When Lucas transferred to the Berlin office, he used the WNRCD internet and this was not an issue. With his move back to the Williston office, he no longer has access to this internet. We requested a Federal computer for Lucas so he can access the internet and printers.

We have been told that USDA will not reissue the Federal computer. The current guidance is that they only issue USDA resources to those working directly on Farm Bill projects. What this means is that Lucas is welcome in the Williston office to work, but he cannot access the internet or printing. This is not a functional office for Lucas and we need to find him space.

Dan requests permission to reach back out to the Winooski Valley Parks District to see if they are still willing to host us.

The Board gives permission to Dan to reach out to the Parks District.

Henry noted that the new Board member, Jean, potentially has office space at the Land Access and Opportunity Board.

Dan will reach out to Jean for details.

Winooski NRCD Program Updates

- Dan - Construction projects (Enos, Woodchuck Hollow, Rouleau, Cilley Hill)
Dan said that the Enos and Partridge Hill Road work would happen later this summer. The District is in the middle of finding a contractor to do the work. Woodchuck Hollow is on the fence as to whether it will happen this summer or not. Delays in getting the culvert are the issue. Rouleau Pond Dam will not be removed this summer. The plans are not complete and we need to find more money. The Cilley Hill Dam study is moving forward.



- **Lucas - Unifying Stormwater**
This grant takes the place of our Storm Smart grant. We have budgeted for 10 Storm Smart assessments, 10 Lake Wise assessments, and 5 Stream Wise assessments. Of these we have completed 8 Storm Smart assessments, have one Lake Wise assessment on the books for Mallett's Bay and one Stream Wise assessment completed
Rick encouraged exploring money to do projects that overlap urban recreation and GSI. Lucas pointed out that VT Urban and Community Forestry might be interested in this. A Rethink Runoff project might also accomplish these goals.
- **Kara - Wrap up of AgCWIP**
We ended the previous agreement having achieved all of our deliverables (except one). Recently we used these funds to do a farm clean up in the Town of Orange. We also used these funds to do a tour on Bobolink Farm and at the Charlotte Wildlife Refuge. We have been making good partnerships. We are moving seamlessly into the new agreement doing much more of the same. In the new agreement, we will be helping NRCS with RPP soil sampling. Similarly, Kara will do a RUSSL2 workshop with UVM extension.
- **Heather - Wrap up of NRCS contracts**
The contracts were due July 15. It was a lot of work getting all that work done. Heather has been helping other NRCS planners in the Williston office. She has also been helping Marybeth with her workload. We are moving the Winooski Mainstem fund pool project forward. We are also working with various producers on getting TA funds. Many of the riparian fund pool projects are for people who already know what to do so it has taken a load off of us and also ensures they will be good projects. This is very exciting.
- **Delaney - Basin 8 Adoptions**
We have made site visits to investigate three sites, two in Northfield and one in Huntington. Some of the plantings have been successful and some need some help. In some cases, planting areas could be extended. So far, landowners have been open to us coming back.
Delaney has also helped Lucas in advertising for the Unifying Stormwater programs.

Supervisory Union Collaboration

- **Henry Harris - Updates**
Provides a brief update on attempts to restart a Vermont State Bank.
Suggests that the District should endorse a political candidate.
Winooski NRCD submitted a bare bones proposal to NRCC for a SU staffer. It would be 5 hrs per week per district from an already existing position. Clare will flesh out this proposal and submit it to the powers that be, and see where we get.

Revisiting: Cybersecurity Training

- **Norwich - Reached Out, No Response**
- **Champlain - Reached Out, No Response**

No responses from either group.

Handbook Revisions

1. Inclement Weather Policy of Franklin NRCD ([Weather Policy - FCNRCD.pdf](#))



Jeff noted that there is existing language about snow days. This section on the weather should be integrated with and referred to that.

2. Jury Duty Policy (draft language)

Jury Duty or Other Documented Civic Obligation

"The Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District will compensate staff for the working hours used to satisfy Jury Duty or other similar, documentable civic obligation. The staff member will provide a copy of the summons to the District Manager (or to the Chair of the Board in the case the District Manager has been summoned). The staff member will keep the District Manager informed of the length of service, as it becomes known. The staff member will be compensated only for the hours served. These compensated hours served in civic obligation do not contribute to the accumulation of earned paid time off (annual leave or personal leave). Compensation will be at the employee's current hourly rate."

Proposed amendment to be retroactive to June 1, 2026

The Board asks that language be added about double dipping. If the court offers a stipend, which is accepted, the staff member is not eligible for payment from the District.

3. Addition to full time staff holidays: Friday after Thanksgiving

- ACTION ITEM: Adopt policies for integration into Winooski NRCD handbook

Nancy moved to approve all three of these policy changes, as modified. Russ seconded. All in favor

Supervisor Stipends

- Check only one box
- Sign
- Thank you!

Proposed Executive Session: Personnel Matters

Dan Koenemann - Annual Performance Review (24 Months employed)

Heather Murphy - Annual Performance Review (12 Months employed)

ACTION ITEM: Evaluation Decisions

Nancy moved to go into executive session for personnel matters. Rick seconded. All in favor. At 12:37 PM.

Nancy moved to come out of executive session. Russ seconded. All in favor. At 1:04 PM

Nancy moved to approve Heather's evaluation along with a two-step pay increase. Russ seconded. It was commented that Heather has been a valuable employee and is doing great work. All in favor.

Nancy moved to approve Dan's evaluation along with a two-step pay increase. Russ seconded. Rick thanked Dan and offered congratulations. All in favor.

Russ moved to adjourn the meeting. Nancy seconded. All in favor. At 1:15 PM.