



**Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District
Board of Supervisors Meeting
Official Minutes - DRAFT**

Date: 16 September 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

Notice

- A reminder that Conservation Districts are subject to Vermont Open Meeting Law. This comes with some legal requirements, including that our meetings have a hybrid option (both in-person and online), that our meetings be recorded and posted publicly (see our YouTube page [here](#)), and that our meeting materials be available on our website (see our website [here](#)). In addition, the board and its committees are prevented from conducting business outside of open meetings, and voting by email (or by proxy) is prohibited.
- The Vermont Secretary of State's Office hosts an Open Meeting Law training video on their website, which you can find here: <https://sos.vermont.gov/municipal-division/open-meetings>. We held a viewing of this video earlier this year. I encourage all board members to watch the training video. It's only about a half hour and goes over the basics.
- In addition, you can find the full text of the law [here](#), under Subchapter 2: Public Information, 1 V.S.A. § 310 - § 314.

Attendance and Agenda

In-Person Attendance: Rick Hopkins (Supervisor), Nancy Everhart (Supervisor), Jeff Cueto (Associate Supervisor), Rich Turner (Associate Supervisor), Henry Harris (Associate Supervisor), Dan Koenemann (District Manager), Lucas Goldfluss (Conservation Specialist), Kara Winslow (Agricultural Specialist), Heather Murphy (Agricultural Specialist), Marybeth Whitten (USDA-NRCS), Pat Richardson (Winooski NRCD Accountant)

Virtual Attendance: Ella Mighell (Supervisor), Jean Hamilton (Supervisor, until 11:00 AM), Russ Barrett (Supervisor, from 12:00 PM onward), Dan Hemenway (Associate Supervisor), Henry Bonges (Associate Supervisor)

- Guest Introductions (if applicable)

The meeting began with all present introducing themselves.

- Adjustments to the agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.



- ACTION ITEM: Approve Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda and the proposed agenda was approved without a vote.

Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- Official Minutes - July 15, 2026
- ACTION ITEM: Approve Minutes

Nancy moved to approve the July 15 minutes. Rick seconded. All in favor.

Financial Updates - Pat

- ACTION ITEM: Approve Financials

Pat did not do a complete year-to-date review in detail. Pat said that, in general, the District is in good shape. We have submitted some large invoices recently that we are awaiting payment on (AgCWIP and Core Services, for example). The balance sheet shows a surplus of about \$30K.

There were some issues with the distribution of the financials and time was taken to make sure all had the correct copies and could review them.

After review, Jean moved to approve the financials. Nancy seconded.

There was a brief discussion that followed. Jeff asked if we were closing the (EastRise) Credit Union account. Pat indicated that the Credit Union line item in the financial reports was an artifact of QuickBooks, and that, yes, the Credit Union accounts are all now closed.

All in favor.

FY27 Draft Budget and Workplan Review - Dan and Pat

- Updated FY27 Draft Budget
- ACTION ITEM: Approve Budget

Pat wanted to cover the FY27 budget for final approval. The FY27 budget had been presented as a draft at the July meeting, pending some decisions about carryover funds. The decision had now been made that any candidate carryover funds were to be reallocated to cover FY26 expenses. As a result there is no carryover and the budget presented here is the same as presented in July. One thing to note is that it is a tight budget, with only \$13K in surplus.

Nancy asked about funds for office space. They are not in the budget, so where are they coming from?

Pat indicated that this is correct, they are not included. We cancelled our internet subscription at the Berlin office and we would apply these savings to the costs of a new office space.

The board took a moment to review the budget.

Nancy moved to approve the FY27 budget.

Rick seconded.

There was a brief discussion that emphasized that this is the same budget that was presented in July, and that it is a tight budget.

All in favor.

NRCS & NRCC Updates - Marybeth Whitten/Rick Hopkins



Marybeth - USDA-NRCS

Marybeth said she would be brief due to the training. Otter Creek NRCD did hire a new manager, Erica Harris, which is great news. It is a step in the right direction.

In terms of USDA-NRCS (United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service), Chittenden County got 8 late pre-approvals. Applicants in other parts of the State backed out and Chittenden County had many high-ranking applications that were then selected. It means more money to farmers in our District. The selected projects were largely CPA (Conservation Planning Activities), mostly forest management and pollinator habitat. There was also one farmstead. The State was 100% obligated as of yesterday afternoon.

Marybeth reminded us that the Annual Report is due to NRCS October 15. Please, send it to Marybeth and Phyliscia.

Rick - NRCC

The NRCC (State Natural Resources Conservation Council) most recently met on September 4. The NRCC finance committee met this morning. The Core Services money is flowing to the Districts. All the agreements have been signed, and all 14 districts will get \$57K.

The legislature directed \$912K from the State to NRCC, which was the largest allocation ever. This is still short of what the Districts need, but it is an excellent result in a time of austerity.

NRCC also received \$30K to facilitate a public engagement plan. Of the \$30K, about \$7K will go to VACD (Vermont Association of Conservation Districts), and about \$22K will go to the VCRD (Vermont Council on Rural Development).

NRCS Civil Rights Training - Marybeth Whitten

- For real this time

Marybeth gave the training. Dan needs to get the affirmation signed for individuals who were not present (Ella, Jean, Russ, Henry Bonges, and Dan Hemenway).

Winooski NRCD Space Updates

- Winooski Valley Parks District
 - Agreed to desk space for now while we explore
 - Storage space no longer available
- Land Access Opportunity Board
 - No space
- VYCC
 - \$300-\$350/month desk
 - \$100/month storage (not available until October 2027)

Dan discussed his recent activities in looking for alternative office space for Lucas. The Winooski Valley Park District has offered to let Lucas use a desk at their office in the interim while we look for a permanent location. The Park District office is likely not a good candidate for a permanent location because it is not centralized and they no longer have storage space for our equipment.

Dan met with VYCC and visited their space. What they have to offer is what we are looking for and is centrally located. The issue is the cost. They are asking for double what Winooski Valley Park District was asking.



Nancy suggested that Dan reach out to the Green Mountain Club in Waterbury, to see if they have space. The Green Mountain Coffee Roasters facility was also mentioned as something that could be explored. There was a brief discussion about renting a storage unit for our equipment, that Lucas could have access to at any time. But we likely wouldn't need the whole space and this likely isn't great use of funds. Three other ideas emerged. VACD has a storage unit that perhaps we could share. Dan will reach out to Julia. We could also try to negotiate with VYCC and get a reduced cost. We could also reach out to a municipality such as Waterbury to see if they have space. Dan can do this.

Upcoming Grant Opportunity

- LCBP Land Acquisition
- Reimbursible

Dan explained the funding opportunity and that he had some properties in mind. Nancy provided an initial reaction that other organizations are better set up to do this than we are. Also, is owning land something the District really wants to get involved with? We would need to partner with someone with more expertise in this area. Vermont Land Trust has easements in that area and Vermont River Conservancy has also been working on easements recently. Dan should reach out to them and see if they are interested. Without their expertise, the project is not possible.

Winooski NRCD - Handbook Revisions

- Review and approval of previously authorized [changes](#)

Dan noted that Jeff had provided corrections (typo). Nancy moved to approve the handbook with the corrections noted by Jeff.

Ella seconded.

In the discussion it was asked that Dan change the revision date to reflect this approval on September 16, as this will be the new official version.

All in favor.

Annual Dinner

- Updates

Dan provided brief updates for the progress on the planning for the annual dinner. We have a location (Richmond Public Library), a date (November 12), and a time (5-7 PM). We have also settled on the awards but are looking for suggestions on SWAG. A sign for people to put in their yards was suggested and might be nice, especially for the farmers ("2026 Winooski NRCD Farmer Excellence Award").

The stumbling block at this point is the food. We are open to ideas as we haven't found things that are affordable and convenient. Some said they would communicate ideas.

Rick asked what our expected attendance might be, 30 people? Dan said that we had about 60 people last year and are planning for the same.

Future Board Meeting

- Next scheduled Board Meetings are November 18, 2026 and January 20, 2027
- Annual Dinner is November 12
- Lucas hire anniversary is October 31



- Kara hire anniversary is December 2
- Third Wednesday in December is December 16
- Proposed: Cancel the November and January Board Meetings and meet in December and then again in February. Thoughts?

Dan outlined the upcoming meetings and proposed an alternative schedule. The new proposed schedule for board meetings would provide more timely evaluations for Lucas and Kara, as well as separate the annual dinner from a board meeting.

The alternate proposal was accepted. Dan will send an email with changes and new calendar invitations. A question was asked about meeting time. It was noted that this was discussed at the July meeting, and it was agreed to keep the meetings at 10 AM on Wednesday. The location will be at the Berlin office, with a hybrid option.

Winooski NRCD Board Membership

Henry Harris was asked to discuss his reasoning and actions around contacting Action Circles, the Vermont Association of Conservation Districts lobbyist. A discussion followed. Ella suggested a conflict resolution/mediation specialist to address the Meg/Jenn conflict. Ella requested that the White River letter be sent to her for review.

Board Officer Positions (Secretary, Treasurer, Bank Signing Authority)

Rich has been a third check signer and treasurer. Since he stepped down, we need a new supervisor to fill that role. Dan suggested that Nancy could be treasurer and signer since she is the longest serving board member who is not already a signer. Nancy said she would be willing to do it. Nancy would be able to sign checks and be an additional signer on the bank accounts .

Rick moved to appoint Nancy as treasurer and grant her bank signing authority.

Ella seconded.

All in favor.

Proposed Executive Session

- Paid Parental Leave Policy - Discussion
 - What can we afford?
 - Do staff need to use sick and vacation time?
 - Can we cover up to half time for 12 weeks in-house?
 - Program through The Hartford?

Rick Moved to go into executive session

Nancy second.

All in favor at 12:15 PM.

Nancy moved to leave executive session.

Ella seconded.

All in favor at 12:50 PM.



Nancey moved to adopt a parental leave policy with the following elements:

- Three months of paid leave covered at half-time.
- The staff member would not be required to use existing, accrued sick or vacation time, but could use it to supplement pay during the three months.
- During the period of leave, the benefits accrue at a rate equal to the percentage of time compensated. For example, if compensated at half-time, the benefits accrue at half their normal rate. If accrued sick or vacation time are used to supplement pay to full time, the benefits accrue at their normal rate.

Rick seconded.

All in favor.