



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

**Date: 17 September 2025
Time : 10 AM - 1 PM**

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

[Video Conference Link](#)

Attendance

In Person: Rick Hopkinds (Supervisor, Chair), Paul Hartshorn (Supervisor), Rich Turner (Supervisor), Jeff Cueto (Associate), Pat Richardson (Accountant) Marybeth Whitten (USDA-NRCS), Dan Koenemann (District Manager), Lucas Goldfluss (Conservation Specialist), Kara Winslow (Agricultural Specialist), Heathery Murphy (Agricultural Specialist).

Online: Russ Barrett (Supervisor, Vice-Chair), Dan Hemenway (Associate Supervisor), Henry Bonges (Associate Supervisor).

Quorum reached.

Started 10:03 AM

Since this was the first in-person meeting that Heather has attended since starting her position, we did a round of introductions.

Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- Official Minutes - July 16, 2025
- ACTION ITEM: Approve Minutes

Paul moved to approve. Rich seconded. No discussion. All in favor.

NRCS & NRCC Updates - Marybeth Whitten/Rick Hopkins

NRCS Updates: Marybeth had a lot to share. She gave an update on all the funded NRCS contracts in our District in the past year, what pool things were funded from, and how much was funded. In total 3.5 million in contracts in the Central Zone.

Marybeth said we got a good one in Heather. Good to have her working with us.

No updates on the reorganization process at NRCS Vermont. The public comment is open until end of September. They have been given a rough number of people to get down to (61), with 66 currently on staff. No planning on the reorganization until the beginning of the Federal fiscal year.

The Federal fiscal year ends this week, and NRCS is not up and running again until October 8 at the earliest, and usually longer. Also, there is a fear of a government shutdown. If that does happen, then it impacts mostly staff, no access to Federal buildings and equipment. Everyone needs to hand in equipment October 1. Marybeth is on leave starting October 1. If we go on shutdown she will work for two hours and check in all equipment. There is no access to office for any reason during shutdown.

Vermont did post some critical vacancies, internal hires from other states. Hired 4 and they are hoping all will come. Marybeth has lost 8 people and didn't get anyone back. Kara and Heather are picking up some NRCS workload.



There is a Civil Rights training, we do this annually. NRCS is still waiting for new materials from the new administration. It will be long, and will be held at the next meeting. Title 6 - client filing a complaint. Title 7 - employee filing a complaint.

Henry asked, what things are not getting done at NRCS. Marybeth said that contract management is the thing suffering. That is not good. It took the group too long to wrap up all the contracts and now the workload is too much. Double edge sword, bad for clients, but good it shows the administration that need more people.

NRCC Updates: Rick had just come from the Finance Committee meeting. NRCC met last month on August 28. The FY26 budget is underway. The FY27 request was submitted. We need 3 million to have one person at each district, plus per diem, plus staff at NRCC. We backed off this year given the circumstances, we asked for 950K this year. The Agency of Agriculture did not really like that request. They think best we could do is level out at 620K. VACD is going to rehire the lobbyist Action Circles. They will work to get us to 950K. NRCC has grants that have been issued to Districts - AgCWIP, Trees for Streams, Core Services, Tactical basin planning. All that money is fine now but next summer may be a very different story. Guidance was issued about board elections. One seat is available at WNRCD (Nancy) who wants to stay on. Paul and Rich ready to step down when someone is found.

Financial Updates - Pat

- ACTION ITEM: Approve Financials

We left the FY25 financials preliminary last meeting. They are finalized now. They are very similar, some extra funding came in. We are looking at a 180K surplus. This is explained by advances from AgCWIP and NACD TA. Even without those we did well. The balance sheet at the end of year is 153K in the bank. We moved 110K into a money market account. We moved some into a CD that matures tomorrow for a few hundred dollars. The hope is to roll that over to and keep getting interest. It would be a six month CD and pay interest at the end of each of the six months. Pat talked to the bank, the CD rollover is 6 months at 3.54%. We have some small liabilities in credit card and payroll that have been cleaned up. Pat also discussed the profit and loss for July and August against the FY26 budget. We are anticipating a surplus for FY26. The July and August and Q1 to date, July shows a \$7,400 surplus, and August a \$14,759 deficit.

LCBP has a new policy on reimbursement. Dan needs to contact them about how to prove money spent. In terms of the balance sheet for FY26, the VSECU/EastRise accounts will close this week. The website / Streamline are the prepaid expenses. MVP payment continues to be an issue, but those liabilities should be resolved.

Housekeeping: Pat asked that when District staff are using the invoicing spreadsheet, to only add new items to the bottom of the spreadsheet. The items do not need to be in chronological order.

Paul moved to approve FY25 financials and FY26 Q1 financials. Rich seconded. Thank you Pat! All in favor.

Final (?) Review of Draft Five-Year Strategic Plan - Dan

- ACTION ITEM: Approve Strategic Plan

The only thing new in this draft is Rick's letter. Rich said he liked the letter; it is a good summary of the major themes. Henry said the updates he requested are all good.



Rich moved to accept and finalize the document. Henry seconded. The plan is that this gets uploaded to a website. We will also include it in the October newsletter. We will have hard copies for the annual dinner. We will send it to Michelle (VACD) and Clare (NRCC). Be sure to update and add the approved-on date. All in favor.

Next Board Meeting

- Currently Scheduled for November 19, 2025
- Annual Dinner is November 12, 2025
- Interested in doing a board meeting on November 12 before the dinner?
- Or is that too much for one day?
- ACTION ITEM: Set Next Meeting Date

Paul thinks it is best to leave it as is (November 19). It is too much to do both on the same day. Rich agrees. No vote, but agreed to leave things as they are with the annual dinner on November 12 and the next board meeting on November 19.

Winooski NRCD Program Updates

- Lucas - Sabin Pond Lake Watershed Action Plan
The LWAP is going really well. The data collection is complete, we are now compiling all the information, putting it all together into one spreadsheet, and seeing what we still need. We still need some prioritization outreach lists and designs and cost estimates for high priority projects. Dan and Lucas did a boat tour to prioritize outreach. Lucas explained how we determined priority properties. Lucas will send around the story map. We need to look into landowner commitment and permitting concerns for potential projects. Continuing to do outreach and working with local stakeholders. We want to keep conversation going between now and implementation.
- Heather (Kara) - NMPs, Locally Funding Pool, EQIP, Union Brook Farm Tour
Fall is coming and farmers are slowing down. We did a lot of outreach over the summer and now farmers are responding with soil test and NMP requests. So far, we have six farms that need updated NMPs and four farms that need new soil tests.
Heather and Kara have been working with a new producer in Essex who recently became a certified CSO. This farm is really starting them from the ground up. We are helping them prepare a capital grant. This producer is interested in joining farm teams, which is great and would be our first! We are getting him set up with maps and manure and crop record sheets.
We had a farm tour at Union Brook Farm in Northfield. Russ came. We talked about bird processing and forest raised pigs. Other local farmers and neighbors showed up. It was a good group.
For the Locally Led Fund Pool, we had eight applications received! One person cancelled, so seven moved forward. But these applications may get split into multiple applications if they want other things from NRCS besides just plantings. We have been supporting the applicants by attending their meetings with FSA. We have been out to one applicant's property, from the Lake Iroquois watershed.
We are managing four NRCS EQIP applications. We have completed two site visits to get those applications in by the deadline. Many of the applications are tunnels. We don't have any huge projects yet, but are hoping to take on more NRCS contracts and more complicated ones. We will also help NRCS with cover cropping certifications in Washington County.



- Dan - Annual Meeting Updates, Tree Sale Updates
Dan gave a recap of the annual meeting planning. There is a subcommittee that has been meeting. At this point all the major aspects have been finalized. We are still trying to finalize the food but it will likely be pizza and salad. We may even go over capacity at the Nature Center! This means we will be looking for another location with more capacity as a backup.
The tree sale list has been finalized for the year. We sent out a survey to our newsletter to see what people want and don't want for the coming year. More so than last year, we are focusing on sourcing our trees in Vermont. This will mean they are a little more expensive but we think it is important to build up local nursery capacity. We are changing the way the tree sale runs this year. Last year, there was so much time between when the sale went live and when pick up was that there was a lot of confusion. Many people forgot their orders and it made packing and pickup more difficult than it needed to be. We are compressing the timeline this year with sales opening in March and ending in April with pickup still in May. Dan said we are also looking to better account for costs this year than we did last year so we can better understand and project potential revenues.

Notice: VACD Annual Meeting

Thursday, November 6, 2025

\$40/person (District gets two free tickets)

Staff and Supervisors Invited

Registration Closes Wednesday, October 1

Draft Agenda

8:45 AM - 10:00 AM	Breakfast, Welcome, and Presentations
10:00 AM - 12:30 PM	VACD Full Board Meeting
10:00 AM - 11:15 AM	Session 1A: Intro to NRCS Programs Panel (<u>Including Heather!</u>)
	Session 1B: Maple Producer Outreach Panel
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Session 2A: GIS Workshop
	Session 2B: Wetland Reserve Easement and Restoration Panel
12:30 PM - 2:00 PM	Lunch, Presentations, & Awards
2:15 PM - 3:15 PM	Session 3A: Public Official Training
	Session 3B: Planning the Future of Vermont's Land Use
3:30 PM - 4:15 PM	Collaborative Art Project
3:30 PM - 5:00 PM	Hike in Montpelier (<u>Led by Dan!</u>)
4:15 PM - 5:15 PM	Yoga
4:15 PM - 5:15 PM	Animal Shelter Volunteer Project
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM	Dinner & Guest Speaker

Notice: Board Elections

- The election process begins this month!
- If you are considering resigning, please let us know
- If you would like to become a supervisor, please let us know
- If you know of others who would like to be a supervisor or associate supervisor, please let us know



Schedule of Board Elections

- Sept 19: Petitions sent to districts
- October 20: deadline for published legal notice of petition availability
- Nov 3: Petitions due to district offices
- Nov 7: Completed positions due to NRCC & notice of elections published
- Dec 8: Election Day
- Dec 17: Election results sent out
- Jan 15: Updated supervisor directory

Rick explained the election process to new staff. The issue is landowner status. You need to be a landowner to vote and sign a petition, but not to be a supervisor. Miscellaneous supervisor sharing.

Paul moved to adjourn. Rich seconded. All in favor.