



Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District Board of Supervisors Meeting

Meeting Minutes

July 28th, 2020 8:00-10:00am
Teleconference meeting on Zoom

Attendees: Gianna Petito, Kristen Balschunat, Rick Hopkins, Jeff Cueto, Rich Turner, Russ Barret Marybeth Whitten (NRCS)

8:04 Meeting Called to Order

8:05 NRCS Updates Recap: Marybeth provided a list of who was funded for projects in our District. Major project areas included: 1) Focus on wildlife funding 2) AMA high tunnels with irrigation. Local work group guidance should be available by the next WNRCD Board meeting. Gianna asked about types of projects that fall under "Farmstead." Marybeth replied that it usually covers managing manure within the farmstead area. These projects are often matched with BMP funding from the State. Marybeth also shared details about the CAMP mentorship program for new NRCS staff to be paired with an experienced farmer. NRCS can't solicit CAMP farmers, but the District can. Kristen asked if there is any potential for the program to extend to District Staff? Marybeth responded that currently it is only for NRCS, but she can see it potentially expanding to the District. Unclear if there would be funding for District time to participate.

8:30 NRCC Updates: NRCC last met on June 23rd over Zoom. Kristen Balschunat gave a presentation about Racial Equity work with the Districts state-wide. Council is hoping to create a survey to ask supervisory union reps and agency partners how to be a more effective partner. The Agency of Ag is only in a position to award council \$76,000 (\$5,400 per district). The NRCS Capacity-Building funding is also discontinued this year. In years prior, Districts received closer to \$8,000. The new financial officer for Council has been hired and has begun work (Claire Ireland). Her time will be split 50/50 between Council and VACD.

8:39 Supervisor and Staff Sharing: Russ mentioned that NCC participated in the WNRCD training and it went well. Cross VT trail association is working to improve trails - bridge in

Montpelier area, new trail easement acquisition through Fairmont Farms. Kristen encouraged folks to look for the comet NEOWISE this week before it is gone. Jeff reminded folks of the EAB project at U-32. Rich mentioned that there was a discussion about EAB management plans at the Williamstown town board meeting.

8:45 Minutes: Rich motions to approve the minutes from the June 2020 meeting as written. Seconded by Jeff. All in favor. Motion passes.

8:50 Financial Report: Gianna noted that WNRCD came out in the "green" by about \$3,000 for FY20. There are still a number of outstanding invoices. There has been a smooth transition to VSECU banking. Rick inquired about the turnaround rate of invoicing and payouts from DEC. Gianna noted that we have not sent an invoice to them since the meeting. Gianna also noted that we need to use the line of credit at least once a year to keep it active. Motion by Russ to approve the June financial report. Second by Rich. All in favor. Motion passes.

9:00 Strategic Plan Approval Gianna and Rick gave a brief overview of the Strategic Planning process and took a quick "tour" through the completed strategic plan. The most notable change is that the goals, objectives and action steps are presented together in one document. We have also shifted the timeline to 5-years rather than the earlier through of a 3-year plan. Russ noted that he likes the new format and shared appreciation for Rick and Jeff for completing the final review of the plan. Motion by Jeff to approve the Strategic Plan as presented. Second by Rich. Discussion: Rick acknowledged the work of Kristen and Gianna in moving the plan forward after the consultation with COPE. Gianna noted that a full board meeting should be set aside in 2022 to use the report card to check-in on progress at that point. All in favor. Motion passes.

9:10 Supervisor Timesheets Gianna inquired about any issues with the Supervisor Timesheet paperwork. No one expressed concerns. Timesheets should be submitted ASAP.

9:15 Farm and Forest Tour Discussion Consensus that the Farm & Forest Tour should be put on hold this year due to covid. It is an important educational opportunity, but we look forward to another F&F tour in 2021. Russ mentioned a horse-based logger, Brad Johnson (Third Branch Logging) who offers tours - maybe for next year. Gianna noted training opportunities through Ethan Tapper's "Coffee with a County Forester" YouTube video series. Gianna also mentioned webinar opportunities through VT Coverts.

9:17 Staff Progress Report Supervisors were asked to review and bring questions. Russ asked about the grants that were not awarded. Gianna noted that those grants were all new money for innovative programs, so the fact that they were not awarded does not threaten our planned budget. Kristen highlighted the intern program and Stream Storytellers program with RRSST. Rick noted the

"Half-Earth" program may be a good platform for sharing RRST reflections. Gianna mentioned the official launch of Storm Smart - we will provide free consultations to homeowners who want to learn how to help improve stormwater runoff on their property for water quality. Gianna noted that Shady Rill Picnic Site money has been awarded (Middlesex). Jeff mentioned concern about the erosion control mat that is proposed to be used VSC-50, which is not biodegradable and is made of polypropylene. There are alternative erosion control mats which are biodegradable. An engineer has been contracted for the Hands Mill Dam removal. Brief discussion about TFS survival rates. Rick offered to set up a phone call if the interns are interested in talking with Board Supervisors. Rick also noted a public speaking opportunity in towns that have allocated appropriations.

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, August 25, 2020 - 9am - Meeting in Berlin Outside WNRCD office - In case of poor weather, Zoom link will be provided later. Bring a lawn chair.

9:42 Adjourn Motion to adjourn by Rich. Seconded by Jeff. All in favor. Motion passes.