



Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District
Board of Supervisors Meeting
Meeting Minutes

November 15, 2018
300 Interstate Corporate Center, Suite 220, Williston VT

9:00am-12:00 noon

In attendance. Hopkins, Cueto, Rowley, Hartshorn. Staff - Petito, Balschunat. Guests - Witten.

NRCS updates. Whitten discussed the office closure policy for winter weather. The Williston office mirrors the Colchester office. In Berlin, Jacob Clay decides whether to close the office. You can call a line at the state office to learn about closures. Staff should also be part of the phone tree of their respective offices. Staff are not allowed to work in an NRCS office that has been deemed "closed" for the day. --- The deadline for ranking of the first round of EQIP applications has been extended to Nov 28th. Round 2 is open for all pools, and it is anticipated that Round 3 will also be open for all pools. CARTS was retracted and the Farm Bill has still not passed, so NRCS is working on a quarterly allocation of funding based on last year's budget. ---- The Williston office may be relocated to the Willison Agency of Ag building, pending negotiations with the landowner. --- Rowley inquired about how long NRCS contracts with farmers can last. Whitten described that contract periods vary based the practice the farmer is being funded for. Typically contracts last from 1-5 years.

Business Items.

~ **Approve minutes.** of 10/23/18 meeting. Motion by Hartshorn to approve, second by Cueto. Motion carried.

~ **Financial report.** (dated 11/10/18). DM Petito presented & explained financial report. Motion to approve the financial report. Motion made by Hartshorn, seconded by Cueto. Motion carried.

Staff report.

Petito and Balschunat presented and took questions about particular aspects of the staff report.

- **Aerator.** The aerator has been found. A staff member of UVM extension shared information with Petito about the whereabouts. Staff will follow up with the current renter and try to facilitate moving the equipment to Elwin Neil's farm for winter maintenance.

- **Intern update.** Information was shared about three interns, one currently serving, and two potential interns. Kelly Rapacki is a student at CCV who is completing an 80-hour internship (unpaid) focused on agricultural fieldwork and policy. She will help us create a farmer contact list using public sources of information. Caitlin Maloney is interested in completing a 40-hour internship (unpaid) to help us create marketing materials for the Tree and Trout sale. Gianna has also been talking with a seasonal employee of the DEC who may have the right skill set to help with some of our septic programs (potential stipend).
- **Tree and Trout.** Hartshorn mentioned that the Green Mountain Coffee Roasters warehouse where the TNT sale has historically been held is rumored to be closing in the next few months. He recommended double checking with the company about the availability of the space in the spring.
- **NRCC Contracting.** DM Petito requested advice from the board on the potential for her to be paid an hourly rate by Council the help with NRCC projects. Board members were supportive, but cautioned her to balance time carefully and prioritize the needs of WNRCD first.
- **Trees for Streams.** Hopkins discussed the guidelines used by DEC in riparian buffer plantings. DEC advises only planting on “stable banks”.
- **Ag Grants.** Rowley recommended reaching out to the Champlain Valley Farmers Coalition to find participants for our ag programs.
- **Regional Ag Coordination Meetings.** Balschunat mentioned the regional meetings that she and Petito have attended, sponsored by Council and the DEC to encourage greater collaboration between partners.
- **Skidder Bridge.** The skidder bridge still has not been located. DEC expressed an interest in administering the program. Staff will reach out to DEC to explain the situation and ask how to transfer the program smoothly.

Signing authority. DM Petito presented proposed guidance document on Purchasing and Contracting Policy and Financial Management Policy Cash Receipts, Petty Cash, Check Signing and Returned Checks. Amendments recommended: Under the paragraph “Contracting authorization” add “or approved motions” to the end of the first sentence. Under the second paragraph of “Duties and Responsibilities” delete “and supervise staff” and replace with “interns.” Motion to approve proposed document with recommended amendments by Hartshorn, seconded by Cueto. Motion carried. --- Present members had a discussion about the Signature Matrix proposed by Petito. Many changes were recommended. Petito will make these changes and present the matrix again at the next board meeting for approval.

Balschunat Probationary Period. Board was presented with Petito’s Staff 6-month Performance Evaluation for Balschunat and Balschunat’s Narrative Self Evaluation. Balschunat left the meeting during the discussion. Cueto motioned to approve the end of the probationary period for Balschunat, seconded by Hartshorn. Motion carried.

Board Member Election. Present members and staff had a discussion about how to proceed with a board member election. Petitions had been received from two candidates: Hartshorn and Daniel Pillsbury. Neither petition had the requisite 25 signatures, so it was decided that both candidates have until MON NOV 19 at 4:00pm to submit a complete petition to the Williston Office. If both candidates meet the signature requirements, Balschunat will confer with Kerry OBrien and Hopkins about how to proceed. Voting is expected to take place on NOV 27 in both the Williston and Berlin offices as per a memo from Council. Legal notice will be posted in local newspapers with voting information. A discussion about absentee voting ensued, but it was determined that mailing out ballots to eligible voters would be too costly for the district. All candidates are encouraged to continue their involvement with WNRCD regardless of the election results. Candidates who are not elected are welcome to become Associate Board Members.

NACD Survey. Hopkins received a request to complete a survey about our district for NACD. Hopkins requested that board members and staff share their remarks about the questions by Dec 1.

NRCC updates

A Water Quality Programs Manager has been hired (Holden S.) coming to Council with a degree from UVM. -- The Basin Planning grant year 1 is coming to a close, but year 2 is starting. -- Council is requesting a budget increase for FY2020 due to increase in staff in council and the districts. --- UVM has, in the past, been a voting member of Council. Recently, UVM representatives stopped attending meetings, so a concerted effort is being made to invite them back to the table now that Council is in a better place and both parties would benefit from continued partnership.

Next NRCD meeting will be TUES DEC 11, 2018 at 0900 in Berlin. An optional celebration will follow at Sarducci's Restaurant in Montpelier to honor the contributions of Corrina Parnapy and Don Hipes for their years of service to the District.

Adjourn. Motion by Hartshorn, second by Cueto. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned 12:01 pm.