

Windham County Natural Resource Conservation District Minutes

Tuesday, February 24th, 2026, 6:00 pm

Geof Dolman's House, 301 Barrows Road, Brattleboro, VT

Virtual Zoom

Present: Cory Ross, Executive Director; Heather Blunk, Agricultural Specialist; Arrow Branwen, Administrative Assistant; Abby Reed, AmeriCorps Conservation Assistant; Meg Kluge, Geof Dolman, Linda Corse, board supervisors

Zoom Participants: Olivia Carlson, NRCS; Isabel Bowman, Conservation Specialist; Emma Gregg, Agricultural Specialist

Land Acknowledgement: *We respectfully acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Abenaki People, who have stewarded this land throughout the generations.*

1. Review Agenda for Additions or Changes
 - a. Locally Led Fund Pool Approval added to agenda

2. NRCS Updates
 - a. EQIP and CSP programs have ranking, including local fund pool
 - b. Fund pool questions sent out
 - c. Specific tree and shrub updates for agroforestry practices
 - d. Producer will be notified between March and July
 - e. May 8th for CSP program
 - f. Vermont Contract Management Review 2/26 go over contract changes from national office
 - g. Maple sugaring tour with NRCS, connection between maple sugar producers and funding
 - h. Local VAWQP training

3. Avian Technician Position - Board to Potentially Approve Hire of Avian Technician for 2026
 - a. Hiring team Benez at CCCD and Cat Abbott on hiring team. Kate McKay lives in Swanzey and is the person being recommended. Has worked as hawk watch, had great references
 - i. **Moved at 6:14PM by Meg to approve hiring Kate McKay as Avian Technician for the 2026 season.**
 - ii. No further discussion
 - iii. **Seconded 6:14 by Geof**
 - iv. **Passed 6:14PM**

4. FY27 Budget - Board to Potentially Establish Budget Subcommittee

- a. Want to rent office space with land trust, other partners. Want to start budget process beforehand
- b. Subcommittee meetings would be subject to open meeting law
- c. Meg will do it if needed, Geof is in, and Pieter and Katie will be invited
 - i. **Moved 6:18PM to establish a budget subcommittee.**
 - ii. No further discussion
 - iii. **Seconded**
 - iv. **Passed 6:18PM**

5. New Office Space Update

- a. Land trust is exploring changing office, district has been invited to join
- b. Visited a house downtown with a large office space, space could work and is nice, but does not have enough parking. Owner of building is very open to leasing more parking spots nearby, very excited to work with us
- c. Another district has acquired funds to purchase a space, a legislator really wants to help other districts get office spaces in the next couple of years
- d. Will need to be furnished, set up with wifi
- e. Cory put together a staff survey, majority of staff are okay with forgoing raises in the next fiscal year if needed to help offset cost of office space.
- f. **Motion to amend establishing budget subcommittee to add building procurement task, assessing building's suitability**
 - i. Geof asked about utilities, probably about \$375 a month
 - ii. Isabel mentioned it would save event rental space as well
 - iii. **Seconded 6:35PM**
 - iv. **Passed 6:41**

6. VACD Updates

- a. 60 break out sessions at NACD meeting, one on board training
- b. NRCS present only at highest level
- c. One Farm, One Application
- d. NRCS not acting like its a partnership, did not feel very nonpartisan
- e. Not enough money for requests coming in from districts, how to set priorities

7. Annual Gathering/Act 59 Listening Session Planning

- a. VHCB approved funding \$4000
- b. River & Rye in Jamaica, March 16th
- c. Grazing tables, buffet, dessert
- d. Costing about \$4800 dollars, minus the \$4000 in funding from VHCB

8. Monthly Report on District Activities

- a. Linda wondered about how long it takes for NRCC to send funds after invoicing
- b. Snowshoeing at Southern Vermont Natural History Museum in Marlboro
- c. Advocacy Day went well

9. Locally Led Fund Pool Approval

a. Different from last year?

- i. Everyone is only allowed to submit one local fund pool proposal; last year applied for 3 and received 3. Only applied for one this year, for invasive species removal. However, the cost list discussed has been hit hard. Planning proposal, Emma Kuester helped, not asking for the practice of brush management, asking for different practices. One farm, one application. Tacking on best practices to existing Invasive Species Removal. Ottaquechee NRCD would like to be included in Windham NRCD's Local Fund Pool Proposal. This would only extend to cover the southern portion of ONRCD where Windham NRCD already provides outreach, education and technical assistance to agricultural producers. This wouldn't present an additional challenge for Windham NRCD planners, since they are already working with producers in this area. Different, but achieving the same goals. We are requesting \$900,000, as we always have less funding than is requested through applications for assistance.

b. Motion to approve:

- i. **Meg moves that we have faith in our staff and accept proposal at 6:59PM**
- ii. **Seconded by Geof at 7:00PM**
- iii. **Passed 7:00PM**

Motion to accept January 27th minutes:

- **Moved Meg 6:54PM**
- **Seconded Geof 6:54PM**
- **Passed 6:55PM**

Review Upcoming Supervisor Meeting Dates:

- Next meeting: March 16, 2026
- Also included Act 59 Listening Session
- Cory will reach out to schedule special meeting in March about office space rental

Motion to adjourn:

Moved 7:01

Seconded 7:01

None opposed

Passed 7:01 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Arrow Branwen