



Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District

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www.fcswcd.org

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

December 17, 2024

ATTENDANCE:

Directors:

Ralph Child
Paul Lauzon
Dennis Egan
Justus Martin
Thomas Derouchie

Staff

Kristin Ballou
Devin Normandeau
Allisa Blanchard
Sarah Otis
Shayla Pfendler

1. **Meeting was called to order:** Chair, Ralph Child, called meeting to order at 9:05 AM – Quorum present.
2. **Meeting Minutes:** Correction of 1 grammatical error to be made for regular meeting minutes. No corrections to be for special meeting minutes.

Motion to approve meeting minutes for regular meeting November 13, 2024 and special meeting November 20, 2024: made by Justus Martin, 2nd by Paul Lauzon, carried.

3. **Board Member Reports:** None to report.
4. **Financial Reports:** Kristin Ballou read through reports presented and reviewed by board. Kristin explained that discrepancies are continuing to be worked on as well as the 2025 budgets. Abstract and vouchers were reviewed by all members and signed. Allisa Blanchard explained that some changes are needed to be made to comply with New York state comptroller requirements. Two documents required to open two bank accounts were passed for signature by the appropriate members.

Motion to add funds to USPS account to send postcards for Christmas Tree Disposal & Newsletters & Tree Sale Flyer: made by Justus Martin, 2nd by Dennis Egan, carried.

Motion to approve Fasprint to produce newsletter & Tree Sale Flyer and pay invoice of \$1,744.50: made by Paul Lauzon, 2nd by Dennis Egan, carried.

Motion to close the “Trust & Agency” bank account and transfer \$4,203.46 balance to savings: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Ralph Child, carried.

Motion to transfer remaining balance of “Retirement” savings account fund to the “Savings” savings account: made by Paul Lauzon, 2nd by Dennis Egan, carried.

Motion to approve the change from QuickBooks Desktop to QuickBooks Online to comply with New York state requirements: made by Ralph Child, 2nd by Justus Martin, carried.

Motion to apply for two Wex Fuel cards for each vehicle: made by Paul Lauzon, 2nd by Dennis Egan, carried.

Motion for preapproval of Agriculture Environmental Management (AEM) payment not to exceed \$15,500 for Wallace Jock and Akwesasne Seed Hub for \$17,916: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Paul Lauzon, carried. After brief explanation from Devin Normandeau of specific projects for each participant.

Motion to issue company credit cards to Sarah Otis, Shayla Pfendler, and Allisa Blanchard: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Justus Martin, carried.

Motion to approve the 2025 Budget: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Ralph Child, carried.

Motion to approve the Part C 2025 Budget and projects: made by Paul Lauzon, 2nd by Thomas Derouchie, carried.

Motion to approve the purchasing of water tests costing \$974.69: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Justus Martin, carried.

5. **Correspondence:** Multiple holiday cards were received.

Motion to accept correspondence: made by Justus Martin, 2nd by Paul Lauzon.

6. **SWCD Business:**

- a. **Tree removal and concrete curb update:** Kristin informed the board that a new guardrail had been installed, courtesy of the Franklin County Highway Department. She expressed her gratitude to Paul Lauzon for his assistance in facilitating this arrangement, which has provided an additional safety barrier for both our property and our neighbors. Kristin also updated the board that the Franklin County Highway Department would return to remove the tree in front of the building once their bucket truck is available.
- b. **Current grant projects updates:** topic was skipped as this is covered by reports.
- c. **Approval requested for an agreement for Justin Bach from Jefferson County Soil & Water, to assist with Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) Planning:** Devin explained that FCSWCD is currently in need of hiring a certified planner, as required

by New York State, to assist with manure storage issues on four to five farms. He noted that certified planners are limited throughout the state, and Justin Bach, from Jefferson County Soil and Water would be able to complete one plan for FCSWCD requiring a single day of field work and the rest of the work can be completed remotely.

Motion to approve agreement for Justin Bach from Jefferson County Soil & Water, to assist with Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) Planning: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Thomas Derouchie, carried.

- d. **Computer Equipment:** Kristin explained that additional monitors were required for Shayla and Sarah, as the current equipment is outdated and no longer functional. Dennis generously offered a television that could be used as a replacement monitor.

Motion for the purchase of new monitors not to exceed \$200: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Paul Lauzon, carried.

- e. **Policy additions for Flex Time & Telework:** Policy revisions were discussed for Flex Time & Telework. All policies are reviewed at the end of the year and the board would like time to review the policies to update at the January meeting.

Motion to table Flex Time & Telework policy additions: made by Paul Lauzon, 2nd by

- f. **Removal of adopted Franklin County's Code of Ethics:** Incorrectly was labeled St. Lawrence County's Code of Ethics, corrected. Allisa explained that FCSWCD has adopted much of the same language and policies but does not have a separate code of ethics, while also explaining that FCSWCD is a niche body that does not fit the requirements of the specific requirements of the code of ethics. Board members expressed interest in reviewing this policy as well.

Motion to table removal of adopted Code of Ethics: made by Paul Lauzon, 2nd by Thomas Derouchie, carried.

- g. **Board Payment:** Allisa explained that current payment per diem is not being processed correctly and what other boards from other counties are doing for payment. All board members decided to be volunteers and to be paid for mileage.

Motion for all members to be volunteer members and paid for mileage and expenses: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Thomas Derouchie, carried.

7. Reports:

Kristin Ballou-District Manager-

AEM

- Working on Forest Conservation Plans as time allows
- Continuing implementation of plans with EQIP funding for producers – 2 properties marked (consultant completed this) – supervising logging operations
- Assisting Clinton County SWCD with AEM Forestry – 2 more plans scheduled for 2025 as time allows
- LCBP Covered Barnyard Project –working on contractor bids
- Part B – 4 Forest Management Plans – 2024 4 Forest Management Plans – contractor completed inventories
- Meetings/Workshops/Other
- Administrative Conference
- Managers Meeting
- Water Quality Symposium Course planning
- CWICNY
- Project site visits
- 2025 Budget and Part C Budget – working on this with Rhonda will email and discuss at December meeting
- Independent Contractor contract complete
- Site visits
- Winter permit assistance prep – photos, measurements, etc.
- Grants:
- Ag. NPS Round 24 – project complete, prepping for closeout
- Ag. NPS Round 27 – project under construction
- CAFO 3 – working on closeout paperwork
- Franklin County Septic Grant – application review and closeout redocument review and approval
- Lake Champlain Watershed Capacity Contract – contract signed and waiting for execution
- Nature Conservancy Planting with a Purpose Grant – signed contract and advertising program
- RRAMP and Forest Roads (CWICNY) – cleaning up financials, tracking projects and payments. Prepping to closeout Round 1
- Smart Growth Grant – sent Inter-Municipal Agreement and Procurement Policy to County Attorney for review and feedback
- WQIP NAACC – Received grant extension until 5/9/2026
- WQIP Hydroseeding – will send report and voucher for work completed in 2024. Signed contract extension until 12/31/2026
- Determining status of grants and other projects

Allisa Blanchard- Secretary to the Board- No formal report was provided, but it was shared that efforts are focused on familiarizing with a grant for records management, managing finances, processing payroll, and handling records retention in collaboration with the NYS Archives. Additionally, work is being done on processing new hire paperwork, organizing policies, and providing support to the team.

Devin-District Technician

AEM

AEM Round 18 Tier 4 Projects:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Not started | 6- Closing out |
| 2. Fence and well in | 7- Closing out |
| 3. Not started | 8- Closing out |
| 4. Not started | 9- Not started |
| 5. Access Road started | 10- Not started |

11- Closing out

1 Tier 2 site visit

Grown and Certified Infrastructure and Technology Grant out 11/27

- Working with Franklin CCE to help farms apply

Ag NPS

Rd. 24, 16-1 (Oakes) manure storage

- Assisted engineer with surveying, waiting on as-builts
- Closing out project

Rd. 27 (Trumble)

- Concrete, roof, laneways complete

Round 30 out on 12/5- meeting with farmers

- Approximately 4 projects lined up

CAFO

Papa's Dairy Manure Storage

- Closing out project

CRF Rd 7

Sent in for certification

Still waiting for state contract

Part C

Presented to 4-H group on soil health

Soil sampling

Rd 8

Developing Plan of Work

Sarah Otis-District Technician

AEM

- Site visits to barnyard, liner manure storage, and concrete manure storage
- Soil sampling for Scott Robinson
- Observed high tunnel AEM inquiry in Burke

Part C

- Researched funding opportunities for environmental education programing
- Created a list of desired education supplies with prices
- Started program for Women in STEM event at Point Au Roche State Park, February 8th
 - Hope to lead an animal tracks activity– still waiting to hear back from Kristin Collins (Environmental Educator) to confirm

Permits

Mines

- Received training from Bob Brower on mine extension permitting process
- Surveyed Scott Robinson's Upstate Pit for mine expansion
- Created maps for mine expansion

Stream Disturbance

- Site visit to John Edwards stream in Brushton with DEC biologist to determine if stream can be improved after damage made by summer flooding events
 - Cobble washed into stream may need to be removed to prevent stream widening and to restore stream function
 - Other DEC employee will need to visit the site in the spring to take stream measurements before moving forward
 - Made a new map of site
- Went to site in Malone with DEC biologist where company had cleared all vegetation from stream bank

Workshop

- UVM Soil health indicator webinar series – four-part series

Shayla Pfendler-District Technician- No formal report was provided, but it was mentioned that Shayla has actively engaged in the tree sale and plans to explore certification for drone use. She also expressed her enthusiasm about meeting everyone and her eagerness to take on additional programs and opportunities once she is settled and the New Year begins.

Ryan Cunningham- NYS SWCC

Round 30 Agricultural Non-Point Source Program:

The SWCC has \$25 million available for competitive projects in the 2023-2024 budget. Applications are due by 4:30 PM on February 24, 2025. The RFP is available on the SWCC SharePoint and Ag and Markets websites. Questions due by January 10, 2024.

December SWCC Meeting:

Next meeting: Tuesday, December 17th at 10:00 AM. All districts are encouraged to attend and participate. Meeting participation counts toward PM1, Part C of State Aid to Districts.

State Aid to Districts and Annual Reports:

Annual and performance measure reports are now in a new format using Google Docs. Reports must be submitted by February 15, 2025. For issues, contact Tyler Knapp or Chastity Miller.

2024 Part C Performance Measures:

Check your district's Performance Measure goals. Special requests need approval by December 31, 2024.

2024 Part B Projects:

Submit revised requests by December 31, 2024.

NYS Grown & Certified:

Opportunities for NYS Grown & Certified are available. Information on participation and funding can

be found on the certified website. Districts can find relevant forms and help on the SWCC SharePoint site.

CREP Annual Progress Report:

Send any CREP-related updates or questions to Scott Fickbohm by December 16, 2024.

Other Events:

NACD 2025 Annual Meeting:

Register now for the NACD 79th Annual Meeting, February 8-12, 2025, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Other Funding:

Establishing Large Forests (ELF) Grant Program:

\$4.5 million available for private landowners. Applications due by 3 PM on January 7, 2025.

Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program:

Proposals due by January 22, 2025. This program funds projects that improve water quality and habitats.

Environmental Education Centers Grant:

\$7 million in grants available for community-based organizations to build or renovate environmental education centers in disadvantaged or environmental justice communities.

Applications due by January 22, 2025.

NRCS-USDA

Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC):

Provides financial help for specialty crop producers to expand or develop markets. Deadline: January 8, 2025. Contact the FSA office to apply.

Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program:

Covers crops not insured due to weather. Deadlines:

- December 31 – Honey and Maple Sap
- February 1 – Greens, Herbs, Lettuce, Onions
- March 15 – Spring fruits & veggies, Hops, Sorghum

Emergency Conservation Program:

Cost-share assistance for storm damage. Deadline: December 30 (extension requested).

Acreage Reporting:

Report maple taps by December 31 and bee colonies by January 2.

Organic Certification Cost-Share Program:

Reimbursement of 75% (up to \$750) for certification fees. Deadline: February 7, 2025.

Interest Rates (December 2024):

- Commodity Loans: 5.25%

- Farm Storage Loans: 4.125%-4.375%
- Operating Loans: 4.75%
- Emergency Loans: 3.75%

Farm Bill Update:

The Farm Bill has expired. Some programs are on hold; others, like DMC and disaster programs, are active.

8. **Cell Phones:** The stipend for cell phones was discussed. FCSWCD was advised by a third party that it is recommended that employees should not use their personal cell phones to conduct official business. Costs were provided to the board of a total of \$45 per month per line.

Motion to approve cell phones for staff to conduct FCSWCD business: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Thomas Derouchie, carried.

9. **Executive Session began 10:53 am to discuss personnel matters**

Motion to enter executive session: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Thomas Derouchie, carried.

10. **Executive session ended 11:40 am**

Motion to exit executive session: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Paul Lauzon

11. **Regular Meeting Resumed 11:40 am**

Motion to accept Donna Wrights resignation effective close of business December 31, 2024: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Paul Lauzon, carried.

Motion to move Allisa Blanchard from temporary Secretary to the Board, to permanent Secretary to the board, effective January 1, 2025,: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Paul Lauzon, carried.

Motion to close FCSWCD office in observance of Christmas Eve as a paid holiday: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Thomas Derouchie, carried.

Motion to increase District Technician, Devin Normandeau's salary to \$52,000 per year, effective January 1, 2025: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Paul Lauzon, carried.

12. **Next Meeting:** January 21, 2025 at 9:00 am.

13. **Meeting Adjourned at 11:46 am**

Motion to adjourn meeting: made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Paul Lauzon, carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Allisa Blanchard

Secretary to the Board