

**Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District**

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www.fcswcd.org

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**February 18, 2025**

**ATTENDANCE:**

**Directors:** **Staff**

Ralph Child Kristin Ballou

Dennis Egan             Devin Normandeau

Paul Lauzon Allisa Blanchard

Justus Martin Sarah Otis

 Shayla Pfendler

1. **Meeting was called to order:** Chairman, Ralph Child, called meeting to order at 9:10 AM – Quorum present.
2. **Meeting Minutes:** January meeting minutes tabled until next meeting.

1. **Board Member Reports:** Board members expressed their appreciation for the new board packets and binder arrangements for the meeting materials.

1. **Financial Reports:** Allisa Blanchard read through reports presented and reviewed by board. Kristin explained that Rhonda Jarvis had completed the Annual Report of the Treasurer developed for the Office of the State Comptroller. Allisa discussed expired 1099 and 1096 tax documents that are beyond retention date that can be destroyed. Allisa discussed with the board that due to the circumstances of the financials an accountant to audit the financials. It was discussed that once a cost was established we would bring that to the board for approval. Abstract and vouchers were reviewed by all members and signed.

**Motion to accept financial reports:** made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Justus Martin, carried.

**Motion to Open interest-bearing checking accounts titled - CAFO ENMP Round 1,** **RRAMP 3, and CWICNY Coordinator :** made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Paul Lauzon, carried.

**Motion to transfer funds from the General Checking account to the respective accounts for Part C, RRAMP 3, and CWICNY Coordinator as soon as the funds are deposited:** made by Justus Martin, 2nd by Dennis Egan, carried.

1. **Correspondence:** Correspondence was shared with the board and staff. Allie \_\_\_\_ from USDA NRCS, sitting in for Colin Bainbridge discussed a letter received. Allie discussed the funding of programs due to the current political state and funding freeze. Allie also explained that NRCS has lost about 30 employees throughout the state due to the cuts being made. Allie stated that no staff was lost locally and will have the same presence that they have continued to have.

1. **SWCD Business:**
2. **Avenza Subscription:** Kristin informed the board that Devin, Sarah, and Shayla will all need to use Avenza. Kristin informed the board that the District may qualify for a discounted rate for the subscription.

**Motion to approve Avenza Subscription not to excess $160 per year per device (x3):** made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Paul Lauzon.

1. **Culvert Assessment Equipment:** Kristin informed the board that in order to complete the Culver Assessments we would be needing a specific tablet and that the current technology that we have does not support the requirements. Kristin advised the board that the cost of the device and required accessories would be reimbursed through the WQIP NAACC Grant.

**Motion to approve tablet and accessories purchase for Culvert Assessments to be reimbursed by** **WQIP NAACC Grant, not to exceed $1,034:** made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Paul Lauzon.

1. **Office chair:** Allisa explained to the board that the District took advantage of all office furniture that Franklin County had to offer and that they did not have any more chairs. The current chair Shayla has is in disrepair and it not able to be fixed.

**Motion to approve the purchase of an office chair for Shayla Pfendler, not to exceed $150:** made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Paul Lauzon.

1. **Hydroseeder Mulch:** Kristin explained that the District needs Hydroseeder Mulch for the 2025 season. Sarah had requested bids from multiple companies. It was discussed if there are requirement for using a MWBE organization when purchasing mulch. Kristin confirmed that she would clarify this when Sarah was back in the office.

**Motion to approve the purchase of mulch from Banfield Baker ($18,540), or Maple Ridge ($23,052) if there is a MWBE requirement:** made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Justus Martin, carried.

1. **Board Training Plans:** Kristin explained that the board would receive their board training plans to sign at the next board meeting. The board will take District Law training presented by Ryan Cunningham and is required every three years.
2. **Water Quality Coordinating Committee:** Kristin explained that Sarah is the Water Quality Coordinating Committee is acting as a chair person to bring life back into the committee. Kristin explained that the District will need a representative that is not Sarah.

**Motion to appoint Shayla Pfendler as Water Quality Coordinating Committee representative for the District:** made by Paul Lauzon, 2nd by Justus Martin, carried.

1. **St. Lawrence River Watershed Revitalization Project:** Kristin explained that the District needs a representative from the District for the St. Lawrence River Watershed Revitalization Project

**Motion to appoint Shayla Pfendler as St. Lawrence River Watershed Revitalization Project representative for the District:** made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Justus Martin, carried.

1. **Third-Party Water Sampling Policy:** This is currently actively being worked on and will be presented at the next meeting.
2. **Contracts:** Kristin explained that we have three new grants that are going to be starting. Kristin will need permission to act on the board’s behalf to execute the contracts for the CRF 8, CAFO ENMP 1, and RRAMP 3 grants.

**Motion to approve Kristin Ballou to act on the board of directors’ behalf to execute contracts for the** **CRF 8, CAFO ENMP 1, and RRAMP 3 grants:** made by Dennis Egan, 2nd by Paul Lauzon.

1. **CWICNY Coordinator position:** Kristin outlined the need for a CWICNY Coordinator and the positive impact this role would have on the Districts in Franklin, Essex, Warren, Washington, and Clinton counties. It was explained that this would be a paid position funded through a five-year grant awarded by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation. After the five-year period, the position is expected to become self-sustaining. Franklin County was selected to hold the contract for this role. Board members expressed concerns about the additional responsibility and its potential impact on Kristin’s already heavy workload. However, she reassured them that the position would be a shared responsibility among all participating Districts and would ultimately benefit CWICNY as a whole.

**Motion to approve the CWICNY Coordinator Contract and Position Responsibilities, including advertisement of the position :** made by Paul Lauzon, 2nd by Justus Martin, carried.

1. **Duck Houses:** Allisa explained that Shayla sold 4 duck houses in the 2025 Tree Sale and that there was a need for the duck houses to be built as the District was unable to find someone to build them. The District plans to purchase the materials and build the duck houses as a team.

**Motion to approve funding for the duck house materials not to exceed $65:** made by Paul Lauzon, 2nd by Justus Martine, carried.

1. **Ag NPS Rd 24 16 1- Oakes:** Devin explained the status of the project and upon NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee approval the District would issue a partial payment.

**Motion to approve partial payment of $346,206.33 for Ag NPS Rd 24 16 1-Oakes upon approval of the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee:** made by Paul Lauzon, 2nd by Justus Martin, carried.

1. **Reports:**

**Kristin Ballou-District Manager-**

**AEM**

* AEM
	+ Working on Forest Conservation Plans as time allows
	+ Site visit with NRCS to certify and closeout completed EQIP Forestry projects
* Part B – 4 Forest Management Plans – 2025 4 Forest Management Plans
* Meetings/Workshops/Other
	+ Water Quality Symposium Course planning
	+ CWICNY
	+ Project site visits
	+ USFS Emergency Forest Restoration Program meetings and contract discussions
	+ Meeting with producers regarding funding opportunities
	+ Year end reporting
	+ NARE Event planning
* Grants:
	+ Ag. NPS Round 24 – working on closeout, partial payment information submitted to ag & markets for approval
	+ Ag. NPS Round 27 – project under construction, nearing completion
	+ CRF 7 – waiting on executed contract
	+ CRF 8 – waiting on contract
	+ CAFO 3 – waiting on closeout approval
	+ CAFO ENMP – 1 project awarded – Devin wrote application and is working on developing the POW
	+ Franklin County Septic Grant – application review and closeout document review and approval
	+ LCBP Covered Barnyard Project –working on contractor bids
	+ Lake Champlain Watershed Capacity Contract – contract executed – need to advertise position and schedule interviews, 25% advance voucher submitted
	+ Nature Conservancy Planting with a Purpose Grant – advertising program and discussing it with interested landowners
	+ RRAMP and Forest Roads 1 (CWICNY) – cleaning up financials, tracking projects and payments. Prepping to closeout Round 1. Working with Ag & Markets to develop a different data collection option that will also make the data tracking easier. Anticipated to roll out in the spring.
	+ RRAMP and Forest Roads 2 (CWICNY) – projects planned for 2025; need to plan on closing out at the end of 2025
	+ RRAMP and Forest Roads 3 (CWICNY) – contract executed and voucher submitted
	+ Smart Growth Grant – sent Inter-Municipal Agreement and Procurement Policy to County Attorney for review and feedback, awaiting a response
	+ WQIP Hydroseeding – Review of mulch bids and planning fieldwork
	+ WQIP NAACC – Planning fieldwork

**Allisa Blanchard-** **Secretary to the Board-**

* Obtaining information and guidelines for the Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF) Grants through NYS Archives-working on
* Sorting/organizing through documents & retention schedules as well as documentation to destroy per regulations
* Tree sales
* Established Wex cards
* Working with Verizon to set up phone account
* Working with Kristin & the bank on straightening bank accounts out & organized
* Updating & revamping the website
* Assisting individuals with water drop-off
* Took over nuisance beaver permit assistance
* Gathering information for ramp replacement & permit application
* Updating yearly documentation
* Assisting with annual reports
* Training documentation & tracking
* Updating timecard template
* Took, passed Notary Exam-Received notary
* Working with NYSLR system to get contacts updated
* Submitting NYSLR reports
* Worked on QuickBooks-setting up new company
* Processing payroll & deferred comp
* Conducting office administrative duties
* Completing year end reporting
* Processed W-2’s, W-3, 1099’s, etc.
* Assisting other staff with requests
* Attending site visits with staff to learn more about programs
* Attended and presented at the Women in STEM Event at Miner Institute
* Working on compiling the 2024 annual report to be sent to our mailing list

 **Devin-District Technician**

**AEM**

AEM Round 18 Tier 4 Projects:

1. Draft Engineer Designs 6- **Closed Out**
2. Fence and well in 7- **Closed Out**
3. Collecting bids 8- Closing out
4. Not started 9- Not started
5. Access Road started 10- Not started

11- **Closed Out**

Grown and Certified Infrastructure and Technology Grant out 11/27

* Assisted farms with application

**Ag NPS**

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

* Closing out project

Rd. 27 (Trumble)

* Extension

Round 30 (Applications due Feb. 24)

* Manure Storage
* Covered Barnyard/Manure Storage

**CAFO (ENMP)**

Papa’s Dairy Manure Storage

* Closing out project

Awarded 1 project in CAFO ENMP Rd. 1

**CRF Rd 7 CRF Rd 8**

All cover crops certified Plan of Work sent in

Getting District/Landowner Contracts signed

**Meetings/Workshops**

AgPAC – 1/21

Grants Workshop – 2/6

**Sarah Otis-District Technician**

**AEM**

* Attended Ag PAC meeting at Malone Courthouse
* Justin Tucker covered barnyard meeting

**Part C**

* Studied for and took the Pesticide Applicator Core and Category 3 exams -passed
* Prepared and presented animal tracks program to over 70 students for the women in STEM event with Allisa

**Permits**

 **Mines**

* Received edits on Scott Robinsons Upstate Pit expansion from DEC and started making corrections
* Made reclamation map for Village of Malone Lane Street Pit

**WQIP**

* Received bids for hydroseeding mulch

**Workshop**

* Terrestrial Connectivity Protocol Certification for NAACC Assessments

**Meetings**

* Meeting with Sue Hagar LCBP to discuss potential environmental education opportunities
* World Water Day Zoom meeting
* Scheduled this year’s first quarter Water Quality Coordinating Committee 3/6

**Shayla Pfendler-District Technician-**

**Part C**

Planting with Purpose (The Nature Conservancy)

* Moving forward with developing planting plans for interested landowners
* Awaiting confirmation for Site Visit with Mary Jo Newcomb

Municipal Assistance

* Salt Reduction Program received applications from: Village of Saranac Lake
* Tire Recycling locations and interest: Chateaugay set, Village of Saranac Lake & Town of Franklin interested; awaiting word for potential Moira location

2024 Annual Report

* Collecting data for narratives of projects completed alongside Allisa

**NAACC Culvert Assessment training**

* Non-Tidal Streams Protocol 1/8/25
* Terrestrial Passage Assessment 1/8/25
* To complete: Culvert Condition Assessment TBD

**2025 Tree Sale**

* 85 Orders to date
* 200 trees going to St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, also potential trees being purchased through School Assistance Program for Adirondack Education Center, BMC FFA purchased large order

**Social Media**

* Updated Facebook with Employee Highlights
* Several new followers and likes on page

**NARE**

* 2025 School email complete and sent out
* Confirmation from Mel Johnson (aquatics) with help for this portion of exam
* Awaiting word from Greg Vaverchak for forestry section

**Drone Certification**

* Completing FAA Part 107 Remote Pilot Knowledge Test Prep Course
* Pilot Knowledge Test Scheduled for Feb, 27th in Burlington @ Burlington Tech Center

**Arbor Day**

* Awaiting an interested party, potentially Moira

**Meetings and Site Visits Attended**

* World Water Day Meeting
* AEM Grant Workshop with CCE
* St. Regis Falls to identify tree health issues
* 2025 North Country Stormwater Conference Tradeshow meeting
* Ag NPS @ Justin Tucker’s farm

**Ryan Cunningham- NYS SWCC**

The New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee (NYS SWCC) Region 4 Report (February 2025) provides updates on key programs and deadlines. State Aid to Districts reports are due by February 15, 2025, and Districts should prepare for the Claim for Payment Blackout Period by submitting necessary payment requests by February 21. Round 30 Agricultural Non-Point Source Program has $25 million in funding available, with applications due by February 24. The next SWCC meeting is scheduled for February 25, and participation counts toward PM1, Part C of State Aid. The Tools and References Wiki has been updated for 2025, providing useful resources for conservation planning. The 2025 NYS Envirothon will take place at SUNY Cortland on May 28-29, and volunteers are needed. Districts can also request informal SWCC program reviews to assess and improve grant administration processes. Other announcements include the NACD Northeast & NYACD Annual Event (September 21-24, 2025, in Syracuse), SOGL 2025 funding opportunities for Great Lakes conservation projects, and DEC’s $15 million Community Reforestation Grant program, with applications due by March 12.

 **NRCS-USDA**

**Farm Bill:** Was extended for an additional year.

**Agricultural Risk Loss Coverage/Price Loss Coverage (ARC/PLC):**

Signup is underway now through April 15th for the 2025 crop year. This program is based on a farm’s historical crop base (planting history) for commodity crops such as corn, soybeans, barley, oats and wheat.

**Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC):**

Enrollment for the 2025 calendar year runs now through March 31, 2025. DMC provides payments when the national average milk price minus the national average feed cost is below at least $9.50 per hundredweight.

**Emergency Conservation Program:**  Provides cost-share assistance for debris removal, land stabilization, repair of permenant fence, and sugar bush cleanup resulting from damages due to the severe storms and flooding in August. The deadline has been extended to June 2, 2025.

**Emergency Forest Restoration Program:**

Franklin County was recently approved to hold a signup for EFRP. EFRP provides cost-share to conduct forest restoration measures and clean-up for private wood lot owners who sustained damages due to Tropcial Storm Debby. Signup is from February 10, 2025 through March 31, 2025.

**Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program:**

Provides coverage for crops not covered by the Federal Crop Insurance Program due to weather/natural disasters. The remaining deadline to obtain coverage for the 2025 growing season is:

* March 17 – Spring seeded fruits & vegetables, Hops, Pumpkins, Sorghum (forage)

There is no charge for basic coverage to producers who meet and certify to Limited Resource, Socially Disadvantaged, Beginning Farmer or Veteran Beginning Farmer criteria.

**Price** **Support Interest Rates (February 2025):**

* Marketing Assistance (Commodity) Loans: 5.25%
* Farm Storage Facility Loans:
	+ - 3 year 4.375%
		- 5 & 7 year 4.50%
		- 10 year 4.625%
		- 12 year 4.75%

**Farm Loan Program Interest Rates (February 2022):**

* Operating Loans 5.125%
* Ownership Loans 5.50 %
* Emergency Loans 3.75%

1. **Meeting Adjourned at 11:11 am**

**Motion to adjourn meeting:** made by Justus Martin, 2nd by Dennis Egan, carried.

**Next meeting**: March 18, 2025, at 9 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Allisa Blanchard

Secretary to the Board