



# Caledonia County

## Natural Resources Conservation District

### **Caledonia County NRCD Board Meeting Minutes February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

Present: Emily Finnegan, John Drew, Willie Nickerson, Gillian D’Acierno, Matt Langlais, Curt Busto

Open meeting: Willie opened the meeting at 12:14 pm.

Approve December 2025 meeting minutes: John moved to accept the December 2025 board meeting minutes, Gillian seconded. Motion passed.

Approve January 2026 meeting minutes: Emily reminded the board that they had met briefly after the local workgroup meeting in January to discuss two sole source exceptions to the procurement policy. Both of those sole source exceptions were approved. Willie made a motion to approve the January 2026 meeting minutes, John seconded. Motion passed.

Reflection on local workgroup & potential local fund pool application: A board member asked, what are we asking of the partner local workgroup specifically; what are we trying to get from that group? Are they supposed to help us set conservation priorities as we requested? Or are they supposed to help us create our local fund pool proposal? Matt reported that he attended the Essex County NRCD local workgroup, and the focus in that meeting was more on planning for a local fund pool, and ECNRCD asked attendees to consider NRCS practices. Emily explained that we chose to put less emphasis on NRCS practices, with the hope that would allow for feedback and creative solutions beyond NRCS practices. Both approaches have benefits and drawbacks. The general consensus was that having it be open-ended in terms of priorities and how to solve them, without getting bogged down in NRCS practices, worked well for CCNRCD this year. There was a brief discussion of what to focus on in CCNRCD’s local fund pool. Emily explained that they were thinking about focusing on flood resilience related practices, both on forest and ag land. Matt mentioned that soon, there would be new UVA standards, and all undersized culverts on enrolled lands will have to be evaluated and updated. This new requirement will be enforced through current use inspections. This might create more motivation for forest landowners to sign up for financial assistance from EQIP. The board was generally supportive of the idea presented, and would like Emily to share the local fund pool proposal once it is drafted.

**Gillian made a motion to support the local fund pool idea presented by Emily; John seconded; motion passed.**

6-month budget check-in: Emily presented what she was able to pull together for this meeting. Although a 6-month budget check-in does not usually represent what the FY26 final budget to actual will look like, Emily shared that she believes CCNRCD will lose a few thousand dollars this year. Emily suspects that this is due to a combination of over-charging hours to deliverables-based grants, the



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necessarily slow ramp-up of project-based work for Karina, and the government shutdown. Emily did not have time to write a narrative as she usually does, and the board emphasized that even if Emily improves the financial reports available to the board, they would still like the written narrative. The board will approve FY26 Q1-Q3 financials at the meeting in April 2026. Emily will also upload the bank statements for the first three months of FY26 into the board's google folder.

Telework stipend: Karina requested that the board re-visit the amount of the telework stipend and consider increasing it to better reflect the costs of working at home. There was some discussion of other examples of telework stipends. The VT state rate is \$65 per pay period for entirely home-based employees. Our current rate is \$11.53 per pay period for part-time home-based employees (other part-time in office). Emily mentioned that most other districts do not pay a telework stipend at all, even if they don't technically have enough desks in the office for all district employees to work there at the same time. While the board was generally supportive of some increase in the telework stipend, they want to make sure it fits within the budget. The board also wants to make sure that we consider whether increasing the telework stipend is the most effective way to show appreciation and provide compensation for all employees of CCNRCD. Emily will include various levels of a telework stipend in next year's budget and bring it to the board in April or June.

Willie adjourned the meeting at 2:00 pm.