



Caledonia County

Natural Resources Conservation District

Caledonia County NRCD Board Meeting Minutes June 8, 2026

Present: Emily Finnegan, John Drew, Willie Nickerson, Matt Langlais, Amber Reed (on Zoom), Ian Balcom (prospective board member), Curt Busto, Hannah Wigginton (for local fund pool discussion)

Open meeting – Willie opened the meeting at 12:05.

Introductions – Willie welcomed Ian Balcom, prospective board member, to the meeting. Everyone introduced themselves. Willie noted that he was going to try to run the meeting in a bit more of a structured way to make sure we have time to talk about everything on the agenda.

Approve April meeting minutes – The board reviewed the April minutes. John made a motion to approve the minutes. Curt seconded. Matt and John will follow up with the folks that they mentioned in April as being prospective board treasurers; motion passed.

Plant Sale reflection – Emily outlined the questions she’s interested in using as prompts, including how we felt about our level of involvement in the plant sale this year versus what we got out of it; thinking about what our involvement should be next year; and reflecting on how this event fits into our goals around presence and community engagement in Caledonia County.

- Could spending funds on more of a local event make more sense? There seemed to be lots of groups represented there, who was there may have blended together for the public
- How much would it cost to do a more local event? What kind of event would we want to do?
- Amber thinks that our involvement was worth \$2000 for CCNRCD; running a separate event is hard. Amber was really impressed by the cross section of people at the plant sale, especially for a conservation event. She suggested that UVM could have table there in the future for livestock and grazing TA
 - Opportunity – could be bigger? More of a fair? More food, more tables, farmer’s market style?
 - CCNRCD could add a product/vendor that would act as a fundraiser for our specific district
 - More indoor space would be nice
- Someone asked where the customers were from (i.e. how many were from Caledonia County); Emily will follow up with Sarah for that information
- Matt talked about the plant sale as a good opportunity for outreach to forest landowners –
 - Matt has heard a lot more talk about planting trees in the forest for climate mitigation purposes (related to forest health & opportunities for assisted migration of certain species) than even five years ago
 - Matt has been involved in tree planting projects on town lands, has talked to landowners about it; landowners are going to be hearing about it a lot more



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- All suggested further developing the workshop options & more clarity on schedule and locations
 - John - if people have to be there at a specific time the flow will have to change because entrance was backed up in pulses, not just at the beginning (part of what slowed it down was same day as flea market so John had to ask every car what event are you going to)
 - Amber suggested more hands-on workshops like the mushroom workshop (which was popular) – for example, an apple grafting workshop – participants get 2 free apple trees; 10 rootstock and 10 scion wood to do your own grafting; people could select scion wood
 - Blueberry pruning, participants get blueberry bushes
- Could a private consulting forestry firm that offers planting services be involved somehow?
 - With the idea that a forest landowner might purchase a few trees from the plant sale, but not realize that there are contractors that can plant thousands of trees on their land for them
- Do we want to have a fundraising event or do a community event because those are two different things with different primary goals; either type could be a community building event, but if we want to have our own fundraising event, that's an entirely separate event with different goals

Local Fund Pool update – Hannah Wigginton joined the meeting to talk about the local fund pool. She said that three contracts ended up getting funded this year. Later, Hannah followed up with Emily to say that four contracts actually ended up getting funded, totaling \$196,000 (our total allocation was \$250,000). She is not sure where the rest of the money allocated for the fund pool went, nor how that is decided. Hannah thinks that the additional contract(s?) withdrew their application(s?). Hannah reflected that most of the applications she has gotten funded in the past few years have been through a local fund pool. Amber suggested that local fund pools complicate applying for funding. There was a discussion about an upcoming potential change in the cap on contracts in the Farm Bill.

Emily reviewed the program and resource questions for this year's local fund pool. Matt suggested that whether or not an applicant has a forest management plan might be a better screening question than \$1000 in income related to forest products. Emily will follow up with Taylor to see if we can still change that. Amber expressed concern that biochar and contour farming were expensive practices that would use up too much of the local fund pool.

Emily will follow up with Hannah and Taylor to see if the board can hear from a farmer funded by the local fund pool directly.

DM Performance Review – Emily explained that the performance review spreadsheet is in the board google folder. Willie asked if there was a formal process, and Emily said that she thinks that last year they started on a formal process but didn't follow all the way through. Emily explained that an annual performance review will now be part of the Core Services agreement. Willie explained the Core Services agreement. Willie believes that it's the intention of NRCC to provide a template for an annual review for the DM. He also mentioned that there has been talk of suggesting to district boards that the DM review be a 360 review, maybe only with partners within NRCC?



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Willie suggested to the board that they review the spreadsheet that Emily filled out without Emily, and take some sort of action on it. John suggested that they could do it on a quick call in an executive session. Emily will follow up with requirements for executive session to follow town meeting law. The board decided on Wednesday June 24 at 9 am. Emily volunteered to be in the physical location during the meeting (the office conference room) so the board could meet on Zoom. Emily will get back into the self-evaluation and finish filling it out by the end of this week.

Board of supervisors: John made a motion to appoint Ian Balcom to the CCNRCD Board of Supervisors to the term ending in December 2026; Willie seconded; motion passed. Emily will send along resources/incorporate Ian into district shared folders & info.

Project updates – Emily reviewed a few project updates based on board interest.

- NEK Union capacity building RFP process update
 - Willie provided an update on the collaboration process
 - Emily will make sure folder with info on collaboration process is easily accessible from board google folder
- Sleepers Weir, Lazy Mill Rd culvert, and Stannard Mtn Rd culvert all have hired construction contractors & pre-construction meeting dates/time frames
- Governor Mattocks Rd design – Fitzgerald Environmental
- Jackson Dam project update
- Grant applications submitted
 - LISFF pay for practices application (through Windham County NRCD)
- Ongoing work on financial management
 - Proposal from Dave Dore
 - Matt wondered if 24 hours enough in a calendar year? Maybe add more in year 1; keep phrasing about not being charged for hours you don't use

Summer meeting schedule

- Board is interested in seeing Sleepers weir removal construction process; Emily will let them know a more specific day for that as soon as possible, estimate is that contractor will start in mid-July
- Next in-person board business meeting will be August 24th 11:30 to 1:30; Emily will send invites for that meeting and the rest of 2026 and then we can go from there

Willie made a motion to adjourn at 2:02, Amber seconded; motion passed.