



**White River
Natural
Resources
Conservation
District**

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White River NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting

July 16, 2026, 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM

In person, 28 Farmvu Drive, White River Jct, NRCS Conference Room

Or Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/ft3afp2WQgKpjgJsg-Q>

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Attendees: Kevin Geiger, Jean Hamilton, Jaiel Pulskamp, Didi Pershouse, Jennifer Byrne, Olivia Carlson, Alvina Harvey, Kate Willard, Trinity Stradford, Pat Richardson

Welcome and [Approval of June Minutes](#)

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 PM. The Chair noted the meeting was being recorded and that minutes would be posted publicly.

Didi Pershouse asked whether a formal vote was required to approve the June minutes; the Chair confirmed that it was. Kate Willard moved to approve the June minutes; Didi Pershouse seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

NRCS Updates

Olivia Carlson provided NRCS updates

- Recognition was given to Lyle for submitting his EQIP grant applications on time.
- The state office's EQIP agreement obligation deadline is July 31; NRCS is exploring whether more agreements can be pre-approved before then.
- Jennifer Byrne and NRCS meet monthly with Lyle and Bruce to coordinate workload.
- NACD technical assistance (TA) funding that previously supported Lyle and Bruce's workload has been fully spent, and neither NACD nor NRCS is currently providing replacement funding — creating a funding gap that has not existed before.
- NACD funding supports the district's EQIP-related work; American Farmland Trust (AFT) funding is also available, but it does not close the NACD/NRCS gap.
- The new NRCS Chief is in the process of negotiating the NACD contract.
- RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program) funding can support grazing planning and conservation planning, which may help absorb some of the TA workload.
- Remaining AFT funds must be spent by October.

Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TROC) — Regional Plan Update

Kevin Geiger, Chief Planner at the Two Rivers Regional Commission, introduced himself and gave an update on the draft regional plan, noting a communication gap between the Conservation District and the Regional Planning Commission.

Key changes and points discussed:

- Rural conservation areas are intended for agriculture, outdoor recreation, and forestry uses; the plan aims to avoid clearing forest for solar development.
- Ground-mounted solar above a home in a conserved area is capped at 15 kW; larger systems (around 20 kW) are treated differently under the proposed policy.
- Subdivision policy discourages "checkerboarding" a field; the plan supports a conservation subdivision process.
- Act 250 review is triggered at 10 or more units; 9 units or fewer do not trigger Act 250 review.
- A farm and processing accessory business is generally exempt from Act 250, and towns are required to allow accessory online businesses.
- Act 52 was also referenced in relation to these accessory-use provisions.
- There is an August 10 deadline for all comments to the plan.

Didi Pershouse recommended broader public awareness of upcoming regional plan hearings — for example, through local listservs and posters at town post offices. The board agreed the district should review the draft plan (particularly pesticide-related content and its treatment of pollinator and human health impacts), prepare comments, and request a summary of the substantive changes from the prior plan version.

District Updates

Intern Updates

Presenter: **Trinity Stradford**

- [Chemicals in the Environment as an Emerging Issue in Public Health and the Agricultural Food System](#)

Trinity Stradford presented her research report, "Chemicals in the Environment as an Emerging Issue in Public Health and the Agricultural Food System," examining PFAS, glyphosate, and atrazine and the district's role in supporting a transition away from chemical dependency in agriculture. The report covers invasive species, federal regulatory action, and opportunities for state-level leadership.

Didi Pershouse asked about follow-up on synthetic fertilizers. Trinity explained that a section on nitrogen and phosphorus inputs was drafted but ultimately set aside so the report could focus on chemical pesticides and herbicides, given the complexity of the fertilizer topic. Didi asked to review that removed section for use in her own farmer coursework.

The board also discussed the broader impact of chemical fertilizer costs on farm income, including pressure from global fertilizer markets connected to the conflict with Iran, and the disconnect between how water quality and chemical use are currently regulated.

Upcoming Events

- [July 20: Alternative Cropping Systems Event w/ NOFA VT](#)
- [Aug 4 & 5: Public Banking Congress, Hosting Don Morgan, President of BND](#)
- [CEMA/Soil Health Training Sept 10-12 @ VTSU](#)

The Public Banking Congress will include a Farm Resiliency Bus Tour and an all-day event at Vermont Law School aimed at educating farmers, lenders, and the public on public banking and state investment programs. Didi Pershouse asked about strategy for engaging larger banks; the focus will remain on local community banks and lenders.

Farm Force Funding

The district has a full three-year funding request from the Canaday Family Charitable Trust to relaunch its workforce development program. Funding would cover:

- Travel costs and a paid stipend for a work-brigade model
- Peer support through AgLearn
- Farm Forest Conservation Planner certification training, boot camps, and the Envirothon (Vermont and U.S. Virgin Islands)
- Investment in capital improvements and a permanent nursery/orchard training hub

VTSU Update

- Limited update; VTSU has a new President and Dean.
- The district is building a relationship around CAFE food training and brainstorming an agriculture engineering training program.
- August 22: Tree planting event with students at VTSU.
- Follow-up needed to reach out to the Langevin family about the house.

[FY27 Proposed Budget](#)

-  **WR FY27 Budget Draft.pdf-**
-  **FY27 WR NRCD District Budget - Agreements FY27 (1).pdf**
-  **WR FY26 BS.pdfFY26 Balance Sheet**
- Update on the 2027 budget and grant funding
- The district plans to move accounting from QuickBooks Desktop to QuickBooks Online (and to evaluate QuickBooks Nonprofit), despite some resistance from the accountant; Pat Richardson noted ongoing issues with the bank-link feature in QuickBooks and the case for keeping tighter, in-house control of banking records rather than relying on AI-based data entry.

- The board discussed adding a line item for board of supervisors mileage reimbursement, which is permitted by statute; a board attendance log covering the last six months will be compiled to support stipend and reimbursement payments.
- Pat Richardson noted the board needs clarity on what counts as a "community engagement" expense, and needs a mileage log for tracking travel across different projects.

Executive Session

- Kate Willard moved to enter executive session to discuss the salary plan and budget; Didi Pershouse seconded. Olivia Carlson, Trinity Stradford, and Jaiel Pulskamp were moved to a waiting room, and Pat Richardson remained for the discussion. The board entered executive session at 1:48 PM and returned to open session at 1:59 PM.
- The salary plan and budget were voted on and approved after the executive session ended.
- Kate Willard moved to pass the FY27 budget as presented; Didi Pershouse seconded. The motion carried.

NRCC & VACD Updates

- **Ag Staff Guide:**
 -  [VT NRCD Agriculture Staff Guidance Document Draft \(JB 6.2.26\)](#)
- **Act 250 Updates**  [Memorandum to NRCC SU Rep 7.16.26 \(1\).pdf](#)
-  [VACD Lobbyist Comments](#)

The board discussed whether the district is in compliance with board responsibilities outlined in the new staff guidance document, and agreed a workshop would help the board review the guide and align on next steps. It was noted that fiduciary duty over funds ultimately rests with the Council, and that Claire will be a direct employee of the Council. Kate Willard asked for time to review the guide in more detail before further discussion, and offered to help communicate with NRCC.

The board discussed forming a more permanent agriculture working group at NRCC for ongoing collaboration, and reviewed a memo on community engagement and environmental justice work, stressing that NRCC needs to be actively involved in the state's public engagement process (related to Act 181).

VACD

- There was discussion about VACD and the comments from VACD's Lobbyist
- Kate Willard emphasized that public entities should not be treated as confidential clients, and that districts should proactively engage with NRCC to ensure their voices are represented in the public involvement process.
- Some board members recalled an earlier mediation effort that engaged conflict-resolution facilitators to help address recurring issues within VACD; the group that led that effort was expected to report back with a strategy but has not yet done so. The board discussed tracking down that group and following up with VACD on the status of that mediation work.

District Advocacy Role:

The board discussed how much latitude the district has to advocate for policy positions on its own — for example, related to public banking and statutory updates — versus waiting for consensus across the state VACD network. There was general agreement that it is appropriate for the district to take initiative on issues it cares about rather than wait indefinitely for full alignment.

Jennifer Byrne agreed to draft a letter compiling the board's concerns (regarding Action Circles confidentiality practices, VACD oversight, and the Act 181 public engagement process) and circulate it to the board for review ahead of the August 18 VACD meeting. The board also agreed to work with Didi Pershouse to draft language for a VACD agenda item requesting a follow-up report from the prior mediation/strategy team.

Adjournment

Kate Willard moved to adjourn; Didi Pershouse seconded. The meeting adjourned at 2:51 PM.

Minutes compiled from the board's recorded notes and meeting transcripts by Jaiel Pulskamp.