

NRCC Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 17, 2023
8:30 am
Zoom Meeting

Agenda

1. Welcome (Rick)
2. Review and approve meeting minutes (Clare)
3. Financial Reports (Clare & Lina)
4. Grant proposals, approvals, and updates
 - o Trees for Streams (Wolcott Planting) (Jess)
 - o Enhancement Grant
 - o Other grants updates, as needed
5. Legislative Update (Jill)
6. Administrative Issues (Clare)
 - o Procurement policy - Follow-up
 - o Discussion of liability coverage for NRCC board and Finance Committee members
 - o NASCA Dues (\$3,000)
7. Other business, as required

Attendance: Rick Hopkins, Jill Arace, Richard Noel, Chris Von Alt, Clare Ireland, Jess Miller, Emily Nummer, and Lina Smith.

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 am.

Review of Meeting Minutes

Clare presented the finance committee meeting minutes for March 15, 2023 & April 19, 2023.

The motion was made by Richard to approve the minutes of March 15 as presented. Chris seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote, all were in favor.

The motion was made by Chris to approve the minutes of April 19 as presented. Rick seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote, all were in favor.

Financial Reports

Clare presented a draft of the Quarterly report (January – March) for discussion purposes. She noted she has some adjustments to make in accounts payable, which is due to a timing issue between invoices and receipt of payment. She also highlighted that the VACD personnel contract expense is currently booked solely to the management class but needs to be distributed through the agreements.

- Profit & Loss Statement:
 - o The new AgCWIP agreement is up and running with one full round of payments to districts (\$419,000)

- o Core Services second round invoices were paid.
- o NRCC has paid VACD \$110,000 in actual personnel costs to date. This is within budget.
- Balance Sheet
 - o NRCS RCPP Streams agreement is open but we haven't begun spending yet.
 - o The AgCWIP balance now includes the executed amendment to incorporate capacity building funds.
- A check detail report, deposit detail report, reconciliation detail report, and bank statements were also included for transparency, but not discussed in detail.

She noted there are plenty of funds available for all projects.

Comments:

Chris offered that consideration should be given to using a different bookkeeping system given the complexity of Council accounting.

Grant Proposals, Approvals, and Updates

Trees for Streams -

Wolcott Planting. Jess presented the application from Lamoille County NRCD for a tree planting at a Vermont Fish & Wildlife owned river access point in Wolcott. Jess noted this project is the 1st planting but is part of a much larger multi-year stream restoration project which involves Vermont Stream Conservancy and Vermont Fish & Wildlife.

Rick asked if there would be some promotional/educational signage on the site. Jess said she would look into this. Jill noted that she had emailed Troy regarding the possibility that this might be a good site for a dry hydrant.

Chris made the motion to approve the VT Fish & Wildlife Access planting for \$21,300. Richard seconded the motion. Upon call for a vote all were in favor.

Woody Buffer Block Grant. Clare reported that at a meeting with NRCC, DEC and Watersheds United Vermont the current Trees for Streams agreement was extended to 2026.

Enhancement Grant - Clare noted that the signed agreement is in place. Jill explained that the strategy for the next round will be to merge the balance of the old Design & Implementation grant with the new Enhancement Grant.

AgCWIP - Clare reported that an amendment has been executed to incorporate the new capacity building funds into the existing AgCWIP agreement. The next step will be to invoice the Agency of Ag and issue payments to districts for capacity building.

Project Development Block Grant - Clare reported that the current Project Development Agreement ending in June will not be extended. We already have a new agreement executed, and that agreement will begin funding projects after June.

Other Grant Updates - Clare noted that this has been an extremely busy time for grant invoicing. DEC will shut down for the month of June, and May 15 was the deadline to submit invoices before the shutdown.

Legislative Updates

Jill reported that it was a really busy legislative session with many new legislators that were learning a lot. When the legislature adjourned, we had \$250,000 additional ongoing funds in the budget which brings the total to \$612,000 in the core services going forward.

There are rumors that the governor might veto and if he does, there will be a veto session the week of June 20. Everything is up for grabs at that time. If it does get vetoed we will be reactivated again. She noted that District managers rose to the occasion being at the statehouse and connecting with legislators. Clare and Molly were also very involved in providing documents which had a short turn around.

Meanwhile a survey has been sent to supervisors regarding how to distribute the funds. The VACD board will also be discussing this Monday. A quorum is anticipated in the afternoon, and it is anticipated that the following committees will be formed:

- Governance Committee to consider changes to the VACD bylaws and statutory changes;
- Capacity Building Committee to consider various capacity issues, with an initial focus on HR issues and guidance, like district manager compensation, benefits and job descriptions;
- Board Development Committee to consider ways to strengthen the VACD and district boards; and
- Finance Committee to consider ways to strengthen VACD and district finances.

Jill thanked Chris for agreeing to join the VACD executive committee as treasurer.

Clare identified the following needs to move forward:

- Action Circles would like to have a series of 3-5 meetings over the next couple of months to prepare for the next legislative session.
- They have asked us to identify a core group of decision makers. One of the challenges has been sporadic attendance from some. Action Circles felt they could benefit from more consistency and more certainty in knowing who is a decision maker from various groups.
- More diverse input into the decision making. Get more supervisors involved and form a group of people to work on these issues. This might be something for the VACD Committees to help with.
- Having a series of meetings to solicit more input from supervisors and at the VACD board meeting.

Timeline of action items from Clare:

- A decision on how to allocate the extra funds from the legislature. A discussion about this will happen at the VACD board meeting, but NRCC will have the final decision. This must be finalized by the end of June.
- A budget for FY25. VAAFAM typically asks us to have a budget ready by August, but historically, we've provided this to them as late as early October.

- Statutory Recommendations. There is no hard date for this yet, but likely by early October.

Administrative Issues

Procurement Policy – Clare presented the updated policy with new wording that was requested by Chris at the last meeting. Richard made the motion to accept the policy as written. Chris seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote, all were in favor. It will be presented to NRCC for final approval.

Liability Coverage – Following up on a previous discussion of liability coverage for NRCC board and Finance Committee members, Clare presented correspondence with the Agency of Administration that confirms that Council is an agency of the state and therefore covered under all the State’s insurance policies. Clare will be receiving a copy of the policies to have on file.

In a discussion of who is insured, the definition of coverage is by virtue of being elected and/or appointed. Clare expressed that NRCC Board members are covered by virtue of being elected, and NRCC Finance Committee members are covered by virtue of being appointed to that specific role. Clare will confirm this with the Agency of Administration.

Chris asked if health insurance for district employees would be available through the state. Clare replied that there are no employees at the Council, so this is moot at the state level. There is a secondary question about whether districts are municipalities (in which case they would not be covered) or are they instrumentalities and therefore a subdivision of Council (and if so, they might be eligible for health insurance). This is an open question that legislative counsel will be looking into.

The Agency of Ag said they will start billing us for this insurance. We haven’t been budgeting for it up until now. We don’t know what that will be yet.

NASCA Dues (\$3,000) – Clare presented the bill for NASCA dues to the finance committee. She reported that she has been newly involved with NASCA but has found it to be a great resource. It’s a network that allows us to directly communicate with other state agencies across the country. After some discussion, it was agreed to pay the dues of \$3,000.

Clare also suggested that the executive director of NASCA be invited to a future Council meeting.

There was no other business.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:12 am.

The next meeting will be June 21st at 8:30 am.

The minutes were accepted as presented at the July 19, 2023 meeting.