

NRCC Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
April 19, 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 Enhancement Design & Implementation Block Grant
  - o Tactical Basin Planning - Review and approval of administrative budget
  - o Other grants updates, as needed
5. Legislative Update (Clare)
6. Discussion on District Performance Measures & Core Services (Clare)
7. Administrative Issues (Clare)
  - o Procurement policy - Review and approval
  - o Discussion of liability coverage for NRCC board and Finance Committee members
  - o Docusign
8. Other business, as required

Attendance: Rick Hopkins, 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. Because of the lack of quorum, minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting.

### Financial Reports

Clare noted she was not able to do the financial reports. She expects to have them available for the next meeting.

### Grant Proposals, Approvals, and Updates

**Enhancement Development, Design & Implementation Block Grant:** Clare reported that an agreement was received from DEC for the new Enhancement Block Grant and will be forwarded for signature to Rick. She reminded the board that this is a new grant intended to be a continuation of the Project Development and Design and Implementation Block grants with expanded project types and purposes. The total amount of the grant is \$631,000 with the possibility of an amendment to add money in the future. It will run through March 31, 2026. An RFA in winter of 2025 is planned. We expect to obligate the money quickly.

Rick asked if districts could target this money for aquatic invasive work. Clare noted that this is still an open question. There are other possibilities for supporting invasives work. VACD supported a federal grant application last year that would have supported invasive species work through out Vermont, and although it was not successful, we were encouraged to re-apply. Clare also noted the America the Beautiful grant which is new. Cory Ross from Windham County is looking into this. This grant would go through VACD. Jess also noted there is a Lake Champlain basin grant for invasive species.

**Tactical Basin Planning Grant:** Clare reminded the committee that this grant supports district involvement in the Tactical Basin Planning process, water quality work and engagement in the water quality council. Council submits some administrative costs for administering the grant and coordinating with DEC and also covers participation in Act 76. This represents a significant time commitment from Clare, attending meetings that are ongoing. The financial budget projection for this year is \$850 more than last year and covers administrative time. Last year, the districts received a total of \$215,000 which they each applied for individually. This year should be similar with final numbers available in mid-May. This funding covers district outreach and education around water quality issues, some project development for clean water projects and participation in the Basin Water Quality Council itself. This funding is entitled by statute so instead of RFA's, DEC asks for work plans from each district and the amount council receives will include all of the district's and administrative funding wrapped into a parent agreement.

Chris made the motion to approve the Administrative Costs and Act 76 Support for FY 24 Tactical Basin Planning in the amount of \$22,550.00, an \$850.00 increase from previous year. Upon a call for a vote, all were in favor.

**AgCWIP:** Emily reported that we are in a 4-year agreement with the Agency of Agriculture that provides funding for districts to do outreach and education, technical assistance and organizational capacity building related to agriculture clean water. The Agency has released an opportunity for organizational capacity and seven districts applied for this independently. To expedite administration of these new capacity building funds, VAAFM has asked us to add these funds and the associated deliverables to districts' preexisting AgCWIP agreements.

She reported that only 7 districts applied. Of those applications, only Essex district was not funded because there was not enough specificity in their application. She noted this is probably because Sam is new and will become more familiar with this type of work. White River applied separately on behalf of the CT River Watershed Partners Alliance, so that agreement will be made directly between VAAFM and White River. All others will be added to preexisting NRCC deliverables. Emily also noted a slight change to the payment schedule. She brought it to the finance committee because she wasn't sure if this requires approval: NRCC did not apply for this grant on behalf of districts, so we have no role in approving or denying these funds to districts.

Chris commented that it was ironic that they offered funding to increase capacity and then did not fund the district that submitted a weak proposal. This would seem to indicate there was a need there. There was a discussion about district capacity. Clare noted that the Agency of Agriculture had a different review process that might have affected Essex not receiving funds and she also noted discussions with DEC to put out additional capacity funding. The irony is that the people who are able to give them feedback in the development of those grants are the people who have the most capacity. A new funding model might be needed for capacity building funds.

The finance committee decided it did not need to approve the additional funding added to the AgCWIP agreement since these funds are not subject to NRCC approval.

### Legislative Updates

Clare recapped: VACD's initial request on behalf of districts was \$3 million. The House Agriculture Committee reduced the amount to \$1 million and some of that changed to one time funding. Now we are working with the Senate to at least get it converted to ongoing funding. District Managers have done a lot of outreach and now our request is being discussed in committee. There has been confusion about the nature of the request to move our funding into the Clean Water Fund. This would add restrictions on how it can be used so we are pushing back on that. A memo was created in the past couple of days which will be shared with the board restating our position, addressing some confusion and answering some questions.

### Discussion on District Performance Measures & Core Services (Clare)

Clare noted the House Agriculture Committee would like to look at our statute and noted the need to begin having conversations about FY 24 allocations as well as developing a request for FY25. She reviewed the Draft Budgeting & Statute Review Process document with the board.

The discussion included

- The role of the finance committee in this discussion
- Questions about why and what changes be made to the statute
  - o House Agriculture Committee is planning to review the statute which is forcing the issue
  - o Some of the language is antiquated
  - o Defining funding sources
  - o Would like to develop recommendations for changes
- Supervisor and DM roles in the decision making process

Clare asked for input on the next steps. Rick and Chris suggested ways to involve the Supervisory Unions by talking with them directly or having a series of informational meetings. Clare will try to develop that and will also look into options for legal support.

### Administrative Issues

#### **Procurement policy - Review and approval**

Rick noted the policy was developed in 2019 but was never signed. Chris stated he would like to change the language to be "of greatest value" instead of "best price". Clare will develop the requested language and send it out for the committee to review via email.

The motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Chris. Rick seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote, all were in favor.

### Other Business

There was no other business

The meeting was adjourned at 10:17 am.

The next meeting will be May 17th at 8:30 am.

