

Approved Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

April 23, 2025 – 8:30 am

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87661939646?pwd=VXpMYkRJSUtGYjRuTFJTa041bWMMyUT09>

Agenda

1. Welcome (Rick)
2. Review and approve March meeting minutes (Rick)
3. Grant Proposals, Approvals, and Updates
 - AgCWIP - MOU with Otter Creek (Clare & Emily)
 - AgCWIP - RFA Update (Emily)
 - Enhancement Design & Implementation Block Grant - RFA Update & DEC Funding Discussion (Clare)
 - Core Services One-Time Funding - Discussion of Strategy for Use of Balance (Clare)
 - Other grants updates, as needed
4. Admin Updates (Clare)
 - Office Space Request Update (Clare)
 - Website & Branding (Julia & Clare)
 - Organizational Policies Update (Clare)
 - SU Rep Guidance & Orientation - Discussion and Request for Feedback (Clare)
5. Impact of Executive Orders & Changes to Federal Funding - Update (Clare)
6. District Performance Review - Discussion and Request for Feedback (Clare)
7. Other business, as required

Attendance

Voting Members: Rick Hopkins, Richard Noel, and Bill Manner, Kate Willard

Other attendees (non-voting):

Clare Ireland, Administrator

Jessica Miller, Grants & Finance Manager

Emily Nummer, Agriculture Programs Manager

Julia King, Communications Manager

Michelle Monroe, VACD Executive Director joined at approximately 8:50 am.

Welcome

Rick welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

Approve Minutes of March Meeting

Richard made the motion, seconded by Bill to approve the minutes of March 2025. Upon a call for a vote, all voted in favor.

Grant Proposals, Approvals, and Updates

AgCWIP – RFA Update

Emily will send out the new RFA this week, and Michelle will step into Emily's role until Emily returns from maternity leave.

Enhancement Design & Implementation Block Grant - RFA Update & DEC Funding Discussion

Clare reported that \$2.3 million in applications were received in response to our latest RFA, and of this, \$1.2 million are eligible expenses. NRCC released \$1 million, so not everything will be funded. She has talked with DEC about the large demand, and they will try to get us more money in an amendment in July. She also noted that there is a good mix of projects from multiple districts. After a technical review, projects over \$20,000 will be brought to the Finance Committee for approval.

This should fully obligate funds under EDIBG, except for a smaller \$100,000 RFA for project development. A contingency fund will be created in case of budget adjustments due to inflation and tariffs or in the case of losing a federal match.

AgCWIP - MOU with Otter Creek

Clare explained that VAAFM's Agricultural Clean Water Initiative Program (AgCWIP) grant is intended to cover a wide range of agricultural activities that support water quality improvement. There is a large demand for this kind of agricultural work in Addison County and a number of unmet needs in the region. Michelle explained that VACD holds an AgCWIP agreement that funds VACD to hire a person to assist with certain kinds of agricultural work in Otter Creek. While this position is budgeted for under VACD's AgCWIP agreement, the work funded through VACD's AgCWIP agreement is separate from the work funded under Otter Creek's AgCWIP agreement. Michelle presented an MOU between VACD, NRCC, and Otter Creek that lays out the terms under which the VACD staff person will assist Otter Creek with Otter Creek's AgCWIP deliverables: 2/3 will go to VACD and 1/3 to Otter Creek. The deliverables will also be split accordingly.

After discussion, Bill made the motion, seconded by Richard to approve the MOU between Otter Creek and NRCC/VACD as presented. Upon a call for a vote, all were in favor.

Core Services One-Time Funding

Clare reported that there is a balance of \$6,685.00 in Core Services one-time funds to be spent by June 30th. She suggested these funds be used for the boat items originally requested by Poultney Mettowee and Windham County NRCD. The committee agreed with this strategy.

Admin Updates

Office Space Request Update

Clare reported that both the Agency of Ag and ANR are willing to extend office space to NRCC, but VAAFM has minimal space and would need to charge for use of offices whereas ANR has ample space and would not charge. The committee asked Clare to pursue the office space option with ANR.

Website & Branding

In an effort to improve Council's standing as an agency of the state, Julia has been in touch with the State of Vermont's Chief Marketing Office and has received the new State Natural Resources Conservation Council logo. The Chief Marketing Office developed the logo in the standard "moon over mountains" style. Now that we have this logo and official branding guidance from the state, business cards, stationery, and other outreach materials can be developed for Council. Julia will also pursue a state website.

Impact of Executive Orders and Changes to Federal Funding

Clare gave an update on the federal situation.

- Federal funds that were formerly frozen have been released for most districts.
- About \$555,000 for VACD staffing is still on hold, but is hopeful that a new court order will result in a release of these funds.
- Indications are that the recent Deferred Resignation Program (DRP) will have a significant impact on NRCS staffing levels in Vermont, but we don't have details yet.
- At this time, no specific USDA centers are at risk for closure. However, Clare is working with Building and General Services to identify unused state office space for districts if needed.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Meeting adjourned at 10:04 a.m.

The next finance committee is scheduled for May 21, 2025 at 8:30 am.