

Essex County Natural Resources Conservation District Board Meeting

May 21st, 2025

Meeting was called to order at 2:07 PM

Board attendance: Tim White, Bill Manning, Ursula Johnson, Chris von Alt

District staff: Sam Mayne, Clara Fernandez Odell

Public: None

Opening remarks

No opening remarks were given.

Approval of meeting minutes:

Bill moved to pass the April meeting minutes, Chris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Financials

- Financials were reviewed
 - Ursula noted an unknown bank charge which Sam said he would look into
 - Bill moved to approve the financials, Chris seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Accomplishments/Updates:

- Sam reported that the Wallace Pond lake project EDIBG application was not funded by either WUV or NRCC. He guessed that this was due to the volume of submissions and the award of funds for many projects in Essex County already.
- Project Updates:
 - Tree plantings in Guildhall have all been completed
 - Lakeshore plantings are happening this week on Miles Pond, Great Averill, and Maidstone

Meeting Topic(s)

- New hire
 - Sam presented the position description for a 3rd employee, a Watershed Restoration, Forestry, and Outreach Specialist.
 - All discussed the pros and cons of hiring another employee and the financial position of the District to do so. The work areas of the new position were also discussed. All were supportive of hiring.
- Agriculture Update
 - Clara reported that she had received an NRCS computer and was now able to take on a larger amount of NRCS contract work in the county. This would help the District see projects through from start to finish.
 - The deadline for NRCS applications for FY2026 is August 22nd
 - Clara discussed an upcoming event cohosted with Connecticut River Watershed Farmers Alliance in Canaan, and asked for board input on best timing and location.
 - Clara and Sam both attended Coos County Conservation District's recent equipment rental demo day, where many helpful pieces of equipment, available to Essex County farmers, were shown.
- Forestry update

- Clara met with County Forester Matt Langlais recently which resulted in a few potential events related to forestry
 - Matt was interested in some general events to help get forest owners in contact with him and other available resources, as well as cover the basics of Current Use and the Current Use Reserve program
 - We would like to showcase the an upcoming timber harvest on the Canaan Town Forest and use it as an educational opportunity
 - Matt is very interested in assisting with Christmas Tree growers
- Nursery Update
 - Between starts purchased from Intervale and started indoors by Clara this year, Clara will be getting about 2000 stems in the ground in the coming month, with more to come from silver maple she will be collecting soon.
 - Clara thinks the next important investment for scaling up the nursery is a seed starting space with automated watering, and will be completing the nursery business plan soon.
 - Clara will also be putting together a rainwater collection system at the nursery soon for an alternative water source.
- Payment & Performance Bonds
 - Sam asked for input from the board on including Payment and Performance Bonds as a requirement for the construction contractor replacing the Mink Brook/Baptist Hill Rd culvert in Lunenburg. All thought that the money was better held in reserve in case of unforeseen overages and trusted Austin Excavation based on their reputation to not require these bonds.
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Other Business

- Bill announced that he had invited the Executive Director of the Memphremagog Science & Education Center to present at the June ECNRCD board meeting.
- Bill and Clara discussed the plan to host a Conservation Field Day at Bill's farm this fall.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held 12:30 PM June 18th in the conference room at the US Fish & Wildlife Service Silvio O. Conte Refuge Nulhegan Basin Welcome Center.

Tim made the motion to adjourn at 4:12 PM. Chris seconded. Motion carried unanimously.