

Essex County Natural Resources Conservation District Board Meeting

June 18th, 2025

Meeting was called to order at 12:30 PM

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

District staff: Sam Mayne, Clara Fernandez Odell

Public: John Aldridge (MemSEC)

Opening remarks

Bill welcomed John Aldridge from MemSEC and suggested we allow him to present to the board first.

Approval of meeting minutes:

Chris moved to pass the May meeting minutes, Tim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Financials

- Bill moved to pass the May financial reports, Tim seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Accomplishments/Updates:

- Bill reported that he had gotten positive feedback but had no solid update on the mycelium pollutant reduction grant submitted to VHCB
- Clara gave an update about agricultural programming
 - She attended a Canaan Naturally Connected meeting, which was very helpful and she expects to attend several local community events to connect with new producers
 - PSNT testing is coming up soon
 - Clara is working with a teacher from Canaan to set up a consistent after school program
 - There will be a Conservation Field Day at Bill's farm on September 22nd. We plan to invite all Essex County schools and some Orleans in addition.
 - Clara and the board discussed the feasibility and obstacles to on-farm processing of meat and dairy products to allow for local market access, including regulatory hurdles, a lack of nearby processing facilities and their high cost, and transportation challenges.
 - All were complimentary of Clara's newsletter
- Clara gave a nursery update
 - The board may go to the nursery to see it next month
 - Silver maple has been germinating well recently, and so has tamarack
 - Will be picking up start from Intervale on Friday
- Project Updates:
 - The Larsen planting and gully remediation was completed on Maidstone
 - T. J. Boyle was selected for clean water designs on a private property on Maidstone and the Neal Pond, Shadow Lake, and Norton Pond Fish & Wildlife Access Areas.
 - Sam is continuing to solicit bids for designs of the culvert projects on Maidstone State Park, with one bid having come in well over the awarded budget.

Meeting Topic(s)

- Presentation from John Aldridge, MemSEC Executive Director about the Memphremagog Science & Education Center
 - John described the floating classroom program where students go out on the Northern Star boat and do a number of experiential learning activities, including measuring water clarity, looking at microbes in lake water, and learning about maritime navigation.
 - He also described the Gateway Center, a hands-on classroom at MemSEC which allows students to learn about lake and river geology, the first peoples of the region, and more.
 - John and the ECNRCD board and staff discussed ways the two organizations could cooperate in the future.
- All agreed to the proposed plan for the Tri-District meeting on September including a boat tour on Maidstone
 - Chris said he could communicate with the other Union representatives to determine any needed business items for a meeting.
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Other Business

- Sam reminded the board of Clara's scheduled \$2/hour raise.
 - Bill asked if that was adequate, and Sam agreed it could be larger. Bill also suggested Sam should receive a raise. All agreed that both employees were doing very well and deserved a raise. Sam confirmed when asked that financially the District could support it, though it might require a revisit of our billable rate.
 - Bill moved to raise Clara's pay \$3/hour, from \$22 to \$25. Tim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
 - Bill moved to raise Sam's pay \$3/hour, from \$25 to \$28. Tim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
 - Both Sam and Clara thanked the board for their generosity
- The board discussed their role in the hiring process for the currently listed position. They were comfortable with any role that was helpful. Sam said he did value their input in a second round of interviews, and said he and Clara would narrow the field before determining whether they felt it was needed to include them.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held 12:30 PM July 16th 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 3:05 PM. Chris seconded. Motion carried unanimously.