



Eastern Connecticut RC&D

Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.
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John Guszkowski, President
Lois Bruinooge, Vice President
Barbara Kelly, Treasurer
Margot Burns, Secretary

Eastern Connecticut RC&D Council Meeting Minutes Monday, October 22, 2012 RiverCOG Offices, 145 Dennison Road, Essex CT

Board Members in Attendance: Margot Burns, Wini Olson, Jude Rondeau, Lois Bruinooge, Tom Seidel, Philip Chester, Tom O'Dell, Jennifer Kaufman, John Guszkowski

Board Member not in attendance: Jim Gooch, Barb Kelly, Jim Larkin, Lee Szurba, Paula Stahl

Other Attendees: Jane Slupeck, Elaine Sych, Amanda Fargo-Johnson, Chris Donnelly, Sal DeCarli, Javier Cruz

John Guszkowski called the meeting to order at 12:30

Secretaries Report:

Elaine requested that the meeting minutes reflect the motion for the board to support the application of Killingly, Thompson, and Putnam in a Brownfields Grant. Elaine also asked if the "private" session should be changed to an "Executive" session.

Elaine asked why there were no committee reports. Margot wanted to discuss how Sal had structured the minutes for the last two meetings. She acknowledged that the minutes were more elaborate when Liz was full time, and that it often took her a full day to generate the meeting minutes. She stated that she is not able to spend that amount of time on the minutes anymore but thinks that Sal should be making the minutes more detailed.

John stated that in the interest of time Sal was trying to make the minutes more streamlined, and that the minutes reflected the required action items.

Elaine stated that there was a motion missed at the last meeting that was not reflected in the minutes. She also commented that it would be hard for someone who didn't attend the meeting to figure out what went on if the minutes are too abbreviated.

Margot wants there to be a happy medium so if a council member didn't attend the meeting they could still "get the general gist" from the meeting minutes, and stated that it needs to be more than just the motions.

John asked that each item on the agenda be reflected in the minutes.

Phil asked that there be a mention of all board members in attendance and a mention of those absent. Lois would like to see all attendees listed including staff and partners present.

Wini emphasized that there should be a “legal record”

Motion: to accept the meeting minutes from the August 27th meeting as amended

Motion Made by: Lois

Seconded by: Tom O.

Voted: Motion passed

Treasurer’s Report

Reviewed financial statement, Profit/Loss Statement, and Project Accounting

John stated that Barb was not able to attend the meeting because of an appointment, but that she was back in Ct after hiking the Appalachian Trail. John stated on behalf of Barb that she needed guidance and support in making investment decisions. Barb also suggested that the board setup an ad-hoc subcommittee to make investment decisions. Paula had said previously that she would be willing to help out and John asked if anyone else would be willing. Wini indicated that she would be willing to assist with investment decisions.

Motion: to enter the treasurer’s report into the records

Motion Made by: Margot

Seconded by: Judy

Voted: Motion passed

Environmental Review Team (see attached memorandum)

ERT is continuing their postcard survey until their meeting with DEEP in December. Amanda created a QR code for ERT that will go on ERT outreach materials and link to the ERT website.

At the recent subcommittee meeting, the subcommittee voted to change how the salary is paid under “Salary and Progress Review.” Changes were approved at the subcommittee level and now needs to be approved by the council.

Motion: for ERT salary to be paid biweekly in 26 equal payments for the ERT coordinator, and biweekly for hours worked by part-time employees

Motion Made by: Wini

Seconded by: Margot

Voted: Motion passed

Another change to the ERT Manual was on page 22, under “ERT Request Procedures” under “Statewide Subcommittee” was that “ERT has the authority to respond by the phone (*or electronically*)”

Elaine was asked by the subcommittee to see if state ethics laws apply to the council because of state funds being reviewed by the ERT program. Elaine talked with Brian O'Dowd, Deputy General Council of the State Ethics Commission Office, and in their verbal phone conversation he said that it appears RC&D is subject to state ethics laws

John suggested that everyone look at the ethics laws and if members question whether the ethics laws apply to RC&D it could be discussed at the meeting in December at the next meeting.

Lois wanted to compare the current RC&D Conflict of Interest document with the state ethics document provided by Elaine, and determine if there is enough overlap that we can say we are abiding by the state ethics requirements

John stated that he will be having a phone conference with Denise Savageau and Jeffrey Folger to discuss how and if there will be coordination this year to receive state funding.

Project Manager Update

Peat 319 is working with growers to get the experimental peat substitute into production lines. A few nurseries have pulled out of the project because of their operational changes (plants, substrate, etc. .)

Shoreline Protection BMP project has not been making very much headway. There was a conference call with John (RC&D), Sal (RC&D), Chuck Lee (CT DEEP), and Josh (F&O). Chuck expressed that he was not satisfied with F&O's progress. He requested the F&O get an editor to go through the document for grammar and to replace some of the scientific language with more common terms. Until Chuck is satisfied he is going to hold back partial payments.

John updated the board on the VCP project. He stated that he is in communications with partners on the status of Brother's processing operation. John has also conducted multiple visits to the processing facility and believes they will have USDA approval in 1 month. John also visited with Bogner's Meats in Vernon and local Dairy operations. He also attended the New England Regional Meat Conference Planning Committee meeting.

RC&D received a contribution agreement from NRCS to conduct soil health workshop in 2013

Sal asked about how to bill postage from the mailing of Municipal Zoning Regulations Guide. Phil stated that it could come out of the Ag Committee budget for 2013.

Committee Reports

Agriculture

Phill stated that the committee had not met since the last meeting.

John asked Phil if the Ag. Committee could recommend to the full board that they approve the submission of an Ag. Viability Grant for the Advocate program, which has a deadline fast approaching. Grant should be 40-50K.

Motion: that the board approve the submission of an Ag. Viability Grant for the Advocate Program with specifics to be determined by the Advocate Steering Committee

Motion Made by: Phil

Seconded by: Jennifer

Voted: Motion passed

Greenways

Margot stated that the first GPS unit was leased out today to the Clinton Land trust. She asked that the board assist in getting the word out about the GPS unit availability. The units are free to use but require the user to have ArcPAD. ArcPAD costs about \$150. Margot also reported back to the group about the Greenway's recent survey. Tom O. commented that one of the biggest problems facing open space is stewardship, and that it is a problem for both Land Trusts and Municipalities.

Sustainable Communities

Elaine stated that the Lakeshore BMP was behind schedule

Elaine asked Chris Donnelly, Urban Forestry Coordinator, Division of Forestry, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Urban Forester with the State of Connecticut, to update the board on the new CT State Vegetation Task Force

Jane Slupeck update the board on some of the Farm to School results. She said that they go a lot of useful information from food service directors. Jane also said that the food service directors are really struggling and could use assistance with recipes that work with the new meal plans

John updated the board on the Brownfields Grant that they had agreed to support at the last meeting. It turned out that a non-profit was not eligible to apply for the grant, and that one of the towns was going to need to take the lead on the grant.

Farm Energy Program (see attached program update)

Amanda distributed the Farm Energy Program Update

The 2012 CT Farm and Energy Expo will be held on December 1st at the Glastonbury Riverfront Community Center

New Business

Strategic Planning Follow-up

Phil made a motion to empower the executive committee to scope, advertise, and interview candidates for the Executive Director Position Jennifer 2ed.

Wini asked if the money to pay for the Executive Director position would come out of ERT funds. John said that funds would not come out of ERT funds, and that there are about \$100k in unrestricted RC&D funds that could be used.

Phil's motion was tabled

Tom O. suggested that there first be a motion to accept the strategic plan before acting on the recommendation of appointing a executive director, which was identified in the plan.

Motion: to accept the strategic plan as detailed in pages 10-16

Motion Made by: Tom O.

Seconded by: Lois

Nay by: Wini

Voted: Motion passed

Tom O stated some examples where it worked out very well for some organizations (CLCC) to start with a part-time executive director, and then move to a fulltime executive director.

John stated that the ERT subcommittee decided that there is a need for more documentation from Elaine and Jim in reference to ERT funds, to get a more definitive set of guidances that had existed on ERT funding. Once we can get those we can get a sense if those documents change our opinion or our attorneys opinion and then go to DEEP for concurrence. John stated that we are likely going to have an executive on board before this issue gets figured out.

Tom S. stated that he had a concern of the long-term viability of everything.

Motion: to again to empower the executive committee to scope, advertise, and interview candidates for the Executive Director Position, and make recommendations on compensation and the source of compensation

Motion Made by: Phil

Seconded by: Jennifer

Nay by: Wini

Voted: Motion passed

Wini wanted the record to reflect her comment that "Someone has to speak up for ERT"

Old business

AGvocate Project Coordinator Recommendation

John recused himself and left the room

Lois gave background on the current status of the Agvocate program. She then gave details of the Agvocate Subcommittee's process thus far for trying to find a qualified Agvocate Coordinator.

Lois stated that the committee had interviewed 4 applicants in response to their solicitation. And after much deliberation choose CME as the most qualified entity to take the Agvocate position. The Agvocate Steering Committee recommended that the council approve their decision to hire CME as the Agvocate Program Coordinator.

Lois stated that if the program is to grow that John and CME provide the best opportunity to do that.

Phil wanted to make sure that John would not be signing the upcoming Ag. Viability application for the Agvocate and that he would not be working on the application.

Motion: to approve the Agvocate steering committee's recommendation to award the Agvocate contract to CME for the Agvocate position for \$14,000.00 for approximately 1 year

Motion Made by: Lois

Seconded by: Jennifer

Abstention by: Wini

Voted: Motion passed

Partner Updates

NRCS

Javier informed the board that Jay Mar has left CT, and has taken a position in Iowa as the State Conservationist there. Nancy is now the acting State Conservationist until a replacement for Jay is found. James Hyde is now the state Agronomist and Vivian Felton has replaced him as the district Conservationist. No news on new Farm Bill yet.

CACD

Tom O. stated that CACD had recommended to the conservation districts that their RC&D representatives listen to funding that is going to be spent at RC&D meetings. CACD recommended that representatives of these conservation districts vote against and RC&D funding that would be applied from ERT surplus until the State provides documentation that ERT funds can be used for RC&D programs.

Adjourn

Next meeting set for noon on December 17, 2012 in Vernon, CT at the Tolland Agricultural Center

Motion: to adjourn

Motion Made by: Phil

Seconded by: Jennifer

Voted: Motion passed