

Eastern Connecticut RC&D Council
Monday, April 25, 2011
12:20 pm - 2:30 pm
Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Eastern Connecticut RC&D Council, Inc. was called to order at 12:20 p.m. by President John Guskowski.

Present:

John Guskowski, WLA, President
Lee Szruba, Thames River Basin Partnership
Margot Burns, CRERPA, Secretary
Elaine Sych, ERT
Phil Chester, WINCOG, Vice President
Amanda Fargo-Johnson, ERT
Tom ODell, CRCCD

Wini Olsen, Essex Land Trust
Paula Stahl, GVI
Lois Bruinooge, TLGV
Barbara Kelly, Treasurer
Judy Rondo, ECCD
Jane Slupecki, CT Dept. of Agriculture

NRCS Updates

Due to NRCS funding withdrawal Joyce Purcell was unable to attend.

RC&D Program Update

National Program Funding –

Eastern CT RC&D was defunded at the federal level for the current fiscal year.

Abbie Cadman has been reassigned and is no longer RC&D Coordinator.

Files and RC&D office equipment and supplies are still located at the Brooklyn NRCS office.

Contract Status Updates:

Any cooperate funding agreements were suspended for the RC&D line item.

The outstanding budget item for the NRCS give back money that was unable to be recovered from NRCS was the \$1,600.00 for CT Tree Warden Association Certification Program Scholarships. All other allocations were honored.

NRCS continuing projects:

- Agriculture Zoning Best Management Practices;
- Putnam Saturdays Farmers Market Program;
- Equine Outreach with Kings Mark.

Secretary's Report

Motion: To approve the minutes of 2/28/11 with corrections.

Motion made by: Tom O'Dell

Seconded by: Paula Stahl

Voted: Motion passed

Treasurer's Report:

There is \$2,300.00 left in the project support line item. Discussion concerned if the tree warden scholarship funding in the amount of \$1,600.00 should be taken out of this line item. A letter to be written by Margot Burns is to be sent to the Tree Wardens Association to let them know that the original funding was withdrawn and the funding will come out of our programs support line item.

Motion: To fund the outstanding \$1,600.00 tree warden scholarships out of project support.

Motion made by: Tom O'Dell

Seconded by: Lois Bruinooge

Voted: Motion passed

Program accounts at \$113,472 includes about \$35,000 to be allocated to the Eightmile River Program. The council has approximately \$80,000 in unrestricted funds.

Motion: to receive and place in file.

Motion made by: Lee Szruba

Seconded by: Paula

Voted: Motion passed

Environmental Review Team:

ERT just had field review for Gunther property. Tolland Agricultural Center board is looking to acquire the property and want to have a natural resource inventory performed.

The Ridgefield to Ridgebury natural resource inventory is scheduled for May.

Legislative updates – funding is unclear for the next fiscal year.

Subcommittee earmarked \$40,000.00 from non-budgetary funds for a State wide land use education program to Green Valley Institute. ERT subcommittee wanted to ask the full council for support for this program. Tom O'Dell asked about including storm water management within the curriculum. Funding is to be for one year. The name of the program is still to be determined.

Motion: to engage \$40,000 and enter into draft cooperative agreement with UConn.

Motion made by: Phil Chester

Seconded by: Tom O'Dell

Voted: Motion passed

Committee Reports

Agriculture

The committee last met in March. There is ongoing discussion concerning the odor complaint issues at the Brothers slaughter house. John Guskowski mentioned interest by meat producers to come together to rent half of the slaughter house facility to create an end of processing facility for packaging etc.. Phil Chester would like to have the Town of Bozrah in the Advocate program. The advisory subcommittee regarding agricultural zoning regulations also met in March regarding the first advisory meeting on land use and agricultural zoning regulations.

Attendees included representatives from the Dept. of Agriculture, the Farm Bureau, and the advocate program. The contract is at AFT for approval. Converting Dairy Manure Fiber into Plant Growing Media as a nutrient removal strategy is in final phase of contract scope discussion with DEP. John Guskowski is working on the project with Cooperative Development Institute of New Hampshire. The regional dairy beef project was discussed.

Greenways – Margot Burns

The last meeting was held on March 24th. The draft final copy for the area plan was handed out. It is hoped a project for the upcoming year will be to conduct a survey regarding greenway and open space development within Plans of Conservation and Development with the State's land use commissions and in partnership with CACIWC. Margot will be presenting at the CLCC conference concerning the creation of a GIS based land records system for the State as a support system for the conservation community in their greenway planning and land preservation efforts. 3 GPS receivers have been purchased and accompanying software will be purchased. The Park River greenway project has available approximately \$68,000 on the south branch and \$77,000 on north branch. John Guskowski will be meeting with a group for the North Branch with UHart, Annie Fisher School and others who would like to develop a trail and outlook platform. DEP reports that the funds are available for the project.

Livable Communities – Elaine Sych

The last meeting was held on March 23rd. The contract for the shoreline best management practices guidelines was awarded to Fuss and O'Neill. John Guskowski will be working with them to finalize a scope of services. The Ct Tree Warden Association Scholarships were awarded. Jane Slupecki from the Dept of Agriculture reported that the State of CT has received \$11,000 towards work on the State's farm to school program from \$250,000 in funding received by the Regional Farm to Schools Network and awarded to Franklin County Community Foundation who is giving sub grants to the States. Jane would like help to conduct a base line survey to find out where we stand in the State in regards to Farm to School programs. Work plans would have to be submitted. The survey would have to be completed by the end of January, 2012. Farmers, Food Service Providers, and Wholesalers are the primary targets.

Motion: To develop a contract with Franklin County Community Foundation to create a base line survey to find out where we stand in the State in regards to Farm to School programs and have John Guskowski sign it.

Motion made by: Phil Chester

Seconded by: Paula Stahl

Voted: Motion passed

Farm Energy Program:

Rural Development came out with the notice of still sitting applicants. Due date for this is June 15th. Amanda met with candidates from Lebanon and Canterbury. Attended conferences include: The NOFA Conference, NE Dairy Conference, Ag Day at the Capital, and Roses for Autism. The program will be applying for continuing funding from the RITA grant. They will be working on the Farm Energy Fair with Eastern CT State University.

New Business:

New England Fall Conference:

3 options: Same as previous year; Scale back conference to two days; or cancel the conference. The question arose as to our position as a continuing partner with NRCS. It was concluded that we are a permanent program of NRCS and that they should attend the Fall conference. The Council would support sending 1 or 2 people to a shortened fall conference. The conference should be geared toward the sustainability of RC&D's.

Strategic Planning Session:

Discussion: Now that we are operating independently of NRCS should we as a council participate together in a strategic planning process to chart our course for the future in special meetings outside of regular council meetings sometime before the annual meeting. John will contact a facilitator. John and Phil will coordinate. The council agreed.

Project Management:

John will create a list of projects and people responsible for them..

2011 – 2012 Budget Preparation

Barbara and John will take the lead on it. Committee chairs should submit their budget needs as soon as possible.

Old Business:

Letters of Appointment are needed from those who have not submitted them.

Annual / Area Plan:

We will not worry about the Annual Plan immediately but will focus on getting the Annual Plan in place. Committee Chairs should get the sections in as soon as possible.

Annual Meeting Update:

The Annual Meeting will take place as scheduled on June 15th . Cost to attend will be \$20.

Partner Updates:

Paula Stahl handed out flyers for GVI workshops to take place in May funded by RC&D through the NRCS give back money funds. Tom O'Dell reported that a grant has been applied for by Ct River Coastal Conservation District and there will be a possible workshop and/or training opportunity for equine BMP through NRCS and the Long Island Sound Futures Fund.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm.