

Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition, Inc.

Wednesday, September 4, 2019

UVM Extension Office
23 Pond Lane, Middlebury, VT



9:30 am **Directors Business Meeting Minutes**

In attendance: Eric Clifford, David Conant, George Foster, Ray Brands, Loren Wood, Rachel Orr, Lorenzo Whitcomb, Jeff Carter, Brian Kemp, Kirsten Workman, Tim Kayhart

Call to order & President's Report

Brian Kemp

Lots of things going on. Developments in the Governor's office/ANR/VAAFAM with wetlands, Harvey will join us later. Working groups (wetland, ecosystem services, others). Dairy Water Collaborative also, Update in main meeting.

Secretary Report

Kirsten Workman

Motion to approve July Minutes: George Foster

Second: Brian Kemp

Discussion: add strategic plan note

Passed (11/0/0)

Membership Applications

Kirsten Workman

Class I – Vermont Farmer Member

Richard & Cynthia Larson, Larson Farm (Wells, VT)

Class III – Supporting Business Member

Addison County Chamber of Commerce (Rob Carter) – membership trade

Motion to approve membership applications as presented: Rachel Orr

Second: Lorenzo Whitcomb

Discussion: none

Passed (11/0/0)

Treasurer Report

Jeff Carter

Jeff presented Profit & Loss and Balance Sheet through 9-4-19

Motion to approve July Minutes: Loren Wood

Second: Ben Dykema

Discussion: none

Passed (11/0/0)

Staffing Plan Discussion/VAAFAM Clean Water Grant Application

Jeff/Kirsten

Jeff described existing grant from CWF and new application submitted to augment existing funding. We asked for additional funding fill in staffing to create a full-time ED/Program person, communications consultant. It would implement our strategic plan and also allow for putting practice information into Partner Database.

UVM Extension in similar situation. Waiting to hear on funding before we make

Other Updates

All

- CEAP Announcement coming in October – paired watershed study (Dead Creek/Little Otter). Joshua Faulkner will likely be leading the initiative for UVM Extension
- ANR request for participation in the Land and Water Conservation Study draft scoping of plan...September 6th

- Migrant Justice talking about some announcement on October 1st.

10:00 am Updates and Discussion

Additional attendees: Harvey Smith, Jed Davis

Program Reports

Kirsten/Jeff

CWIP Grant Update - Crop Patrols

September – Manure Injection

October – Grassed Waterways & Buffers

Invite WCAX reporter (Marie will send contact info) and new Addison Independent reporter

Send specific invite to Harvey to share with legislature

Tile Drainage Sampling

Kristin gave an update with transition after Nate's departure.

Need to collect records (mostly NMP data) – fertilizer/manure applications, harvests, RUSLE, etc.

Need to also get some manure spreading event sampling event (would need a manure sample too)

Addison County Field Days – Drill Demo

Bourdeau Bros Open House – September 5th

Funding Updates

VAAFM [Capital Equipment Assistance Program](#)

Kirsten

Opens Sept 1st, Due Nov. 1st

VHCB [Water Quality Grants for Farmers](#)

Kirsten

Open Now, Due Nov. 8th

Dairy Water Quality Collaborative Recap & Next Steps

Marie/Brian

Consensus is to keep it going. Will Raap no longer participating. David Marvin/Gil Livingston may not continue coordination, TBD. The group had gotten bigger. Definitely more participation from environmental advocacy groups, that was intentional. VtNRC, CLF, The Nature Conservancy. Jen Dugan is a new CLF representative (not sure her position with CLF). She lobbied to include more language in vision statement regarding 'harmful chemical inputs' but it was not included yet.

Jeff Carter asked how this group expects to effect change...through policy change? Original intent was to bring light to the dairy crisis and how water quality regulations were impacting some of that. However, it changed and evolved as time went on. Ultimately sent out their 8-point plan to legislature (and public). Gil wanted to move it forward, but he realizes that there may need to be more resources: facilitator, etc. Unlikely they would be able to pull off any policy proposals this session. Overarching goal would be to have farmers and env'tal groups to agree on SOMETHING. Harvey pointed out that the TMDL was a place where everyone came together and agreed...on loading, reduction goals, progress towards those goals. 82% of reductions came from agriculture.

Marie talked about this newest version. It is very stressful. Public momentum could easily be headed in the wrong direction. If we lose public support, we could lose legislative support. We need to keep participating and make sure the visioning and language stays on point with water quality goals. They continue to try and fold in social justice issues. Gil Livingston did try to keep that at bay in the current version. The participating groups have incredible reach (and privilege)...thousands of people. VLT, VHCB, Farm2Plate. FWA, Paul Doton, Brian/Marie, Abby Corse, Jack Lazor, Graham, Grace (NOFA). Gil & Dave are going to switch from 'vision' to 'goals'. Marie would like to be replaced...but they do want consistency. There will be a stipend.

Brian...if we're not at the table, the other groups are going to drive the bus. When farmers left early at one meeting, a lot of irrelevant language got added. Chuck Ross pointed out that having challenges/disagreements is okay (and even good), but let's work on what we can agree on and move forward. David Mears also emphasized maintaining focus on water quality.

Marie would like more input. Ben pointed out that we may need to do more education of some of the folks representing the env'tal groups. If we are going to agree on anything, they need to have better information. They haven't bought in that practices farmers are implementing are actually doing anything. Plus..there are still black eyes.

Wetlands Update

Harvey Smith reminded us of the history of the conversation. This year was a perfect example...lots of fields could have been 'delineated' as wetland. ANR proceeded with trying to make rule changes. VDPA sued ANR...that held some of that at bay for a while. That gave the legislature a chance to take a look at the issue. Took testimony....it was very confusing and not well-understood. However, the legislature took action. H.525/Act 64 outlines VAAFM Secretary should outline in the RAP update that ag land is exempt from wetland regulations (if in crop production). ANR was not happy with a loss of perceived jurisdiction. Starr/Partridge letter explained rationale (6-17-19), Sec. Moore challenged it. Starr letter (8-14-19) responded. The letters really lay out 'legislative intent'. Meeting at Gov's office and ANR was told that VAAFM has jurisdiction. Ryan Patch is working on language for RAPs...'agricultural activities on hydric soils'. If it holds, farms wouldn't need a permit for cropping/food production on these areas. It lays out the associated uses, like access roads and processing facilities (ie hemp drying). It won't get done easily or without discussion...still need to be at the table. There was a summer study committee created, Harvey is on that committee. ANR will likely have push-back. RAP process will open up...(Ryan Patch can come share details). Act 250 has the potential for the ag exemption may be removed. Harvey has asked for clarification on which ag exemption. Another concerning provision...'significant natural resource concerns' (wetlands, depth to bedrock, 15% slopes, wildlife others?) could trigger implications for ag (pull the whole farm into Act 250?). Could be contentious, but definitely need to pay attention and be involved. It could mean a loss of exemption to local zoning issues. A possible implication could be that development will get pushed to the best ag land. Local zoning....Cornwall Conservation Commission as an example. Existing wetland on farms (not being farmed) would need a permit from ANR, farmed areas would not. RAP rulemaking process will take time (drafting, public comment, hearings). TWO MAIN ISSUES to keep track of: RAP Update through VAAFM (LCAR), Act 250 legislation in Legislature (NR Committee).

ATTACH LETTERS -

David Conant asked about clarification between NRCS/State on crop rotations. If you have FSA crop reports showing any cropping history (hay, annual or otherwise).

VAAFM Tour September 18th in Addison County – only 8 legislators signed up.

Ecosystem Services Update

Brian/Jeff/Kirsten

Other Updates

- Mortality management...Marie is working on a project to deal. Looking at cremation. VAAFM says they have no jurisdiction, go to ANR. They said it would cost \$6000 for testing; they are now down to \$2000. David mentioned they are in the process of building a composting site. What are the air quality standards, and will the unit meet the standards? \$30K unit that should work...there was testing done in Canada, talked to Vermont, seems like it will go through
- Dairy Marketing I....regional staff meeting, what's working
 - Lorenzo pointed out that when talking to people we should know the price of milk/gallon instead of cwt
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Nick Richardson, Vermont Land Trust (tentative)

Nick was unable to attend, will reach out to invite him to the October Meeting.

12:00 Motion ADJOURN Meeting: Ray Brands

Second: David Conant

Passed (11/0/0)

Reminder: Next CVFC Board of Directors Meeting – October 2nd