



Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition Inc.

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Virtual/Remote Meeting

ZOOM LOCATION:

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://uvmextension.zoom.us/j/7672674868>

Dial in by phone: 1-646-876-9923 | Meeting ID: 767 2674868

In Attendance: Jeff Carter, John Roberts, Kirsten Workman, Brian Kemp, Tim Kayhart, Loren Wood, Matthew Biette, Marie Audet, Lorenzo Whitcomb, Sarah Audet, George Foster, David Conant, Steve Kayhart, Eric Clifford, Cheryl Cesario, Jed Rubin

9:31 am Directors & Membership Business Meeting

Call to order & President's Report

Brian Kemp

- PES working group starting back up, Brian will sit on that group and keep us up to date. Jon Winsten working on guidelines with CIG grant

Secretary Report

Kirsten Workman

- Review and approve February meeting minutes (*attached*)

Motion: Loren Wood

Second: Tim Kayhart

Discussion:

Passed (6/0/0)

- Approve Membership applications
 - *None received this month*

Treasurer Report

Jeff Carter

- Review March financial reports

Motion: Marie Audet

Second: Lorenzo Whitcomb

Discussion: working with Yankee Farm Credit to resolve tax issues. Jeff signed an POA to allow them to contact IRS directly for abatement of fines/fees. Ruling letter in the next 6 weeks.

\$1800 in question to be resolved.

Passed (7/0/0)

New employee hired to work on Farm24 VT

GF: Who's doing books/taxes for 2020? Yankee FC likely will do it again this year.

Communications Update

Sarah Audet

- CVFC Communications
 - Keeping up with monthly farm story and monthly newsletter. This month's story was Smith Family Farm.

- Good open and click rates – farmer stories and nutrient management minute most popular clicks
- Mailed newsletter going out next week
- Looking for next month's story
- Website:
 - Need to settle the checkout form to collect information when people sign up
- Paid advertising
 - agriView
 - radio
 - social media
- Farm24VT Update
 - 70 days away!
 - UVM Student Intern – Meaghan Contois, Food Systems major/PR minor
 - Registrations, sponsorships are picking up
 - Comment on farm posts and steer them to #Farm24VT
 - She's been following other farmers and that had generated interest
 - Social Media workshops for farmers starting in March

KW: Sarah is doing a bang up job and making us look good!

Executive Director Report

John Roberts

- ISSUES Updates (**new/emerging issues*)
 - ACRWC: monthly meeting
 - Still sampling for e.Coli
 - Assures they are trying to identify and figure out problems and find solutions, they don't want to be a 'gotcha' scenario.
 - Focused on Lemon Fair, Lewis Creek, Shoreham WWTP
 - Wants to do a training session for volunteers at Meeting Place Pastures...
 - CC: emailed a couple of weeks ago, in good proximity to his volunteers
 - Talked last week, shooting for early May (May 2nd) training – both how to sample, but also how to communicate with landowners
 - Listened to her frustrations and has a better understanding of challenges
 - BK: there has been a lot of miscommunication in the past, and they are trying to remedy that and learn from us what's happening on farms. They're heading in the right direction, its important to keep educating them.
 - JC: could this be an opportunity to also invite farmers to learn about water sampling and to educate volunteers about farming.
 - Farm Labor housing survey –
 - It is confidential
 - Trying to determine if there could be funding available to assist with upgrades housing
 - Steve Kayhart...tried to log in, but found it confusing. Seemed to focus on 'new hires' but not overall employees. JR...represent current staff. Marie...they are trying to gauge the need for affordable housing.
 - Herbicide

- Not going away. Hearings coming up
- Bob Foster's letter to the editor,
- Educational opportunities about pesticide safety
- DC: opportunity to get into this with people who have a lot of background on the issue...beyond glyphosate. If we want to use these materials, we need to be more educated about them, why and how we use them. Central NY group that works with 80,000 acres – stopping the use of glyphosate. I need to better understand it to communicate to sweet corn customers too.
- MA: LCBP CAC has already made up their mind. We will never change everyone's mind, but Bob's piece does a good job explaining it. We do need to continue to educate ourselves and strive to do better.
- CAFO (MFO)*
 - Meeting on March 10th with MFO farms and ANR to discuss the CAFO permit.
 - LFO's already have annual permits, voluntary for other farms
 - Sent LOTS of information to folks,
 - Discussions between VAAF and ANR...we need to be careful to not set up another issue for the two agencies to disagree over, leaving farms in the middle.
 - It's not all bad, but could cost money (ie. Freeboard measurements, etc).
 - Start of a process, not the end or even public comment period. He's just looking for input from farmers as they develop some of the language
 - March 12th...partner organizations meeting
 - Marie..this could be potentially a big deal. Meeting was canceled a year ago, she talked to him for over an hour to understand the motivation. Only thing she could determine is that it seems like an opportunity to charge fees and have more power.
 - JR: would be interesting to talk with folks like Tom and Jeff C to understand the dynamics of how it works in places like NY.
 - BK: concerned, will attend the meeting. MFO & CAFO....onus is on the individual farmer with CAFO, vs the general permit liability of the MFO permit. The benefits might be better, but it could also change if federal permit changes.
 - DC: spoke with Tom quite a bit about it. He's got a good handle on working with NY CAFOs and he is open minded about it. Some of the rules he is in favor of, but could shed a lot of light on it. It is a permit to discharge....a lot more documentation. What are LFOs doing differently than us now? How could it also impact LFOs? Is there a plan for pit overflow? Lots of water being collected, more now than ever.
 - JC: ask if it is a second option vs a replacement of MFO?
 - TK: does private information become public? JR: likely yes...as CAFO permits have public hearings, even more power from public to have influence over permits/requirements.
 - Who controls inspections? How often are they?
 - Take out evaporation allowances for storage calculations, requiring more storage.
 - How does funding play into this? Would it preclude you from BMP funding from agency?
 - MA – difference between who regulates and who promotes could be good for public perception?? JC: that is the LCBPs recommendation to the legislature this year.

- Rural VT/NOFA – Livestock Housing
 - Proposed changes to Act 116
 - Did not testify, but did listen
 - Not particularly happy with testimony, as there was “slamming” of dairy farms, lack of respect to members of committee also,
 - He communicated that he could support the wording, but not that kind of testimony.
 - Brian and Steve sit on Livestock Council too
 - MA: how was dairy ‘slammed’? JR: because dairy is exempt from many of the rules.
 - EC: no issue with the committee, but we’ve gotten calls about Rural VT using CVFC in those meetings, same tactics and format that has been used in the past despite new leadership, should be careful.
 - CC: on NOFA-VT board, Rural VT spun off as more of an activist organization, there seems to be a disconnect between tiers (staff, board, members), constructive without division, but things can fall apart when farmers come to Montpelier, if they are tied to the organization they should represent the major thoughts of the organization
 - JR: being sure to communicate CVFC’s stance and agreement with wording, but that other organizations do not represent our attitude towards other farmers.
 - MA: trying to catch up...trying to understand the motivation, and how they are using the CVFC? EC: yes...they are using our name to promote their agenda beyond this one issue. Just a few sentences that delineates that NOFA and Rural VT don’t represent CVFC...not the details of this one issue.
 - BK: Livestock Council met last week and discussed. Made up of lots of stakeholders....animal rights, vets, horse, beef, dairy, VAAFM, slaughterhouse. Lots of discussion, split vote (4/4). Went to leg with that split result. Basis of the argument is the inclement weather, rotational grazing (shade/shelter), etc. Is it too picky, worst case scenario? As a NOFA member, have some legitimate concerns with current policy actions. It seems to have gotten more divisive, and it is uncomfortable. Willing to meet with Grace and share concerns. Not sure what has happened since Kent presented findings to committee. Agree with Eric’s concerns, I don’t think it has been completely unrepresentative but good to be keeping tabs on.
 - JR: are you comfortable with me communicating to NOFA/Rural VT and Ag Committees that our endorsement stands but is limited to the current suggested wording of this Act 116.
- Climate Economic Action Council (CEAC) - Addison Co.*
 - Participated in a meeting/roundtable – 15-18 presenters
 - On the State side, John has asked to participate in the ag subcommittee, starts Friday
- Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) Report, Soil Health Network, etc.
 - Committee starting again soon, Brian representing CVFC
 - Members of group are in statue...two seats represent farmer watershed groups + one that participated in Dairy Water Collaborative, so now all three represented
 - Gianna Petito (Winooski CD) approached about holding a farmer discussion group...what do we want to be paid for, etc. Week of 15-22nd of March.

- MA: It seems like Ryan Patch has got the most information, what role does Winooski NRCD play, the CDs would be pitched to collect data and run through program
- JR: I think the goal is to get farmer input before the state weighs in. Winooski stepping up to fill a gap in the region.
- JC: may not know that we have already talked a lot about this, Ryan Patch's program is not complete PES very focused on P. If we want to go back to big picture, this might be an opportunity. Brian needs to know what members are thinking today.
- Big, exciting thing in the legislature...they believe it will be the answer to other problems.
- BK: it would be good to hear from our community again, been a year and sitting at the table it would be important to know where folks are at.
- CC: a quick point of interest, watching out for what private industry will do as they are nimbler. Is that where this will land? On a call with Stonyfield, doing something similar with 10 farms. Platform = farmers have to do a lot of data/record keeping with TA, carbon and SOM focus, they are the 'payer'. Maybe other milk buyers will end up also going that way?
- BK: shared some slides from Jon Winston's slides. Kirsten can share them if others are interested. Farm Transformation Fund and PES
- JC: should we have a calendar to the website? Meetings are getting busier
- DC: approached by the VAAFAM for PFP program (Phosphorus or Performance?) CIG project. Talked to Sonya Howlett this morning...sending in lots of practice information and other records. 13 farms in VT involved. Ryan calls 10 minutes ago...would you be willing to talk to WCAX about it? Still lots of questions, and how does it tie into PES overall. How much information? Gund Institute interested in the information...how much do we want to put out there? Looking for input from all of you. No mention of who would provide TA...working through our TSPs. Getting our feet wet...TK: what's in it for you? \$1750 this year...not a lot, will take time, etc. just doing our part. Could it benefit farms down the road.
- MA: WCAX audience doesn't care about details...project that you are a willing participant to try it out and do our part for benefits down the road.
- CC: program fatigue, overlap and people in silos not talking to each other. VLT also has a program starting that sounds very similar, still figuring out.
- BK: a way for a pilot project PES that could focus (P), an example to start with, incorporate into a broader PES system eventually.
- Gov. Commission on Future of Agriculture*
 - Accepting nominations by March 12th, John has been nominated.
 - If others want to be nominated, can go to VAAFAM website or contact Terry Smith
 - Farm to Plate plan, issued report and how to implement that moving forward
- ACoRN – CV Local Food & Farm Guide, asking for advertisements, ads, \$300/quarter page, \$500/half page – also ads available on the new app
 - Marie...steer them towards our educational resources and websites/social media

- KW – in future editions, could we designate CVFC members who are listed in the guide?
 - JC – recommends half page with color, they have been very accommodating
 - BK – agrees with it...cheap way to get the word out to consumers who we may not generally interact with, half page is the way to go.
- Other updates
 - Manure Sampling Concerns with VAAFM (*follow up*) *Jeff/Kirsten*

Education/Outreach Update

- Second Wednesday of the Month – TOPICS (*tentative schedule*)
 - March 10th – CAFO permit meeting with ANR
 - April 14th – Pesticide Training
 - May 12th – Cover Crops (Field Day)
 - June 9th – Manure Management (Field Day)
 - July 14th – Tour biodigester???
- Pesticides –
 - Safety aspects
 - How do we make sure we are using materials appropriately and safely?
 - Linda Bocuzzo...
 - What are the benefits beyond the farmer, but the general public as well. Especially important to folks who direct market products.

Other Updates:

All

- Certified Manure Applicator Training
- Other Updates from Membership
 - March 26th VHCB applications for water quality

12:04 PM Motion to ADJOURN Meeting: Brian Kemp

Next Meeting...April 7th, 2021

PLEASE NOTE: Meeting with Chip G regarding ANR/DEC CAFP permit 10:00 on March 10th