

Rhode Island State Conservation Committee Minutes

Date: July 7, 2016

State: 10:10 am

Location: RI Nurseries, East Main Rd., Middletown, RI

Attendees: **RISCC Members** – Maria Mack (Chair), Ken Ayars (RIDEM), Paul Dolan (NRICD, RIACD), Clarkson Collins (SRICD), Emerson Wildes (ERICD), **Advisors** – Pooh Vongkhamdy (USDA, NRCS), Beverly Migliore (RIDEM), Allison Hamel (3 interns) (DOT), Dick Went (RIACD)

Guests: Gina DeMarco (NRICD), Kate Bousquet (SRICD), Sara Churgin (RISCC – Project Coordinator), J. Eric Scherer (SRICD)

I. Welcome and Introductions – Maria Mack, Chair

II. Review and Approve Minutes of May 11, 2016 – Motion from P. Dolan to approve. Second by C. Collins. Motion carries.

III. Review and Receive Financial Reports (FY 2016-17). Whatever district is managing an agreement receives the 10% indirect. Motion from P. Dolan that in receipt of financial. Second by K. Ayars. Motion carries.

Action Item: S. Churgin to add Traceability and AT 504 into the budget even though they are Pass-Throughs. *DONE*

Action Item: S. Churgin to prepare separate project chart for each agreement. G. DeMarco will send a sample. *DONE*

III. Old Business

A. Website – It is now live on <http://www.riconservation.org>.

Introduction of Jesse Rodriguez (manager of RI Nurseries). Spoke about the water quality issues and what a big problem it is.

B. Update on Funding

- a. M. Mack and DMs testified before the house finance committee before cut of funds
- b. Legislators in South County have applied to give SRICD legislative grants
- c. Researching how we can get statutory funding
- d. M. Mack speaking to people in funding policy office
- e. K. Ayars going to speak to private funding contacts
- f. NPR article done
- g. Eco-ri article written
- h. Letter to go out to all RI legislators with telephone f/u
- i. Social media outreach
- j. Have farmers do testimonials (youtube video)
- k. Annual municipal funding letters – mail it out, f/u with phone calls and possible face-to-face meetings
- l. Get language into the statute that requires funding

- m. DMs need to invigorate board members
- n. Speaker's chief of staff Leo Skenyon – we should approach him but after we've done some of the above items
- o. Meet and Greets for each District in September – for legislators with board members – send out a "Save the Date" email

Action Item: DMs to send out legislator letter and then follow-up with phone calls and reach out to district newspapers.

Action Item: K. Ayars to speak with J. Coit about adding funding as a line item to RIDEM budget.

Action Item: S. Churgin to prepare certificate for towns that do give funding.

Action Item: Annual municipal funding letters to include wording about district giving reduced fee or free services in return for funding.

Action Item: S. Churgin to set up meeting with Linda George in policy office with M. Mack and Theresa Paiva-Weed.

Action Item: S. Churgin to prepare 10 item bullet points for DMs to give to board members for speaking points.

Action Item: S. Churgin to reach out to Rose Jones, communications, at RIDEM.

Action Item: DMs to send out "Save the Date" emails for the meet and greets with legislators in each district.

V. New Business

A. New RISCC Computer

Action Item: D. Went to ask RIACD for a scholarship towards a computer. *DONE - \$300. Can buy QB through TechSoup through RIACD.*

Action Item: K. Ayars to ask RIDEM if there is any money for a computer.

B. Changing Date of RISCC Board Meeting

Action Item: S. Churgin to speak with Mary at NRCS re conference room and then do doodle poll for going forward

- C. Update on J. Coit Signing MOU – K. Ayars said we just need to find a date.
- D. Robert Carr new ERICD Board Member – presented 25 signatures to RISCC board. To replace E. Wildes who will become an advisor. Motion by C. Collins to accept R. Carr as new ERICD board member, second by K. Ayars, motion carries.
- E. FFOS - K. Ayars stated new owners have to re-apply when purchase property that is already in FFOS. If there's a conservation plan on the property being purchased, that plan must match the new owner's farm plans. If it doesn't, a new plan must be written.

Action Item: S. Churgin will add into the FFOS guide that new owners must re-apply to DEM even though property was already in FFOS when property purchased.

- F. Allison Hamel – Representative for DOT to RISCC. Environmental scientist, stormwater coordinator. Has been working with RIDEM on soil erosion handbook.
- G. Upcoming NRCS Agreements - P. Vongkhamdy
 - a. Don't need to develop a new Outreach Agreement because it's for 5 years – just need to add funds to it
 - b. AT504 Implementation Agreement – lasts 5 years, but only funded one year at a time. Helps to implement EQIP programs. Thinks he'll be able to find the funding for the next year with money set aside for relocation.
 - c. Bundled Agreement – wants it to be for 5 years. Grants and agreements departments short-staffed, so they want to bundle 3 agreements and have it managed by RISCC. Engineering, Easement Legal and Easement GIS. GIS 6 days/mth; Engineering 40 hrs/wk; Legal 1 day/wk. Comes to about \$116k. He wants the Engineering Agreement responsibilities to be written broadly so that M. Viola can do a broad range of work, earn more skill and knowledge.
 - d. Funding for Training- perhaps have it billed to the NRCS agreements?

VI. Member and Advisors Reports

A. RI-DEM

- 1. Pollinator Working Group starting up
- 2. Green Economy Bond passed in General Assembly
- 3. RIDEM writing a program to buy and re-sell farmland, getting to farmers that don't have access farmland
- 4. Land for Good – Tess Brown LaVoie working one day a week to connect farmer looking land and a farmer looking for help/helping with succession issues as well.
- 5. RIDEM working with CLF on free legal assistance for farmers.
- 6. \$100K LASA funding received.

B. ERICD

- 1. 3 districts applied for NACD grant for Urban Ag – D. Went said we should hear by July 18, 2016 (K. Ayars said URI just hired an Urban Ag professor)

B. NRICD

- 1. Waiting for RCPP grant on Soil
- 2. Working on Farm Energy workshops
- 3. RCPP soil health application off to DC for approval
- 4. Districts applied for RCPP Farm Conservation Plan (DEM and Farm Bureau as matching partners) – P. Vongkhamdy said only one RFP was received.

C. SRICD

- 1. Mtg 6/27/16, went into field where couple operating 3 acre farm that's intensively managed. 3 years into organic documentation. Use small scale equipment from Italy.
- 2. Adopted 2017 budget with caveat it'll be amended/changed based on state funding elimination.

D. NRCS

- 1. All funding that allocated to RI has been used.
- 2. Wants to continue Ag Tech agreement. Wants to combine it maybe through RISCC or RIACD to distribute to the 3 districts.

3. Field Operations staff person approved – hopefully this fiscal year.
- E. RIACD
1. D. Went called a mtg for 4pm 7/6/16 to discuss funding.
 2. RIACD got \$28k for Ag Partnership. Pays for RIACD's audit and taxes. It'll be used for advertising.
- F. RIRCD
1. 35 attendees at Tiverton Farm Tour
 2. Fall workshops

VII. Motion to Adjourn – Motion made by P. Dolan, second by C. Collins. Motion carries.

*****NEXT MEETING September 7, 2016 place TBD**

Respectfully submitted by Sara Churgin, Project Coordinator for RISCC