

Northern Rhode Island Conservation District

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MEETING MINUTES

January 2, 2008

7:00 PM

Paul called the meeting to order at 7:00.

In attendance were:

Directors: Paul Dolan, Marc Tremblay, Norm Hammond, Eugene Pepper, Dick Went; Staff: Gina DeMarco and Ramona LeBlanc; NRCS: Mike Merrill.

Absent were:

Associate Directors: Ed Baker, Jean Lynch.

I. Minutes

The December 6, 2007 meeting minutes were reviewed. A motion to accept the minutes was made: Marc/Dick, unanimous.

II. Treasurer's Reports

Treasurer's Report and Expense Report for December were presented. Gina informed the Board that a few items will be further defined in future reports. The Education/Outreach Coordinator line will be split with \$4500.00 remaining in that category and \$10000.00 being moved to Education Outreach Assistant. Further, hours categorized as CIG will now be recorded on CIG staff line and the wages will be included there rather than in the Grant Salaries line as had been done previously. Gina also noted that grant income was lower this year to date than projected because so much of her time has been spent to date on administrative work. Moving forward she expects to have more billable grant time.

It was noted that the percentage totals seem inaccurate. Ramona will check for formula errors and make corrections. Updated copies of the Expense Report will be emailed to Board members. Motion made to table acknowledging receipt of reports until February meeting.

III. Old Business

a. Scituate Reservoir Watershed Education Program

Gina reported that Liz started on 1/2/08 and has gotten letters out to teachers to schedule classroom sessions. She will also be working on the Neighbor to Neighbor program.

Kate is working on the Poster Contest packet as well as background information for teachers for this year's program. Gina asked Gene to review this information (septic systems) for accuracy. She will also ask David Dow at URI to review.

The grant to begin work on the stormwater BMP in Scituate should be signed soon according to Jay Manning

b. Pocasset Project: Mike reported that the project was specifically mentioned in the House/Senate omnibus spending bills but was not sure that there will be funding from this.

c. CIG Project: The 3 Districts will meet on January 8th to develop a PowerPoint presentation for upcoming workshops.

Postcards for CIG workshops were mailed on 1/2/08 and the NRICD's workshop will be held on 1/15. Any Board members who are available are invited to attend.

d. Wetlands Outreach and Education: The Wetlands in our Backyard has been

approved by the Director of DEM, according Christine Caron. The timeline will begin in March but implementation of the program will begin in the next school year. This will provide more work for Liz.

c. Health Insurance/Benefit Policy: Paul would like to hold discussion in executive session. Board will meet 1/8/08 at his office at 4pm.

d. Laptop Computer: In order to obtain a new surplussed computer from NRCS, whoever would have access to it would have to undergo a background check. The computer Gene had hoped to obtain will most likely not be available until April and since Gina's computer is not printing or accessing the internet, Gene suggested the problem

must be dealt with at once by NRICD. There remains \$1200 in the budget that had been allocated for computer expenses and Gene made a motion that it be used to get Gina a new laptop. Question of getting a Dell or a custom built machine was discussed and a suggestion made to decide at February meeting. Marc proposed that since the money is there, Gina should just go now and get the best computer she can with the funds available. Motion was made to do so: Dick/Paul: unanimous.

IV. Reports

a. NRCS: Mike reported that NRCS has 6 new EQIP contracts in Northern RI, with 9 more approved and 13 pending. Of \$2.8 million available, \$2 million has been committed. There were a total of 78 eligible projects but it is not certain how many will be funded. A ranking system was established ranging from 4000 points down to 400 points and at this time, the cut off is 1400 points. An effort is being made to prioritize properties that have resources to protect.

Mike also indicated that more funding for WHIP and FRPP may be available in the new budget. He is hoping for more forest implementation.

b. Envirothon: On January 10th at 3:30 a general meeting will be held.

A \$5000 grant was received from RIDEM Department of Forestry and an additional grant is pending. Norm asked if same score sheet will be used this year and Gina said she would review it.

c. RC & D: Annual Meeting to be held on January 16th. The New

England Conference went well. A few grants are pending from Forestry to expand programs and implement more training for the forestry aspect through NRCS.

d. RDC: No meeting held in awhile. The last program was an exhibit at the Wood Expo in the fall. Nothing pending.

e. RIFCO: Woodland owner workshops will be held this winter at the Scituate Community Center on the following dates: February 9th, 16th, 23rd and March 1st.

Press release and a newsletter are pending.

f. District Manager: Nothing to report.

V: New Business

a. Livestock Animal Inventory: A meeting between DEM, Scott Marshall (State Veterinarian) and NRCS is being held on January 3rd to discuss possible program to inventory small farms and the types/number of animals they contain. Southern RI has undertaken such a program in its district and there is an interest in all the Districts becoming involved to eventually cover the whole state. The ongoing project at Southern has found 3-4 times more animals than expected at small “backyard” farms that are not regulated or visited by the State. The concern is that, with no controls, these farms are at higher risk for outbreaks and avian flu is obviously on everyone’s mind.

This is also an outreach opportunity to get information on the District out to farmers.

b. Urban Community Garden Opportunities: Mike indicated that there is the potential for NRI and NRCS to work together on an outreach program to bring urban gardening plans such as Providence' Southside Land Trust and the Urban Food Initiative to other urban areas. It was agreed that a strategic meeting was needed to decide how to approach this idea and other ideas to get more community gardens, food bank gardens, etc. The question of nutritional security in the event of a national emergency was again raised and concern over the small percentage of food consumed in RI that is produced in the state was discussed. A program that targets urban areas would be one way to produce more food locally, but Gina pointed out that if all 3 Districts are involved it could and should move beyond just urban areas. Funding for deer fencing, irrigation, etc may be provided by NRCS through EQIP grants.

VI: Other

a. Seedling Sale: Dates of April 18th & 19th confirmed. Discussion of either a composting workshop or sale of rain barrels resulted in a consensus that the rain barrel idea should be pursued.

b. Dexter Credit Union: Paul has accounts there, so he should be able to go in alone to be added as signatory

c. Relocation Options: Mike asked if Board was aware of conversation at Southern District about possible single site location for 3 Districts. Gina indicated that the idea had been discussed by State Conservation Committee as possible way to save money if

funding reached a crisis level. Marc raised the point that current location is so entrenched in the community that relocation should be an absolute last resort. He also raised the point that grant work must cover overhead and Norm indicated that overhead is typically billed at 35%. Board agreed that if funding became such an issue that NRICD could no longer afford rent, an office (however small) could be found in one of DEM buildings in the area for Northern District. No interest in a combined housing agreement was indicated.

d. Northern Lakes: Bob Ballou has indicated that funding from DEM is available to start a pilot program to deal with invasive species. A meeting between NRCS and DEM is scheduled to discuss NRCS' role.

Possibly NRICD would act as co-coordinating entity to bring various agencies involved (Fish & Wildlife, EPA, DEM) together for a discussion of how to proceed. Gene informed the Board that invasives and their treatment is a major issue with EPA in New England as lakes sometimes provide drinking water and chemical treatment then becomes an issue. Mike also pointed out that invasive are an issue even in irrigation ponds that are being clogged.

Motion to adjourn Norm/Dick. 8:40 pm.