



NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD

10 Baldwin Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-3201

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, March 12, 2024, at 9:00 am

Board Members present in person or by Microsoft Teams:

Sabina Haskell, Chair
Brad Aldrich, Vice Chair
Andrew Collier, Member
Steve Larrabee, Member

Board Members not present:

Don Turner, Member

Staff present in person or by Microsoft Teams:

Alison Stone, General Counsel
Jenny Ronis, Associate General Counsel
Peter Gill, Executive Director
Aaron Brondyke, State Coordinator
Madeline Cotter, Legal Technician
Rachel Lomonaco, Business Director

Members of the Public:

None

The Vermont Natural Resources Board (NRB) convened at 9:01 a.m. via Microsoft Teams, Chair Sabina Haskell presiding.

I. 9:02 a.m. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Haskell welcomed those in attendance.

II. 9:03 a.m. Opportunity for public to comment and agenda and non-agenda items

Chair Haskell offered the public the opportunity to comment. No members of the public were present. No non-agenda items were raised.

III. 9:04 a.m. Review and action on minutes of January 9, 2024

A motion to approve the minutes of the Tuesday, January 9, 2024, meeting was made by Mr. Aldrich and seconded by Mr. Collier. The members that attended the January 9, 2024 meeting voted as follows.

Sabina Haskell - Yes

Brad Aldrich - Yes

Steve Larrabee – abstain; was not present at January 9, 2024 meeting



Don Turner - absent
Andrew Collier – Yes

IV. 9:05 a.m. NRB office and budget updates

Business Director Rachel Lomonaco gave an update on the scanning project. The first shipment of 110 boxes of District 4 permit files were sent to our scanning vendor, Xerox. They are doing a pilot project of 2-3 boxes of records to make sure all the scans are coming back per specifications required by the Agency of Digital Service and the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration. We expect the pilot project to come back to us within the next week or two. Another shipment from the District 7 permit files is scheduled for May 2024. Additionally, we have inventoried and boxed up records and files at the Dewey Building storage space at National Life in Montpelier, and those records will be moved to the District 4 office in Essex.

Business Director Lomonaco gave an update on the budget requests for FY25. The NRB is requesting \$3.7million budget appropriation for FY25. 80% of the budget comes from special fund revenues, i.e. application fees, enforcement out of pocket expenses, etc., and 20% from the general fund. We gave testimony to the House committee on Appropriations last month and we expect to be in front of the Senate Committee on Appropriations in the next week or so. Chair Haskell reported that the Governors recommended FY25 budget also includes a one-time appropriation of \$600,000 from the general fund since our fee revenue is less than anticipated in FY24. The Governors recommended FY24 budget adjustment also includes a \$120,300 budget adjustment for the NRB for the exemptions that were in last years HOME bill.

V. 9:09am Executive Director Update

Executive Director Peter Gill gave an update on upcoming changes to our permit application. These changes will help staff and applicants.

ARPA funding projects are being tracked by ANR. There are currently 437 projects in the list, not all require Act 250 permits. As of now, 174 do not need permits, 46 projects do need permits, and we've issued 32 permits already. Coordinators are working to determine the remaining 180. Many of those projects are still in the design phase.

NRB is continuing to work on outreach to state partners, Regional Planning Commissions and Regional Development Commissions. We had a meeting with the NWRPC that was well received but not very well attended.

VI. 9:14 a.m. Discussion of appeals, enforcement, and attorney-client memoranda.

Attorney Alison Stone provided an update on a new appeal that came in since the last meeting. It is an appeal of a JO that determined a permit is required for conversion of an existing barn on the subject parcel to a wedding and events venue.

NRB received a decision from the Environmental Court in a separate JO appeal where a coordinator determined the project was a Priority Housing Project (PHP) and therefore did not need a permit. NRB filed a motion for summary judgment, and the court agreed with us and issued a decision granting the NRB's motion for summary judgement in the case.

NRB reached a settlement in the Slopeside Syrup case which was not appealed. We have a few things pending in front of the Supreme Court that the Attorney General's Office is representing NRB.

VII. 9:18 a.m. Legislation

Chair Haskell provided an update on the current legislative session where Act 250 is a focus. H.687 is the major Act 250 update bill and is currently on version 6.1. A major focus is on creating a professional board to hear appeals right at the outset of this legislation taking effect. There is a lot of interest from the rural caucus and administration to continue putting the focus on housing. Crossover is at the end of this week. H.128 was introduced last year and is looking for exemptions from Act 250 for accessory on farm businesses (AOFB) and some changes related to wood processing.

VIII. 9:22 a.m. Adjourn

At 9:22 a.m. a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Aldrich, seconded by Mr. Collier, and approved as follows.

Sabina Haskell - Yes
Brad Aldrich - Yes
Steve Larrabee – Yes
Don Turner – absent
Andrew Collier - Yes