

To: Senate Institutions Committee

From: Sarah Damsell, Executive Director, Orleans County NRCD

Date: Apr 16, 2026

RE: Follow-up Information – 278 Roaring Brook Rd Capital Request

As requested during the Apr 14, 2026 testimony, below is a summary of the property details, inspection findings, and specific cost estimates for the proposed Barton project

Inspection Findings & Property Status²

- **Zoning:** Permitted for office use; requires only a \$130 permit.
- **Utilities:** Municipal water/sewer confirmed adequate by Barton Village.
- **Flood Zone:** Rated as a "low flood hazard" property by VLCT; confirmed outside the flood zone by current mapping.³⁶
- **Mold:** Mold identified is primarily due to the building being unheated/unoccupied for 5+ years; remediable with removal of material, replaced roof sections, heat and proper ventilation.

Specific Cost Estimates

A contractor estimate dated Apr 13, 2026, totals **\$101,750** for essential repairs:

- **Roof & Exterior:** \$15,000 to replace compromised roofs, chimney liner, and fascia.
- **Mold Remediation:** \$12,500 to remove/replace molded plywood and drywall.
- **Foundation:** \$2,500 to rejoin and repair stone foundation.
- **Systems & Efficiency:** \$25,000
- **Plumbing & Safety:** \$6,500
- **Other Repairs:**
 - \$5,000 for floor system repairs.
 - \$3,000 for foundation insulation and coating.
 - \$3,000 to replace the front porch.
 - \$3,000 to tape, sand, and paint interiors.
 - \$2,000 for vapor barrier in the crawlspace.
 - \$1,500 for landscaping and clearing vegetation from the building.
 - \$750 to replace the kitchen range.
 - \$500 to clean and service the standby generator.
- **Purchase Price and closing costs:** Estimated between \$150,000-\$210,000 based on JimCampbell realtors professional opinions but further work needs to occur to finalize purchase price.

Proposed Updated Timeline²

- **Jun 2026:** Capital funds awarded.
- **Sep 2026:** Real estate transfer completed.
- **Oct 2026–Mar 2027:** Building renovations.
- **Apr 2027:** OCNRCD moves in
- **June 2027:** NEKO moves in

Improved organizational efficiencies for the Orleans County NRCO in the following ways:

- **Operational Stability & Independence:** Moving out of the federal USDA office in Newport ensures the District is no longer compromised by federal DOGE mandates or government shutdowns. This provides the foundational stability required to focus on delivering conservation results rather than managing immediate logistical crises.
- **Improved organizational recognition:** Moving out of the federal USDA office and into our own facility will establish the Orleans County NRCO as a stand-alone organization and improve efficiencies of services and program delivery addressing operational and service-related issues currently tied to the USDA co-location.
- **Centralized Resource Management:** All OCNRCO conservation rental equipment, currently scattered across various farm cooperator locations, would be consolidated at the fairgrounds. This centralized storage improves oversight, maintenance and simplifies the equipment rental program for local farmers.
- **Expanded Service Capacity:** The new facility provides approximately 2,300 sq. ft. of space, including 8–10 workstations, a conference room for community meetings, a garage and dedicated storage. This eliminates the past USDA and current space limitations that have hindered program growth.
- **Strategic Partnerships & Co-Location:** Sharing office space with **NEKO** (Northeast Kingdom Organizing) and the **Fair Association** facilitates collaboration on community engagement offerings like hands on workshops, input gathering meetings, and regional resiliency and disaster response. This co-housing model maximizes collective impact while OCNRCO potentially providing human resources support to aid the struggling fair association to host staff.
- **Infrastructure for Core Services:** The property includes a functional kitchen and common areas that can be utilized for workshops, training, and "NEK Resiliency Hub" activities, which are not feasible in the current rental space.
- **Financial Efficiency:** Securing a permanent home through a one-time capital request of \$275,000 (covering purchase, closing costs and renovations) replaces the ongoing expense of the Newport rental.