

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 23, 2014-1:00 PM
Three Rivers Public Library-Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

- **Directors:** Matt Meersman, Bob Jones, Zac Martin, Ray Leising, Daragh Deegan, John Law, Ron Niezgodski, Jeff Wenzel, Jim Coury, Eric Kerney
- **Watershed Council:** Grant Poole, Pokagon Band; Jeremy Reiman, MACOG/SJRBC; Joe Parman, Van Buren Co. Drain Commission
- **Visitors:** Mark Robinson, Indiana Michigan Power; Justin Miller, Cass Co. CD; Patty Hoch-Melluish, Keiser & Associates; Rich Walag, Indiana Michigan Power; James Turnwald, MACOG/SJRBC

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM, welcomed everyone to the meeting, and called for introductions.

Minutes of the September 2014 board meeting were approved as printed. Ron Niezgodski moved to approve as printed and was seconded by Jim Coury. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report was presented by Matt Meersman. Bob Jones moved to accept the treasurer's report as presented and was seconded by Jeff Wenzel. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Wetland Partnership Project: Matt Meersman briefly reviewed the project for the new people in attendance. The project is finishing up. Marcy Colclough is working on the final report and the Wetlands Partnership will have their final meeting on November 20, 2014. Matt and Marcy made a presentation to the Noble County Commissioners and still want to meet with the Steuben County Commissioners even though the project is done. Matt will try to send out a summary of the report to members prior to the next board meeting.

Clean Water Campaign: Matt reported that there has not been any new activity on this campaign.

NEW BUSINESS

IDNR Fawn River Dam Removal Support: Matt summarized a request submitted by the IDNR for a letter of support for the removal of the dam at the Orland, IN fish hatchery. There is no in-kind match involved. It is simply a letter of support. John Law moved to have Matt submit a letter of support from the Friends and was seconded by Jim Coury. Motion carried.

Indiana Wetland Program Plan: Matt reported comments were due today for the draft. Priorities in the draft include wetland goals and functional assessment. It was expressed the need to get EPA grant funds to move forward. No action is required.

OTHER ITEMS

Ontwa Township WWTP: Daragh Deegan reported on the public meeting held with MDEQ. There were approximately 200 people in attendance with no one speaking in favor of the project. Daragh did note the opposing group was respectful of the process, knowledgeable of the situation, and prepared with facts. Representatives from MDEQ seemed to be very attentive to what was being presented. At this point, MDEQ will still move forward with the process. There was indication that the EPA is becoming involved with this issue. It was also noted the upcoming recall election in Ontwa Township could change the result of this issue. Ontwa Township does have a binding contract with Elkhart through 2030. Elkhart has indicated they will sue if Ontwa breaks this contract. All these different side issues would make a negative economic effect for Ontwa Township residents.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **Matt Meersman** – We have again received support from Indiana Michigan Power for our Annual Meeting on March 20, 2015. THANK YOU. A group of stakeholders has begun meeting to coordinate restoration efforts in the Bowman Creek Watershed in South Bend. Matt and Daragh both attended the first meeting.
- **Eric Kerney** – Eric presented on Wetland Partnership at the Regional Tribal Water Workshop. He noted other tribes are doing assessments.
- **Jim Coury** – Jim reported the Pottawatomie RC&D has hired a new Executive Director. He expressed concern over the increase in agricultural land rentals (huge operations), destruction of filter strips, and the increase in irrigation that has a definite effect on water quality. There was some discussion about efforts by Dr. Jennifer Tank from Notre Dame on use of cover crops and the two-stage ditch and the positive results she is seeing.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on **Thursday, November 20, 2014, at 1:00 PM** in Three Rivers at the Public Library. The Wetlands Partnership will meet that morning at 10:15 AM.

Ron Niezgodski moved to adjourn and John Law seconded. Motion carried. Meeting was adjourned at 1:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted by acting secretary, Bob Jones.