

Friends of the St. Joe River Association, Inc.
Board Meeting Minutes
Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, MI
Thursday, November 18, 2010

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors – Eldred Adams, Bruce Barton, Eric Kerney, Jim Coury, Geoff Cripe, Daragh Deegan, Rachel Smith, Dona Hunter, Rudy Kappe, Danielle Meersman, Matt Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Melanie Stoughton
- Outreach Coordinator – Leah Cooper
- Watershed Council Members – Karen Mackowiac, SJRBC; Jeff Reece, Indiana Michigan Power
- Visitors – Paula Mills, Ray Leising, Wade Hawes, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi; Bev Thelen, St. Joe County Deputy Drain Commissioner; Jeffery Wenzel, St. Joe County Drain Commissioner; Gene Lightner, Elkhart River Restoration Association

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and asked for introductions. He thanked everyone for all of the interest and attendance at this month's meeting. Matt then briefly explained the format of the Friends organization and the difference between directors and watershed council members.

Minutes of the October board meeting were approved on a motion made by Rudy Kappe and seconded by Ron Niezgodski.

Treasurer's report was presented by Treasurer Danielle Meersman. Total liabilities and equity of FotSJR is \$56,780.99.

Outreach Coordinator Report – Leah Cooper reported that the 4th edition of the newsletter for December 2010 is at the printer and should be sent out around December 1.

Commemorative Bench/Stone – Rachel and Matt put together suggested language for engraving on the stone to honor Al and Margaret Smith. They shared the language with the group and asked whether it should be engraved on the stone or on a plate that is then attached to the stone. Rudy Kappe suggested and everyone agreed it would be best to have it on a plate that could be attached to the stone. The challenge remains for the board of directors to come up with \$500 to be used toward this memorial.

Wetland Partnership Project – Matt stated that the first meeting of the steering committee for the grant was a huge success with a lot of the partners represented. Matt reviewed the intent of the project stressing that information would be collected for both Indiana and Michigan. Key components of the project will be a prioritized data set of wetlands in the watershed; development of an education program focusing on wetland restoration/protection; example ordinances for planning and zoning; and the development of a project page for the web site.

The contract between Leah Cooper and FotSJR had been emailed to all directors for their review before the meeting. After clarification on Section 11.3 in the contract, Rudy Kappe moved to approve the agreement for the Southeastern Lake Michigan Wetland Protection/Restoration Partnership; Ron Niezgodski seconded the motion; motion carried.

Matt stated that the MDNRE technicians who have been contracted to do the wetland functional assessment are planning on attending the next meeting to do a presentation on the process.

Leah has agreed to provide \$5,500 of in kind match toward the grant, which would basically include any mileage and her time attending meetings related to the grant.

New Outreach Coordinator Contract had also been sent to directors for their review before today's meeting. Ron Niezgodski made a motion to approve the contract; motion seconded by Geoff Cripe; motion carried.

This contract has not been reviewed by an attorney, but follows the same format as contracts used in other similar situations. If we had an attorney willing to review the contract at no charge, it would be easy to say yes to having it reviewed, but it may be cost prohibitive to pay lawyer's fees. Danielle may know of someone who could review the contract free of charge.

Annual Meeting Plan – Matt outlined his idea for the upcoming watershed council meeting. He suggests following last year's format with one primary speaker and then Matt doing an update. Matt has a lead on a great speaker. Kevin Kincare works with USGS in Virginia. He grew up in Three Rivers and actually did his thesis on the St. Joe River Watershed, so is very well versed on the river and its history. He is still collecting data on the St. Joe and Manistee Rivers and will be back in the area in March, so the date for the meeting may hinge on the time he will be here, which would be either March 14 or 21.

Matt showed a map that he would like to use as the basis for his presentation. He wants to be able to share some stories from and about the watershed. Matt feels that in order to accomplish the goals outlined in the watershed management plan, stakeholders from across the watershed need to get to know each other. He would also like to have a map available for those in attendance to mark special areas of interest in the watershed specific to them.

We should be able to confirm a meeting date at the December board meeting. The Sturges-Young Auditorium is a good central location. Eldred will check on the availability of the area where we ate last year and the auditorium, plus the costs. This will be a good opportunity to generate new membership. Geoff Cripe mentioned another really good speaker – John Geisler, retired WMU professor, who talks about the Old Sauk Trail from Detroit to New Buffalo and the intersections with the St. Joe River.

Michigan Resource Stewards – Matt has had some communication with Al Smith about Bob Jacobson from the Michigan Resource Stewards and the push in Michigan to have a state tax

which would go toward natural resources in Michigan. The Michigan Resource Stewards include a lot of retired DNR and DEQ folks working with natural resources. This would be modeled after a program already in place in Minnesota. The conservation districts in Michigan are in bad shape financially and this might help them if passed. Al Smith has always pushed for something like a head tax of \$1.00 per person to fund Natural Resources Protection.

Other items from the board:

- Rudy Kappe announced that he would like Leah and Matt to do a presentation for his Lions Club meeting in April. He also wanted the Board to know that he will be in Arizona from January 10 to April 5, but will be available through email.
- Matt will be giving presentations on the FotSJR and the Wetland Partnership project at the Steuben Co. and Branch Co. Annual Meetings.
- Jim Coury said that SWMPC will be doing a ½ day program on Monday, November 22 on Transportation 101 – Funding for Trailways and Greenways.

Items from Watershed Council:

- Karen Mackowiac reported that Matt will be presenting information on the Wetland Partnership project at the St. Joseph River Basin Commission meeting on December 7.

Other:

- Jim Coury suggested a topic for the newsletter – landscape wide land use planning. The wetlands assessment will provide a perfect opportunity to work with counties and townships on long range planning.
- Leah is working on a calendar for 2011 newsletters and should have it by next meeting.
- Jeff Reece said they found 10 cars during the drawdown in the river, the majority of them in the deep pools by the boat ramp in Elkhart. This was the lowest the river has been drawn down for 60-70 years.

The next meeting will be on December 16, 2010 at the Three Rivers Public Library. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m. on a motion made by Matt Meersman and seconded by Ron Niezgodski.

Minutes recorded by Dona Hunter, Secretary.