

Friends of the St. Joe River Association
Annual Business Meeting
Sturges-Young Auditorium, Sturgis, Michigan
Monday – March 14, 2011 – 3:00 p.m.

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors – Eldred Adams, Bruce Barton, Eric Kerney, Jim Coury, Geoff Cripe, Daragh Deegan, Rachel Smith, Dona Hunter, Danielle Meersman, Matt Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Melanie Stoughton
- Outreach Coordinator – Leah Cooper
- Watershed Council – Kathy Worst, Branch Co. CD; Martin Franke, LaGrange Co. SWCD
- Visitors – Claudia & Don Stoller, Roxanne Barton, Ray Leising

Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m., welcome everyone to the meeting, and asked for introductions.

Minutes of the February meeting were approved on a motion made by Matt Meersman and seconded by Ron Niezgodski.

Financial Report for March was distributed by Danielle Meersman, Treasurer. Recoded income included the first reimbursement from the grant, membership dues and event income. Even with hiring a new staff member, income and expenses will come out fairly even for the year.

Outreach Coordinator Report – Leah has spent the majority of her time this month making preparations for the annual meeting. The newsletter was distributed this month also.

Commemorative Stone – In the quote that Rachel Smith emailed everyone, there was a major cost not included. It did not include the cost of the bronze plaque which would be almost \$1,300. She got a couple of other quotes. One for a blind mount with a bronze plague for \$470 and the second quote for an aluminum plague with a polished finish and blind mount for \$350.00. Size would be 10" x 12" and includes engraving. Rachel sent a letter to the City of Three Rivers asking for permission to place the stone. They approved the request and will provide both staff and equipment to assist with setting the stone. Ron Neizgodski has the tools to recess the plague into the stone and they can do it on site. Bruce Barton has equipment to transport the stone from Homer, Michigan to Three Rivers. Eldred Adams and Martin Franke volunteered to help Ron. Matt Meersman moved to purchase the bronze plague for \$470; Dona Hunter seconded the motion; motion carried. Target dedication date will be at the May board meeting – May 26. So far there have been \$325 in donations toward the memorial stone in response to Danielle and Matt Meersman's challenge.

Watershed Council Meeting – Final Details – Matt thanked Martin, Dona, Leah and Danielle for coming early to help set up. AEP will be making a generous donation of \$1,500 to sponsor the meeting. Board members need to encourage attendees to bid on the silent auction items. They will close bids at 8:00 p.m. and announce the winners in the wrap up.

Election of New Directors – There are six open seats with those terms that are expiring and slots that have not been filled. Rachel Smith has withdrawn her name from the election for this year partly due to the fact that her husband has found a new job. Current directors whose terms are expiring and who are willing to remain on the board are Eldred Adams, Geoff Cripe and Daragh Deegan. New directors to be added to the slate of candidates are Brian Musser, Maria Schaefer, and Ray Leising. Nominations from the floor were requested and none were presented. Jim Coury moved to accept the slate of six new directors; Melanie Stoughton seconded the motion; motion carried. These are three year terms and will expire in 2014 for Eldred Adams, Geoff Cripe, and Daragh Deegan. The terms of the three new directors will expire as follows: Ray Leising – 2012; Brian Musser – 2013; Maria Schaefer – 2014.

Annual Report – Matt will be presenting his report at the meeting tonight and does not have an additional hand-out.

Other Items:

- Geoff Cripe asked for a letter of support for a \$2,500 grant from Sauk Trails RC&D to create a good public access for the Spirit Spring Sanctuary. This would be fulfilling some of the goals in the Rocky River Watershed. Matt Meersman moved to approve a letter of support; Ron Niezgodski seconded the motion; motion carried.
- Melanie Stoughton offered to help with some evaluation after the annual meeting, including the survey and membership through Survey Monkey. It can be set up with a link to FotSJR website.
- A thank you will be sent to members and those in attendance after the meeting to those who have emails.
- Kathy Worst announced the Branch County Expo and Annual Meeting scheduled for this Saturday. Also they are waiting for comments back from DEQ on their grant applications for the Prairie River project.
- Don Stoller with Christiana Creek thanked the board for their assistance. The last two Saturdays he worked on an invasive species clean-up in the Dowagiac Woods. They have just acquired an additional 150 acres bringing it up to a total of 500 acres. They can use more people to volunteer to assist in cleaning out invasive species, etc.

Next Meeting is scheduled for April 28, 2011 at the library in Three Rivers.