

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Friday, March 14, 2014 – 2:00 PM
Sturges-Young Auditorium-Sturgis, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

- **Directors:** Matt Meersman, Danielle Meersman, Ray Leising, Eldred Adams, Bruce Barton, Ron Niezgodski, Rachel Smith, Daragh Deegan
- **Watershed Council:** Bob Jones, LaGrange SWCD, Marcy Colclough, SWMPC

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 2:05 PM and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes of the February 2014 board meeting were approved as submitted with a motion by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Bruce Barton. Motion carried.

Treasurers Report was presented by Danielle Meersman. Ray Leising moved to accept the treasurer's report as submitted and seconded by Eldred Adams. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Wetland Partnership Project – Nothing new to report at this time.

Clean Water Campaign – Nothing new to report at this time.

Silent Auction – Matt reported that people have stepped up with some very unique items for the silent auction at the Annual Meeting. Thanks to the efforts of Kathleen Petitjean of Greening the Bend, 20 one-pound bags of cover crop seed were donated by Cisco. It was decided to put all 20 bags together and award them to the soil & water conservation district with the most attendees to the Annual Meeting in order to promote the use of cover crops with their customers. This would include district employees, associates, and spouses. The receipt for auction items has been corrected and is ready for this year's auction. Discussion ensued on procedure in running the silent auction. It was decided we would have the individuals with the highest bid on each item take the bid sheet to Danielle at the registration desk and let her know if they need a receipt. Then they can pay and receive their item at the conclusion of the program.

NEW BUSINESS

Director/Officer Elections – The slate of directors (3 year terms) included Eldred Adams and Daragh Deegan as renewing for another term and Bob Jones from the LaGrange SWCD, John Law from the St. Joseph County Surveyor's Office and Zac Martin from the Steuben SWCD as new directors. Ray Leising moved to accept those nominated and the motion was seconded by Ron Niezgodski. Motion carried. Election of officers was next. Melanie Stoughton had stated she would run for secretary again. Ron Niezgodski moved to elect Melanie as secretary, seconded by Rachel Smith. Motion carried. Danielle Meersman agreed to run for treasurer again. Eldred Adams moved to elect Danielle as treasurer, seconded by Bruce Barton. Motion carried. Daragh Deegan agreed to run for vice president to replace Maria Mast. Ron Niezgodski moved to elect Daragh as vice president, seconded by Ray Leising. Motion

carried. Matt Meersman agreed to run for president again. Ron Niezgodski moved to elect Matt as president, seconded by Eldred Adams. Motion carried.

Other Items

- Marcy Colclough reported that the city of Niles was in need of a letter of support for the Pucker Street Dam removal. Daragh Deegan moved for Matt to send a letter of support on behalf of the Friends, seconded by Ray Leising. Motion carried.
- Daragh Deegan reported that Ontwa Township, Michigan has submitted their application for a permit to build a wastewater treatment plant. The treatment plant would discharge to Cobus Creek, which is a high quality coldwater stream that meets the St. Joseph River in Elkhart, IN. Ontwa Township currently sends their wastewater to Elkhart's treatment plant through a network of pipes. Daragh stated that there have been major issues with how they handle their wastewater, which have caused problems for Elkhart's infrastructure. He said Karen Mackowiak of the St. Joe River Basin Commission has been gathering facts and has received many negative comments from stakeholders on this issue. These comments include concerns about Ontwa Township's ability to manage their treatment plant better than they currently handle their wastewater. IDNR and MDNR have both expressed concerns that the volume of the proposed discharge would have negative consequences for Cobus Creek. Daragh said that he expects the FotSJR will be asked to take a stand on this issue. After further discussion, Daragh moved to authorize Matt to draft a letter on behalf of the FotSJR to oppose issuing the permit based on our shared concerns about the negative impacts to water quality, hydrology, and habitat. Seconded by Danielle Meersman. Motion carried.

Announcements

- GreenTown Michiana 2.0 – Tuesday, April 22, 2014
- Landowner outreach – Nottawaseppi Huron Band, Pine Creek Reservation – Tuesday, April 22, 2014 at 6:00 PM

Next Meeting will be held on Thursday, April 24, 2014 at 1:00 PM at Three Rivers Public Library in Three Rivers, Michigan.

Meeting adjourned at 2:52 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by acting secretary,
Bob Jones*