

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 24, 2014—1:00 PM
Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

- **Directors:** Matt Meersman, Melanie Stoughton, Daragh Deegan, Rachel Smith, Eldred Adams, Bob Jones, Zac Martin, Eric Kerney, Jim Coury, Ron Niezgodski, John Law
- **Watershed Council:** Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Jeff Wenzel, St. Joseph Co. Drain Commissioner; Nancy Brown, Elkhart Co. SWCD; Bill Courlis, Union Lake Association; Chris Bauer, MDEQ; Karen Mackowiak, St. Joseph River Basin Commission; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band

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

Minutes of the March 2014 board meeting were approved as submitted with a motion by Eldred Adams and seconded by Jim Coury.

Treasurers Report was presented by Matt Meersman for treasurer Danielle Meersman. Matt reported that after the annual meeting we had a net profit of about \$4,500 this year. A motion to accept the treasurer's report was made by Bob Jones seconded by Ron Niezgodski.

OLD BUSINESS

Wetland Partnership Project Matt Meersman reported on outreach events going on in both Michigan and Indiana, with the most recent event held in Athens on April 22nd. Jim Coury recommended a final reporting document that could help new district employees and other agency employees that could benefit from the information gathered from the project. Daragh reported that the next outreach event in Indiana will be in the Elkhart River Watershed and will focus on restoration opportunities in heavily farmed areas of the watershed. Jim Coury thanked those people who worked hard to make the wetland partnership project a success.

Membership Development and Fundraising— Matt reported that there has not been any new activity in regards to the Clean Water Campaign. Geoff Cripe, former FotSJR board member, and now watershed council member for the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, will continue to work on the campaign. Daragh Deegan noted that it will be important to find those on the board who enjoy working on requesting donations from local companies and private philanthropists. Jim Coury agreed that philanthropic giving could be a great opportunity if board members in each county began to compile county resources.

NEW BUSINESS

Watershed Council Meeting—Matt Meersman reported that the Watershed Council Meeting had great attendance with about 80 people in attendance. The silent auction was also a great success, with about \$2,000 raised. Marcy Colclough asked the group to consider having next year's watershed council

meeting on a Friday evening again, and the board agreed that the move from Monday to Friday for the meeting seemed to help bring in a crowd of people that may not have attended in the past due to the late night meeting being at the beginning of a work week. Matt relayed the message from Al and Margaret Smith's daughters that they continue to stay up to date with FotSJR, and that Margaret would be up for a visit from Matt in the near future. Matt thanked Rachel Smith and Marcy Colclough for their last minute newsletter publication to help advertise the watershed council meeting. Discussion on the 2015 watershed council meeting ensued regarding future keynote speakers, with a huge push to start planning for the next event as soon as possible. Topics for next year's keynote speaker included a follow up topic from this year's meeting regarding agriculture in the watershed, two stage ditch projects, fluvial erosion hazard program, and controlled drainage and tiling. The board will continue to look into potential keynote topics for the annual meeting, with the goal of having three to four months to plan, gain sponsorships, and increase membership. Marcy made the recommendation to focus on urban issues within the watershed for 2015, and hold smaller events throughout the year that would cover some of the topics relating to agriculture that were discussed as keynote topics. Matt offered to contact specific speakers that relate to some of the topics that were agreed upon by the board for 2015.

OTHER ITEMS

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Marcy Colclough passed out a final report for the Fish Passage project with before and after pictures that highlighted twenty stream miles restored. Marcy also reported on the progress of the Pucker Street Dam Removal, with the intended completion date of 2015. The completion of the project will be contingent on continuing to secure more funding for the removal project. Currently, the grant money earmarked for the project is for the planning and removal of the dam, with no option to repair the structure for continued use. Discussion on the environmental benefit of dam removal ensued relating to concerns addressed by local fishing guides on the loss of business after dam removal. Marcy also reported that the final report for the Southwest Michigan Water Resources Council has been completed, and will be sent to Matt Meersman via email.
- Matt Meersman inquired to the group about Cobus Creek. Daragh noted that there will be a Ontwa Township board meeting with a thirty day commenting period opening up any day now. Daragh also noted that at the last meeting there was a large turnout, with police involvement.
- Matt announced a reminder to the group that the June board meeting will be held somewhere in Indiana, possibly in the LaGrange area, and that there will be NO July meeting. The August board meeting will be moved to coincide with the August Wetland Partnership Meeting, that will be held on August 21st.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, May 22nd at 1:00pm in Three Rivers at the Public Library.