

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 24, 2012—1:00pm
Three Rivers Library—Three Rivers, Michigan

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors: Eldred Adams, Melanie Stoughton, Rudy Kappe, Ray Leising, Matt Meersman, Maria Mast, Jim Coury, Geoff Cripe, Ron Niezgodski, Danielle Meersman
- Watershed Council: Chris Bauer, MDEQ/WRD; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Jeff Reece, IMP; Don Stohler, Christiana Creek Coalition; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band; Jeff Wenzel, St. Joseph Co. Drain Comm. (MI); Karen Mackowiak, St. Joseph River Basin Commission; Joe Schmees, IDEM
- Visitors: Jen Miller, St. Joe Co. CD (MI); Lucas Gabbard, Hillsdale Conservation District

MINUTES of the April Meeting were approved on a motion made by Eldred Adams and seconded by Ron Niezgodski.

TREASURER'S REPORT—was presented by Danielle Meersman, Treasurer. Numbers from the year end report for the fiscal year that were reported at the prior meeting have slightly changed. Finalized annual meeting costs from Sturges-Young auditorium came back lower than expected, bringing the total profit to \$2,200. Current assets are around \$50,000. The treasurer's report was approved on a motion made by Ray Leising and seconded by Maria Mast.

WETLAND PARTNERSHIP PROJECT— Matt reported that functional data for the landscape level wetland functional assessment is now completed, and the data can now be used to help further outreach on USDA, and USFWS programs to landowners. Business items included reviewing obligations to the project with Leah Cooper (Outreach), Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (Administration and Municipal Outreach), Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (Outreach), and Michigan State University Extension (Citizen Planner and Municipal Outreach). Ron suggested a motion be made to approve contracts with these partners in order meet the outreach requirements as stated in the grant. Motion was made by Rudy Kappe and seconded by Eldred Adams.

Matt Meersman reported that the last invoice from the DEQ on the functional assessment will be paid in full, and that smaller invoices regarding the prioritization model will be received in the future. In paying these invoices, the board agreed that it is important to pay attention to the invoice amount, and what is currently in the checking account. Coordinating with the EPA

on reimbursement is critical, and payment requests should be going out right now. Marcy Colclough raised the issue of having more money available that was budgeted, but not spent by MDEQ and that the board should look into whether the money can be shifted to other areas that were initially cut to pay for the analysis. Jeremy Jones from MDEQ has been working on the model, with a draft model built.

MEMBERSHIP STATUS REPORTS—A membership report was handed out looking at total membership, and then broken down between the number of business and family memberships, as well as the number of active, overdue, pending and lapsed members. Lapsed memberships of over two to three months were also included in the overdue category. Pending members were described as those new members that submitted online and had mailed their membership fee to the post office box. The question of whether membership alone could cover the funding of Leah Cooper, Outreach Coordinator was raised. Maria Mast stated that she would like to see a membership report on a quarterly basis to see how well membership increases with further outreach. Dave Foerster asked if email was a good method of communication to those members overdue on renewed memberships, or whether sending a postcard to these members should be considered. Danielle Meersman informed the board that the Wild Apricot website software used by the association does report back whether an email address is bad. Letters were sent out to those members, but Matt Meersman agreed that a personal email should perhaps be sent out aside from the Wild Apricot system sending a reminder. Currently, once the first email is sent notifying a lapsed membership a second email is not sent for quite a while.

A second handout provided summarized the breakdown of income from membership, events and donations over a yearly basis for as long as the Wild Apricot system has been in effect. Marcy Colclough noted that the summary looked at income only, and did not include expenses for each annual meeting. Matt Meersman stated that donations raised during the Matching Challenge raised approximately \$2,000, but outright donations have continually decreased each year since. This is thought to be attributed to board members contributing through the silent auctions rather than outright donations. Comparing the association to other groups like the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, the board agreed that it is tricky to have a working board that also serves as a large funding mechanism. For the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, having large donors increases the drive to have active board members. Continued discussion on membership by Marcy Colclough began the group brainstorming on recruitment strategies.

The board discussed the increasing importance of the role of board members in recruitment, and the possibility of setting a goal of each board member bringing two to five new members in

annually. Geoff Cripe raised the question of whether there was a way to have a schedule of events for board members to attend to get the word out about the association. Jim Coury brought up the idea of sending out an appeal to members at the end of each year for donations, and to also include Conservation Board members in appealing to their county members as well.

Other membership drive ideas discussed lead back to the questions of obtaining a temporary liquor license for an event. Dave Foerster stated that when the Two Rivers Coalition serves alcohol for events, the license and bonding cost is approximately \$75.00, and the chance of loss would be low. Marcy Colclough brought up the possibility of partnering with a local brewery, having a percentage of the sales go back to the association. Jen Miller from the St. Joseph County Conservation District let the board know that their district was currently planning a “Paddle Poker Run” near Labor Day that included a fundraiser, and a chance to paddle the river.

Concluding the discussion on membership recruitment and fundraising, Brian Musser raised the concern that the association can’t keep up with the pace we currently are at unless we work on increasing our funds in order to be sustainable. Geoff Cripe asked if we as a board would be ready to bring ideas to the next meeting. Geoff Cripe also let the board know that he would be willing to participate on a committee. Lastly, Eldred let the board know about the Three Rivers Water Festival coming in July, and that he would be bringing the display board to the event. It will also be the 50th year of the festival.

CLEAN WATER NETWORK—Matt received an email request from the Clean Water Network in Washington D.C. that appeared to be an invoice to renew a membership to a group that the association is not a member of. Both Chris Bauer and Joe Schmees were not familiar with the Clean Water Network. Jim Coury asked if this group was similar to the Clean Water Action group. Looking at the details of the membership, the board agreed that at this time, there would be no benefit to being a member of this group.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR—

- Matt Meersman announced that the Friends of McCoy Creek sent their thanks to the association for our support on their proposal for Fish Passage Barrier grant funds from the USFWS, which they received. The group is currently awaiting a DEQ permit, but do plan on attending a fall/winter meeting to update the group on their progress. Danielle Meersman let the board know that our association is not committed to local match for this project.

- Matt Meersman announced that the next newsletter is being reviewed by himself and Marcy Colclough. While it was supposed to be an early spring issue, it is looking like it will be more of a midsummer issue.
- Karen Mackowiak attended an afternoon meeting regarding the Pigeon River TMDL. The report is available at www.watersheds.in.gov/2652.htm . Attendance was low at the meeting, and the comment period ends June 23rd.
- Geoff Cripe complimented the St. Joseph River Basin Commission meeting on its attendance of a lot of municipal officials. He highly recommended board members attending their future annual meetings. Geoff also let the group know about the June 9th opening of the Spirit Springs Sanctuary in the Rocky River watershed. It will be from 10:00am to 12:00pm. Food will be provided. Directions are available at the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy website.
- Jeff Wenzel updated the group on his attendance at the SW Michigan Drain Commissioners meeting. He used slides provided by the Friends that were also used at the annual meeting and stated that the group was impressed. Matt thanked Jeff for his continued support and promotion of the Friends of the St. Joseph River Association.
- Chris Bauer, MDEQ/WRD reminded the group that the Little Portage Creek/Portage River Watershed TMDL meeting will be held June 6th at 1:30pm at the Mendon Township Hall.
- Don Stohler, Christiana Creek let the group know that did their second cleanup along the creek, and that Christiana Creek is cleanest creek in Ekhart County.
- Marcy Colclough, SWMPC updated the group on a Best Management Practice Auction that the Van Buren County Conservation District is trying out. The program would allow farmers to bid on four different practices to reduce sediment. The farmers bid on what they want to be paid to make the changes. The bidding ends June 20th. There has been a lot of calls coming into the CD office about the program. Marcy has brochures available for those wanting more information.
- Joe Schmees, IDEM announced that the 319 grant applications for FY13 will be due Nov. 30th. Solicitations will begin in July, and IDEM is currently looking at prioritizing watersheds. Chris Bauer let the group know that in Michigan, the Notice of Intent will come out, and then there will be sixty days between the NOI and the Request for Proposals.

NEXT MEETING will be held on Thursday, June 28th at the Bristol Public Library in Indiana. After the meeting, Geoff Cripe has invited the group to his family lake home on Long Lake. The group has the opportunity to paddle from Long Lake to Trout Creek and the St. Joe River. A link to a map will be emailed to the board.

Meeting adjourned at 2:25 pm