

Friends of the St. Joe River Association, Inc.
Board Meeting Minutes
AEP Elkhart Service Center – Elkhart, Indiana
Thursday, June 24, 2010

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors – Matt Meersman, Rudy Kappe, Danielle Meersman, Jim Coury, Rachel Dennis, Dona Hunter, Geoff Cripe, Melanie Stoughton
- Outreach Coordinator – Leah Cooper
- Watershed Council Members – Angie Brown, IDEM; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Karen Mackowiac, SJRBC; Jeff Reece, Indiana Michigan Power; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition; Kathy Worst, Branch County (MI) Conservation District; Amy DeShon, St. Joe County (MI) Conservation District
- Visitors – Eric Kerney, Water Quality Specialist NHBPI; Ray Leising (and wife); Karin Kappe

Everyone present introduced themselves. Amy Boetcher did not attend (see notes under “Board Resignation & Vacancy”). Daragh Deegan and Eldred Adams told Matt they would be unable to attend. Ron Niezgodski was not present.

Minutes of the May board meeting were approved on a motion made by Rudy Kappe and seconded by Jim Coury.

Treasurer’s Report was presented by Danielle Meersman showing income of \$6,274.15 and expenses of \$1,997.97 with total assets of \$60,991.46. Rudy Kappe made a motion to approve the report; seconded by Jim Coury. Motion carried. Danielle reported that \$27,000 was moved into a savings account at a 1% interest rate. \$4,791.46 is retained in a checking account with the remaining \$25,000.00 being retained in a CD.

Outreach Coordinator’s Report – Leah Cooper:

- Leah reminded everyone that the May newsletter has been released and extra copies are available, and she had about 30 copies with her. Dave Foerster, March Colclough and Eric Kerney asked for additional copies.
- Leah requested additional help with the Summer newsletter edition. This edition is focusing on “Fisheries” and Leah had just read an article regarding the Asian Carp being found in Lake Michigan. Leah asked if the Board and Watershed thought a broad article on the Asian Carp should be included in this next newsletter. It was suggested that the article be informative and not take a position on prevention measures. Kathy Worst mentioned being able to help with contacting experts in the field.
- Leah noted that she had picked up grant/sponsorship information from Lunker’s (Edwardsburg, MI) and was going to submit a request for their support of the Friends. It was suggested that Leah encourage them to join as an organization and perhaps donate to our wetland grant, especially since their business is dependent on the health of the St. Joseph River specifically. Also, Leah was hoping to (at a minimum) have Lunker’s provide gift certificates that we could use as give-a-ways to members, or to be used at special events. The application is due by mid-August, so Leah will get working on that and report back during the August meeting.

FotSJR equipment & supplies from Smiths - Matt and Danielle made a trip to the Smith's to visit and pick up the equipment. Al and Margaret were doing well, and it was not known when they would be moving, but Matt seemed to think it would be before the end of the summer. Al Smith contacted Matt about picking up equipment and supplies that have been stored at the Smith's. They will be moving to Battle Creek and will not have a place to store the equipment. There was not a great amount of equipment (about 1 pickup truck bed full) to be picked up. Among the items was kick nets and water quality testing equipment. There was a previous discussion among Matt, Al and Ray Leising about storing the equipment at Ray's house. Matt said he and Danielle will get Ray an inventory list of all the equipment they picked up from the Smith's. Matt made a motion to store the water quality equipment at Ray Leising's house; seconded by Rudy Kappe. Motion carried. There was also a printer, an older computer and monitor that Matt thought was used by Andrew Degraes when he was working for the Friends. Matt said he would need to turn the computer on to see what files are stored on the PC, but it would probably be August before he had a chance to do so. Also, Matt and Danielle noted that one box of the membership cards Margaret used to send out were among the items, and that these cards would be given to Leah. Leah will use these cards to send to members who do not have email and appreciate a tangible card.

Commemorative bench, stone, etc. - Further discussion was considered on a bench or rock for Al & Margaret to commemorate all their tireless work in the SJR Watershed and for the Friends. Jim Coury suggested that Matt contact Merritt Brown for help. Rachel Dennis had given Matt Merritt's phone number previously. It was still suggested to see if the parks department would allow the Friends to dedicate one of the benches going into the renovated park at Scidmore Park in Three Rivers to Al & Margaret.

Freshwater Future grant contract – Leah Cooper noted that she had received the grant contract and reporting form from Freshwater Future. Leah and Matt had reviewed the contract previously and noted that it was straightforward and correct. Leah brought the contract with her and Matt will sign it after the meeting. Leah will place in the mail on Friday so it reaches them before July 1. Rudy Kappe made a motion to approve the signing of the Freshwater Future grant contract; seconded by Danielle Meersman. Motion carried.

Walk, Paddle and Roll event – Leah Cooper noted that the Friends had been invited to participate in the "Walk, Paddle and Roll" fundraising event, encouraged through Freshwater Future. Participants can choose to any type of event any time of the year. The majority choose to walk, canoe or kayak, bike or a combination. Funds are raised by participants who either pay entrance fees or collect pledges. Receiving pledges generates more contributions than an entrance fee. Walk Paddle and Roll participants raise an average of \$700 per person through pledges using a combination of pledge forms and their own personal web site provided by Freshwater Future. Proceeds from the event go to the participating groups and Freshwater Future's support programs. This was not an action item that needed to be voted on, but Leah wanted to make the Board and Watershed Council of this fundraising opportunity option.

Board Resignation & Vacancy – Amy Boetcher has regrettably resigned from the FotSJR Board. The NHBPI would not approve Amy's travel to monthly meetings because Eric Kerney, the new NHBPI Water Resources Specialist would be attending the meetings. Amy had been using some of her vacation time to attend the FotSJR Board meetings, but felt that would no longer be sustainable, and resigned from the Board after the May meeting. Matt discussed the difference in the roles between a Watershed Council member and a Board member: The WC member represents a group, while a Board member focuses on the direct interests of the Friends (separate from a group). Matt realized Eric had only had the opportunity to attend 1 other monthly meeting, but welcomed him to serve in whatever capacity he felt comfortable. Eric said he understood he would need time to acquaint himself with the group (and vice versa), also welcomed the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors. Matt Meersman made a motion to approve Eric Kerney as Amy Boetcher's

replacement on the FotSJR Board; seconded by Rudy Kappe. Motion carried. Eric Kerney will serve out the remainder of Amy's term, through 2012.

Outreach Coordinator Contract Renewal – Matt reminded the Board that Leah's contract would be expiring on July 1, 2010. The Board will not be holding its monthly meeting in July, so discussion about contract renewal took place today. Matt opened the floor to Leah, where she provided the Board and Watershed Council with a detailed list of all her completed projects and milestones since joining the Friends on September 1, 2009. Jim Coury thanked Leah for putting together the detailed summary of her work. Marcy Colclough was complementary of Leah's assistance during the "Zero in the middle" workshop in May, and noted that she was depending on the Friends for outreach help on upcoming projects. Dave Foerster said there was a noticeable improvement in the Friends newsletter and web site since Leah came on board. Rudy Kappe said he has also been very pleased with Leah's work and talent. However, Rudy said he would like to see a financial breakdown of grants awarded versus grant applied for in expectation of paying Leah further in the future. Matt Meersman made a motion to renew Leah's contract for 6 more months beginning July 1 at the same hourly rate; seconded by Rudy Kappe. Motion carried. Jim Coury asked about an "above and beyond" raise. Matt said that with soon-to-be-coming-in grants, Leah would naturally see an increase in pay through an increase in hours worked. Dona Hunter suggested that an addendum could be added to Leah's contract should Matt necessitate a pay increase. Matt will get Leah a revised contract as soon as possible.

Other :

Leah asked for Board approval to attend the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Capacity Meeting on July 1, 2010 in Portage, IN. Dona Hunter made a motion to approve travel expense incurred by Leah to attend this event; seconded by Rudy Kappe. Motion carried.

Jim Coury mentioned that there will be a round 2 for the GRLI. In September there is also a Conservation Easement workshop.

Matt reminded everyone of Paddlefest in South Bend on Sunday (June 26).

Rachel Dennis asked the Board to approve a \$25.00 expenditure for a booth at Harvest Fest in Scotts, MI. She said this is a well-attended event and would be a good opportunity to get the Friends name out there among the agricultural community. Both Rachel and Melanie Stoughton will attend this event and manage the booth. Matt suggested she connect with Eldred on getting the booth and materials. Matt Meersman made a motion to approve the \$25.00 for the booth; seconded by Rudy Kappe. Motion carried.

Dona Hunter announced that LaGrange County had been awarded a 319 Watershed Management Plan for the Pigeon River. This grant is for both planning and implementation. They will have 2 years to write the management plan and 2 years to implement the plan. Also, LaGrange County has been awarded a Great Lakes Commission (GLC) Grant for implementation (only) for the Little Elkhart River, where flooding has been a major problem for a number of years.

Items from the Floor:

- Kathy Worst noted that Branch County CD was asked to resubmit on the Hodunk-Messenger Chain of Lakes Watershed Implementation project, and in doing so would need the FotSJR letter of support reissued. The RFP is due in August. Rachel Dennis made a motion to approve a new letter of support; seconded by Dona Hunter. Motion carried.

- Angie Brown said that applications for IDEM's 319 grant program would be due September 1, and that IDEM will consider projects across the state line. Marcy Colclough asked about the possibility of a 319 grant for an outreach project.
- Marcy Colclough stated that Michigan is looking at taking a "watershed" approach for stormwater permitting, and this could affect the current SJR watershed management plan. However, Marcy stated that this would be work primarily done by any outside consultant, and that this might be a good way (and free way) for the Friends to the watershed management plan updated (as it is now 5 years old).
- Angie Brown noted that on August 5, 2010 there would be a watershed discussion at IUSB. Karen Mackowiac was aware of this event and noted that it was sponsored by the MS4 education department in St. Joseph County.
- Jeff Reece said that AEP had received approval for the Twin Branch Dam draw down, and that this would most likely take place in September.
- Marcy Colclough brought to the attention of the Board and Watershed Council an upcoming RFP sponsored through the USDA Forest Service. The project Marcy proposed is called the "St. Joseph River (MI/IN) Watershed Ecosystem Services Payment Program. The Grantee would be the Delta Institute (<http://delta-institute.org/>) with major partners including the SWMPC, Chicago Climate Exchange (<http://www.chicagoclimatex.com/>), FotSJR, SJRBC, TNC, SWMLC, MDNRE, Conservation Districts, Two Rivers Coalition, etc. The overall goal of this project will be to improve the nearshore health of Lake Michigan by reducing the loading of sediment, nutrients and E. coli through the implementation of a Payment for Ecosystem Services program focused on incentivizing voluntary action by private landowners, business and universities. The project partners will create and implement an Ecosystem Services Payment Program (ESPP) in the St. Joseph River Watershed to protect and improve water quality and to provide other ecosystem benefits in the Great Lakes Basin. Through a local stakeholder engagement process, the team will develop a list of eligible activities that target identified environmental stressors and create a clear and concise payment structure. Payments for Environmental Services (PES) are an economic instrument designed to provide incentives to land users, on behalf of service beneficiaries, for management practice (water, carbon, biodiversity). Matt Meersman made a motion to support Marcy (and partners) with a letter of support (already prepared); seconded by Jim Coury. Motion carried. Matt expressed concern with the sustainability of the program, but agreed with Jim Coury and Geoff Cripe that it was a new way at approaching watershed conservation. Marcy noted that it was inconceivable to submit on this RFP without the support of the Friends. She recognizes the opportunity for improvement within the watershed for green infrastructure practices, which are not widely used currently within the watershed. Marcy went on to note the tremendous opportunity this could bring to the Friends in terms of positive exposure and further support of the Friends' cause.

Meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m. with a motion made by Matt Meersman and seconded by Rudy Kappe after a reminder from Matt that there would be no July meeting. The next meeting will take place August 26, 2010 in Three Rivers, Michigan. Matt also stated in lieu of no meeting in July, he may provide a summary/progress report of items TBD from June meeting, as well as meeting minutes.