

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 23, 2020 – 1:00 p.m.
Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors: Daragh Deegan, Carolyn Grace, Eric Kerney, Ron Niezgodski, Grant Poole, Dona Hunter
- Watershed Council Members: Jan McGowan, LaGrange Co. SWCD; Tara Lee, Steuben Co. SWCD
- Visitors: Shaun Grace, St. Joseph Co. CD; Ashley Ives, St. Joseph Co. CD; Allyson Wentela, St. Joseph Co. CD; Christine Kosmowski, MIARD; Annie Klehfoth, Elkhart Environmental Center

CALL TO ORDER –In President Jeff Reece’s absence, Daragh Deegan, Vice-President called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and asked for introductions.

MINUTES of the October 24, 2019 meeting held in South Bend at the MACOG offices **were approved on a motion made by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Carolyn Grace.**

TREASURER’S REPORT – Treasurer Kim Sinclair was not present so there was no financial report.

OLD BUSINESS

- **STRATEGIC PLANNING – Newsletter Update**

Eric Kerney distributed draft copies of the next newsletter. He asked for everyone present to proof read it and get back with him on any changes/additions. He did ask for more photos, not only for this newsletter, but future ones and for Grant Poole to add to Facebook. Daragh Deegan volunteered to write up something on the dam removals. Jan McGowan suggested bold facing some of the more important items to draw attention to them. The newsletter will be sent by email only and will be distributed as soon as possible. It needs to be out in plenty of time to advertise the annual watershed celebration coming up in March.

Carolyn Grace announced there was a \$70,000 match received for the removal of the Parkville Dam, (one of the top 5 dams identified to be removed).

- **2020 Meeting Schedule/Locations**

Since the Three Rivers Public Library is moving from this location to downtown Three Rivers some alternative locations need to be found for future meetings. Daragh Deegan said that Jeff Reece is working on scheduling a meeting near Berrien Springs. Also he mentioned the Potawatomi Zoo might be another location. Ron Niezgodski mentioned two alternative locations in Three Rivers. Those locations are Broadway/Meijer Park and to work with Ron Johnson from Fabius Township. Upcoming meeting dates are:

- **February 27, 2020** – Three Rivers Public Library
- **March 20, 2020** – 13th Annual Watershed Celebration – Sturges-Young Center for the Arts
- **March 26, 2020** – Location TBD; **April 23, 2020** – Location TBD; **May 28, 2020** – Location TBD; **June 25, 2020** – Location TBD; **July** – No meeting; **August 27, 2020** – Location TBD; **September 24, 2020** – Location TBD; **October 22, 2020** – Location TBD; **No meetings in November and December.**

- **Watershed Leadership Training Opportunity**

Tara Lee reported that the selection committee met on October 31, 2019 and selected 4 applicants. Three were from Indiana and 1 from Michigan. They had a lot of good applications, so it was not an easy decision. Applications were awarded to: Annie Klehfoth, Elkhart Environmental Center; Casey Stoffel, Notre Dame Environmental Change Initiative; Melissa DeSimone, Michigan Lake & Stream Association; and Peter Kelly, Dallas & 5 Lakes Associations in LaGrange County, Indiana. Two \$750 scholarships will be paid for by St. Joseph River Basin Commission and two paid for by Friends of the St. Joe River Association. Annie Klehfoth reported that the first workshop was held two weeks ago.

Christine Kosmowski mentioned another training program opportunity available online through MSU. It consists of 8 modules with a cost of about \$100 per module.

- **Al Smith Watershed Stewardship Award Applications** – Deadline for applications for this award are due today, January 23. Daragh Deegan reported that Jeff Reece said one application had been received. The name of the recipient will be kept secret until the Watershed Celebration in March.
- **13th Annual Watershed Council Celebration Planning Update** – Date for the event is set for March 20, 2020 at the Sturges-Young Center for the Arts. Melissa Widhalm with the Purdue Climate Change Research Center is the scheduled speaker. An honorarium was approved at the last meeting to pay for overnight lodging, if she needs it. The meal will be the same as in past years. Matt Meersman has agreed to emcee. LaGrange Co. SWCD will supply their large screen and audio equipment. Daragh Deegan reminded everyone about silent auction items.
- **Board Member Recruitment** – Daragh Deegan, chair of the board member recruitment committee reported he had talked with all members whose terms are expiring, except Matt Meersman. Matt has been out of town. Matt was appointed to replace Bill Courliss at the last meeting after Bill resigned due to personal reasons. There is still one vacant seat which Bob Jones left when he moved out of the area.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Potawatomi Zoo** - Daragh Deegan reported that Potawatomi Zoo in South Bend contacted Jeff Reece about partnering with the FofSJR on a river cleanup and/or Earth Day event. Earth Day is April 22. They hold an Earth Day celebration with about 2000 in attendance each year. This year they want to focus on watersheds and possibly using the sand box watershed display. There are now 3 of those available in the watershed, with Tara Lee reporting that Steuben Co. SWCD now has one, along with Branch Co. CD and Elkhart Co. SWCD. Carolyn Grace said that Jordan Beehler, Branch Co. CD, will be doing a presentation at St. Joseph Co. CD 4th grade field day. Ron Niezgodski volunteered to help at the Earth Day Celebration, if Jeff needs help.

OTHER/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Carolyn Grace reported they have applied for a GLRI grant to inventory invasive species in the St. Joseph River Watershed in St. Joseph, Branch and Hillsdale Counties. They should know if they get the grant in March. If received it will give them funds to hire an individual to do the inventory in 18 months and they would then be eligible for a larger grant the following year to address the problems identified.
- Eric Kerney reported that the State of Michigan will be including e-coli testing as a part of the TMDLs being developed. The question was asked about DNA testing to determine whether e-coli bacteria is

human or animal. Tara Lee reported that the Steuben Co. Lakes Council paid for some tests, but it is cost prohibitive to do it on a regular basis.

- Grant Poole reported that all the permits are in place for the meanders project on the Dowagiac River. They are beginning to look for grants to start the project. The project was scaled back from 3 miles to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile all on tribal lands. Grant requested a letter of support to submit with the grant applications from FotSJR. Daragh said he would get the request to Jeff.
- Daragh Deegan said that the Elkhart River Dam removal project should start sometime next week. It is in downtown Elkhart where the St. Joseph River meets the Elkhart River. The project cost will be \$2.4 million funded by GLRI and Army Corp of Engineers. The contractor will be putting together a time lapse video of the project.
- A question was asked about the documentary of the St. Joseph River that Matt Meersman mentioned several months ago. No one knew anything.

NEXT MEETING – February 27, 2020 at Three Rivers Public Library, Three Rivers, Michigan

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned on a motion made by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Carolyn Grace.

Minutes recorded by Dona Hunter, Secretary.