

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 24, 2015-1:00 PM

Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

- **Directors:** Matt Meersman, Jeff Wenzel, Bob Jones, John Law, Ron Niezgodski, Daragh Deegan, Bruce Barton, Jim Coury
- **Watershed Council:** Ron Johnson, Fabius Township; Bill Courliss, Union Lake Community Association; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band
- **Visitors:** James Hissong, St. Joseph, MI Grant Writer; Dona Hunter, SNRT; Patty Hoch-Melluish, Kieser & Associates

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM, welcomed everyone to the meeting, and called for introductions.

Minutes of the August 2015 board meeting were reviewed. Corrections made were Bob Jones was absent and Jeff Wenzel was in attendance. Jim Coury moved to accept the minutes as corrected and Ron Niezgodski seconded. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report was presented by Matt Meersman for September 2015. It was noted there were some individual and business membership renewals, an insurance expense for the 12th Annual St. Joe River Races, and a website expense to lock in the fee for the next two years. Ron Niezgodski moved to accept the treasurer's report as presented and John Law seconded. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

Regional Conservation Partnership Project update – Matt and Marcy Colclough met with Michigan NRCS to assist in administering mapping capabilities and will be doing the same with Indiana NRCS in October. Matt noted that Michigan still needs to hire some technicians. The question was asked if there is going to be an overall coordinator hired for the project. At this time, the answer is no.

NEW BUSINESS:

ACOE Sediment Monitoring Workshop – Jim Selegean of the US Army corps of Engineers has proposed a sediment monitoring workshop for our area. He sent a proposed agenda for Wednesday, October 14, 2015 but is in need of a site to hold the workshop. The workshop is

designed to train volunteers. There was some interest shown by several board members. Please let Matt know if you want to attend the workshop.

Annual Meeting 2016 – Matt led a discussion on our Annual Meeting. We had originally looked at Friday, March 11, 2016. Matt will not be available on that date, so we decided on Friday, March 18, 2016 at Sturges-Young Auditorium in Sturgis, Michigan. A possible speaker suggested was Bob Barr, hydrologist. Matt will contact him on availability and cost. Jeff Wenzel was charged with coming up with a great title/slogan for the meeting.

Letter from City of Elkhart – Elkhart city engineer, Mike Machlan, sent a letter announcing AEP has completed a pull-off on Beardsley Ave. adjacent to the upstream portage for the Johnson Street Dam for paddlers to load and unload their canoes and kayaks safely. The river access was also cleaned up. This was done by AEP at the City of Elkhart's request with support from the Friends. Thank you City of Elkhart and AEP!

Additional river access improvements – It was noted several river access points have been improved and new handicap access sites have been done at Historic Bridge Park near Battle Creek, MI and Hansen Park in Michigan City, IN.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Patty Hoch-Melluish – Patty announced that the American Farmland Trust received a NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant for \$306,118.00 for pollinator habitat development in Michigan. They are looking at developing 40 acres of habitat in 2 acre parcels at 20 sites.

Daragh Deegan – Daragh said IN Fish & Wildlife has been talking about dam removal. The IN Water Monitoring Council is holding a symposium on dam removal December 17, 2015 in Indianapolis.

Matt Meersman – Matt mentioned the Pucker Street Dam removal has another issue. It's been discovered there is an oil pipeline in the way. The township says the oil company is responsible and the oil company says the township is responsible. More to come.

NEXT MEETING:

Next meeting is scheduled for October 22, 2015 at 1:00 PM at Three Rivers Public Library, Three Rivers, MI.

Ron Niezgodski moved to adjourn and Jeff Wenzel seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by acting secretary, Bob Jones