

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 23, 2017—1:00 PM
Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE

Directors: Roxanne Barton, Bill Courliss, Carol Higgins, Dona Hunter, Bob Jones, Eric Kerney, John Law, Matt Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Jeff Reece, Kim Sinclair

Watershed Council: Jim Hess, Elkart County SWCD; Tara Lee, Steuben County SWCD

Visitors: John Heiliger, Elkart County MS4; Terri Loomis, City of Three Rivers; Daragh Deegan, City of Elkhart; Lowell Hunter, LaGrange County

Call to Order:

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM, welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for introductions.

Minutes of the February 23, 2017 meeting were reviewed. Bill Courliss moved to accept the minutes as printed, Kim Sinclair seconded. **Motion carried.**

Treasurer's Report was presented by Matt Meersman in the absence of Danielle Meersman. Matt noted that the auction income was part of the Contributions Income and registration was part of Event Income. Along with Membership Dues, we had total monthly income from February 23, 2017 through March 22, 2017 of \$2,880.84. Year to date income is \$6,066.52. The Annual Meeting Event Expense was \$1,765.00. Along with Bank Service Charges, total monthly expenses were \$1,806.45 leaving a Net Monthly Income of \$1,074.39. Year to date expenses were \$2,245.43 leaving Net Year to Date Income of \$3,821.09. Our Total Balance is \$67,134.17. Kim Sinclair moved to accept the treasurer's report as printed, Dona Hunter seconded. **Motion carried.**

Matt asked if the Board would consider going to New Business first and then Old Business. The Board agreed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Annual Meeting Review

The general feeling was the Annual Meeting was a success. Several commented on how the speaker hit topics not only on herpes but also near shore structure that was relevant to what they are doing in their areas. It was also mentioned/asked how many wildlife crossings we have in our watershed? The auction made about \$1,200.00 and change. Thanks go out to those who donated items and bid on items. It was asked if we had a copy of the presentation David Mifsud gave. Bob Jones said he did have that presentation. Matt will check with David if we may share that presentation with others.

National River Rally

The National River Rally 2017, hosted by River Network, will be at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan May 8 – 11, 2017. This is an annual conference focused on education, inspiration, and celebration with the river and water communities. Matt will be presenting at this conference.

2017 Meeting Schedule

Matt brought up the meeting schedule for the rest of the year. He has to reserve a room with the Three Rivers Library and wanted input. It was decided to keep our meetings at the Three Rivers Public Library. The June meeting will be held at Pine Knob Park in LaGrange County, Indiana with a possibility of a kayak/canoe trip and/or walk of Duff Lake Fen after the meeting. We normally do not have a meeting in July and it was decided to not have a meeting in December. Kim Sinclair moved to accept this schedule of meetings, Jeff Reece seconded. **Motion carried.**

OTHER:

- **Great Lakes Day** – Matt gave a report on his trip to Washington DC for Great Lakes Day. Because of weather, the first night flight was canceled. John Law was not able to reschedule but Matt was able to get a different flight. He was able to speak with Debbie Stabenow from Michigan and Jim Banks and Jackie Walorski from Indiana. His team also met with the staffers Pete Viscloski and Todd Young of Indiana. He felt they all are aware of our concerns for Great Lakes issues/restoration and are supportive of funding as much as they can.
- **Fish passage workshop** – Daragh Deegan announced that Len Kring of the US Forest Service at Hoosier National Forest will be sponsoring a workshop on fish passage projects in October. Daragh will get us more details.
- **SJRBC Symposium** – Matt announced that Friday, May 12, 2017 is the 17th Annual SJRBC Symposium to be held at Fernwood Botanical Gardens. The keynote speaker will be Jim Selegean from ACOE concerning sediment transport in the river. There will also be Ignite Presentations by various people.
- **Biochar Demonstration** – Carol Higgins will be hosting a demonstration of biochar at her home. Karl Kaufman of Michigan EcoVillage will conduct the demonstration on Saturday, April 8, 2017 from noon to 4:00 PM.

OLD BUSINESS:

Strategic Planning & SJRBC Collaboration

- Matt started the discussion by expressing we should identify where FotSJR and SJRBC differ and how do we collaborate.
- Through discussion, we identified the SJRBC as a group with some decision making power that is due to its make-up of governmental officials. FotSJR is a volunteer advocacy group for water quality and health.
- The two groups have similar goals but different plans of action. FotSJR can and should act as advocates of water quality that can influence water quality decisions that members of the SJRBC put into practice.
- In hosting this year's Symposium, Matt indicated funds are not available to fully put on the event as in past years. The free lunch meal is one item that is fairly expensive. After much discussion, Kim Sinclair moved to have FotSJR sponsor the noon meal at the SJRBC Symposium for this year, not to exceed \$2,000.00. Bill Courliss seconded the motion. **Motion carried.** A majority felt this sponsorship would be a good step in letting decision makers know who we are and what our priorities are.
- We will continue the discussion of strategic planning next month as we will have our fiscal year report at that time. Suggestions have already been made to maybe use 10% of our money for grants or scholarships. To be continued.

Budget Adoption

- Matt passed out a copy of last year's budget as an example of what we proposed.
- We felt we should wait until next month when we have the past year's final report to work from. We seem to be getting a little closer through our discussions as to what we, as an organization, want to be and what we want to put our energies into.

Adjournment

John Law moved to adjourn, Kim Sinclair seconded. **Motion carried.** Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM. Next meeting is 1:00 PM, Thursday, April 27, 2017 at the Three Rivers Public Library.

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Jones