

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 26, 2012 – 2:00 p.m.
Sturges-Young Auditorium - Sturgis, Michigan

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors: Eldred Adams, Bruce Barton, Eric Kerney, Matt Meersman, Danielle Meersman, Daragh Deeghan, Geoff Cripe, Brian Musser, Ron Niezgodski, Jim Coury, Ray Leising, and Dona Hunter
- Watershed Council: Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; John Nelson; SJ County Conservation District
- Visitors: Roxanne Barton, Don & Claudia Stohler
- Outreach Coordinator: Leah Cooper

MINUTES of the February Board Meeting were approved on a motion made by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Geoff Cripe.

TREASURER'S REPORT – was presented by Danielle Meersman, Treasurer. The report shows an approximate net loss for the year of \$8,000. Total assets to date are \$50,920.85. The treasurer's report was approved on a motion made by Ray Leising and seconded by Dona Hunter.

OUTREACH COORDINATOR'S REPORT – It was nice to have Leah at the March meeting. She and Matt have been working together very closely to improve communications and the quality of the newsletter. She has been working very hard over the last few weeks to organize the annual watershed council meeting coming up this evening. This is the largest event yet with 94 reservations and some big ticket items for the silent auction. A new sponsorship was received from the firm Leah works for. Matt has worked with Leah to restructure her contractual agreements with the Friends focusing on her strengths. Matt is very pleased with the way things are moving forward.

WETLAND PARTNERSHIP PROJECT – The EPA grant is almost through the first half of the three year project. The current newsletter focuses on issues related to the wetland project. The Landscape Level Wetland Functional Assessment is nearly complete for the entire watershed.

WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP AWARD – This is the first year for this award. Matt has completed a plaque for the award and will talk more about it at the annual meeting tonight. The award winner's name will be placed on this traveling trophy, with a certificate presented to the winner, along with a lifetime membership to FotSJR. Recognition will also be placed on the website. Matt met with Margaret and presented the information to her. She is very pleased with the award and may try to come to the meeting tonight with her daughters.

One thing that was not considered in the development of the criteria was where an individual can win the award more than one time. Matt feels that with 5,000 square miles in the watershed that there are plenty of individuals to recognize and feels one time is enough. It was also discussed about whether this should remain an individual award or could be presented to an organization. It was suggested keeping this an individual award and maybe developing another award to recognize organizations in the future. Brian Musser made a motion that an individual can only receive the award one time; Ray Leising seconded the motion; motion carried.

Another point of discussion concerned what would happen if the award got lost, since it is a traveling award. The award could be re-created, but other options may need to be looked into. Part of the award is the certificate presented to Al Smith by the State of Michigan, which Matt does have a copy of. It may be a better option to place the award in a public place in the hometown of the winner and then moved each year. It was also suggested that the person who nominates the winner stay in close contact with that individual and retrieves the plaque at the end of the year, before the next award is presented. The board needs to think about where to hang it and make a definite decision in the future.

WATERSHED COUNCIL MEETING – Most things are ready to go. There are a few things that need to be placed in the packets for attendees, which can be completed upstairs after this meeting. The tables in the lobby will be full of displays from various organizations in the watershed. The silent auction items will be set up in the dining room, for easier access so people can place bids between 5:00 p.m. and 7:45 p.m. Forms have been put together for each item and those forms will be given to the person with the highest bid, so they can pay. Tom Springer does not have a power point presentation, but the projector and screen will be set up to run a rotating presentation during dinner.

ELECTION OF NEW DIRECTORS – Geoff Cripe reported that of the 5 directors up for re-election, 4 have agreed to be elected to serve three more years. Matt Meersman, Danielle Meersman, Rudy Kappe and Eric Kerney have agreed to serve on the board for another 3 year term. Dona Hunter has opted not to serve another term on the board, as she is retiring from the LaGrange County SWCD. Rachel Smith is interested in coming back on the board to replace Dona. There were no additional nominations made from the floor for new directors. This slate of 5 directors was elected by everyone present to serve on the board.

ELECTION OF NEW OFFICERS – The current officers are Matt Meersman, President and he has agreed to serve again; Rudy Kappe, Vice-President and he has asked not to be considered again; Danielle Meersman, Treasurer and she has agreed to serve again; Dona Hunter, Secretary will not be eligible to serve as secretary again. Officer positions are elected for two year terms.

Dona Hunter nominated Melanie Stoughton for the position of secretary; seconded by Jim Coury; being no other nominations from the floor; Dona moved the secretary nominations be closed; seconded by Jim Coury; motion carried.

Matt Meersman nominated Danielle Meersman for the position of treasurer; seconded by Dona Hunter; being no other nominations from the floor; Dona moved the treasurer nominations be closed; seconded by Jim Coury; motion carried.

Geoff Cripe nominated Maria Mast for the position of vice-president; seconded by Matt Meersman; being no other nominations from the floor; Dona moved the nominations for vice-president be closed; seconded by Eric Kerney; motion carried.

Brian Musser nominated Matt Meersman for the position of president; seconded by Geoff Cripe; being no other nominations from the floor; Dona moved the nominations for president be closed; seconded by Geoff Cripe; motion carried.

Congratulations were offered to the newly elected officers of Matt Meersman, President; Maria Mast, Vice-President; Danielle Meersman, Treasurer; and Melanie Stoughton, Secretary.

NEXT MEETING – Thursday, April 26 at Three Rivers Public Library, Three Rivers, Michigan

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR:

- Leah Cooper shared the date for the River Clean up scheduled in South Bend on April 14. Last year they had a great clean up filling a 40 yard dumpster.
- Don Stohler invited everyone to the Christiana Creek Clean up on April 28. Last year in July they filled a truckload with trash.
- John Nelson reported there is a St. Joseph River Clean up between Colon and Mendon sponsored by the Conservation District on August 25. They will be cleaning up litter and trash and have clean ups scheduled for the next four years.

Matt noted that this is how the Friends got started with the river clean ups and it is great to see it being carried on by other groups throughout the watershed. Dates for other clean ups will be placed on the website calendar, so remember to look at it.

Meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m. on a motion made by Matt Meersman and seconded by Bruce Barton.