

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, August 21, 2014—1:00 PM**  
**Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, MI**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- **Directors:** Matt Meersman, Melanie Stoughton, Daragh Deegan, Bob Jones, Zac Martin, Jim Coury, Ron Niezgodski, Danielle Meersman, Rudy Kappe, Ray Leising
- **Watershed Council:** Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Jeff Wenzel, St. Joseph Co. Drain Commissioner; Chris Bauer, MDEQ; Joe Schmees, Indiana Dept. of Env. Management; Dona Hunter, LaGrange SWCD; Jeff Reece, IMP; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition; Martin Franke, LaGrange SWCD; Paula Miles-Cass County CD; Kathy Worst, Branch County CD; Jeremy Reiman, MACOG/SJRBC;
- **Visitors:** Jack Knorek, Michigan Dept. of Agriculture and Rural Development; Kyle—volunteer with LaGrange SWCD

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:07 pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and called for introductions. Matt announced that after this meeting, Marcy Colclough will present on the Regional Conservation Partnership Project funding proposal that was recently selected to submit a full proposal.

**Minutes** of the June 2014 board meeting were approved upon correction of removing Chris Bauer as an attendee at the June meeting, with a motion made by Ron Neizgodski seconded by Jim Coury. Motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report** was presented by Danielle Meersman covering the previous two months, noting a net income of \$577.64. Danielle explained that money had been donated by her office that was raised during a "jeans day" at work. Matt noted that some funds were also donated by John Senecal following the paddle that took place after the June meeting. A motion made to accept the report was made by Ray Leising and seconded by Daragh Deegan. Motion carried.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Wetland Partnership Project:** Matt Meersman reported on the meeting held earlier this morning. All of the official landowner outreach events have been completed. The last meeting will be held here at the Three Rivers Public Library in November on the 20th at 10:15 am.

**Membership Development and Fundraising:** Matt reported that there has not been a lot of activity on working with local businesses at strengthening the campaign to date. Matt summarized the goal of the Clean Water Campaign, and that both he and Geoff Cripe are continuing to work on developing the campaign. Matt reported that at the Wetland Partnership meeting held earlier in the day, Geoff Cripe suggested looking into working with the local Rotary groups within the watershed to help develop a stronger campaign. Ray Leising noted that the rotary groups traditionally have only focused on

international projects regarding water quality, and that there may be some roadblocks in gaining support for a local project. Daragh Deegan noted that some rotary groups do have substantial funding, and it may just depend on the local groups themselves if they are interested in supporting the project.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Rachel Smith Resignation:** Matt Meersman announced to the meeting attendees that Rachel Smith contacted the FotSJR board via email regarding her need to resign from the board. Matt shared with the group that Rachel has taken a job in Maine at a Soil and Water Conservation District, which began in the beginning of August. Matt explained that the board could appoint someone to fill out the remainder of Rachel's term if they know of a good candidate.

**Fawn River 319 Support:** Matt summarized the request by the LaGrange SWCD to support projects they are applying for via a 319 grant. Dona Hunter was present at the meeting. A motion to draft a letter of support for these projects was made by Ron Niezgodski, and seconded by Daragh Deegan. Motion carried.

**Watershed Council Meeting Speaker/Date:** President Matt Meersman thanked Jeff Wenzel on his enthusiasm to begin planning earlier than usual for the 2015 Watershed Council Annual Meeting. Matt reported that he has been working on an event focused on urban stormwater management, and found that Jim Patchett of the Conservation Design Forum was available and interested in being the keynote speaker. Matt reported that usually charges around \$2,000, but that he agreed to speak for only \$200. Matt reported that the date for the Annual Watershed Council Meeting is set for Friday, March 20, 2015 at Sturges-Young Auditorium. Submissions for a catchy topic title are welcomed, and appreciated. Marcy Colclough noted that this speaker will be in line with previous keynote participants in that Jim is very energetic, and an overall great speaker.

**St. Joseph River Races:** Matt announced that the 11<sup>th</sup> annual race will be held Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, and invited everyone to volunteer and/or participate. Matt asked the board to consider sponsoring the event again this year. Daragh Deegan made a motion to sponsor, and cover the insurance cost for the event, with Jim Coury seconding. Motion carried. The cost of the liability insurance for the event was reported as approximately \$200.00. Matt thanked the group for their continued support. Jeff Reece asked whether Matt would be looking for sponsorships for the Watershed Council Meeting as well, and that he would look into getting a sponsorship by IMP for the meeting.

## **OTHER ITEMS**

- **Bob Jones, LaGrange SWCD:** announced that LaGrange SWCD has partnered with Stewardship Network in creating new cluster called the "Lakes Country Cluster". The main focus of the cluster will be on invasive species. Bob reported that one field day has already been completed, with goals to have another field day in the fall. They are currently applying for a grant to combat invasive species, and requests a letter of support on the project from FotSJR. Bob briefly summarized some of the invasive species they intend to target with this project, and work and research that has been done within the areas they look to control. Matt requested

that Bob Jones draft a letter. A motion to provide a letter of support was made by Ray Leising, with Ron Niezgodski seconding the motion. Motion carried.

- **Matt Meersman:** announced that he recently visited Margaret Smith in Battle Creek, who is doing well, and being taken care of by her daughters. Margaret told Matt that she had made a connection with Rick Schaffer, a former State Representative, who comes into the care facility frequently as a hospice care provider. Margaret continues to thank everyone within the Watershed Council for their hard work and support of the work done over the years.
- **Daragh Deegan:** A River Restoration event will be held on September 8<sup>th</sup>. Topics on pond dredging of the Goshen pond, and Walleye stocking in Elkhart River will be discussed. The Great Lakes Commission Grant on sediment reduction will also be wrapping up soon. An Elkhart River Cleanup will also take place on Sat. Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>.
- **Jim Coury:** congratulated Matt, Marcy, and Geoff on their work in the Wetland Partnership project.
- **Jeff Reece:** Announced that Indiana Michigan Power would like to use biological controls to combat Purple Loosestrife, and the company is currently looking for supplies of the appropriate weevils to address the issue. Jeff let the group know that the Buchannan upper dam access site is open again. Jeff also announced that he will be retiring in March, and hopes to have a new employee shadow him at future board meetings to continue the relationship between Indiana Michigan Power and FotSJR.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00pm in Three Rivers at the Public Library.

Bob Jones moved to adjourn the meeting, with Ron Niezgodski seconding. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.