

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 24, 2019 – 1:00 p.m.
Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, Michigan

IN ATTENDANCE:

Directors: Bill Courliss, Grant Poole, Eric Kerney, Ron Niezgodski, Carolyn Grace, Kim Sinclair, Dona Hunter

Watershed Council Members: Matt Meersman, St. Joseph River Basin Commission Director; Roey Marcon, LaGrange Co. SWCD

Visitors: Pamela Reed and Anna Keim - Grow Crops Not Wind Turbines; Lyndsay Morrison, Branch Co. CD; Doug McLaughlin, Keiser & Associates; Dallas Chester; Jason Tharp; Jared Foster, Native Connections; Jared Harmon, Rebecca Shank

CALL TO ORDER - Ron Niezgodski called the meeting to order. Jeff Reece, President, is recovering from knee surgery and had asked Ron to take his place at the meeting. Ron thanked everyone for coming and asked for introductions.

MINUTES of the October 2018 meeting were approved on a motion made by Bill Courliss and seconded by Carolyn Grace.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Treasurer Kim Sinclair submitted a financial report for November 2018 through January 2019 showing Total Liabilities & Equity of \$66,197.92. Membership dues had been received from Berrien Co. CD. Dona gave Kim the invoice from Keiser & Associates for payment for formatting the newsletter. Carolyn Grace made a motion to approve the financial report; seconded by Bill Courliss; **motion carried.**

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Strategic Planning** – Dona distributed the newsletter which had been picked up at the printer by Kim Sinclair. She thanked everyone for their assistance in getting the newsletter information together. She also expressed her appreciation to Keiser & Associates for their work in formatting the newsletter.
- **12th Annual Watershed Celebration Update** – The event will be held at Sturges-Young Auditorium in Sturgis, Michigan on March 22, 2019. The facility has been confirmed, along with the menu for dinner. Matt Meersman will serve as emcee for the meeting. Carolyn Grace has confirmed the presentation – Feathered Friends on the River – by Aimee Pico of the Lake Milton Raptor Education Center. Sturges-Young personnel approved having the raptor presentation in the facility. Carolyn said they will be bringing a golden eagle and barred owl, among other raptors. Matt will get the registration information on the website soon. Final details will be discussed at the February meeting
- **Watershed Leadership Academy** – Carolyn Grace reported that there are 40 people taking advantage of the excellent training provided at the Leadership Academy. Carolyn is really excited about being able to attend. She attended their first on sight training and has homework assignments every week. Matt mentioned that a total of 4 people – two from Indiana and two from Michigan – had been awarded scholarships.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Grant Poole reported he has not followed up on Facebook, Twitter, and other media outlets for the Friends, but will soon.
- Al Smith Watershed Award – Matt reported only one nomination had been received. The individual is very deserving of the recognition with his name being announced at the watershed council meeting in March. Matt will make sure the plaque is updated and at the meeting.
- Donation to Three Rivers Commission on Aging – Two of the past meetings were held in their conference room and they did not charge anything for the use. On a suggestion made by Jeff Reece, Kim Sinclair proposed paying them \$75 per meeting for a total of \$150. Bill Courliss made a motion to pay the Commission on Aging \$150; Grant Poole seconded the motion; **motion carried.**

PRESENTATION ON INDUSTRIAL WIND TURBINES

Bill Courliss introduced Pamela Reed and Anna Keim. They are representatives of “Branch County – Grow Crops Not Wind Turbines” a concerned group of citizens in Branch County. The proposed site for the wind turbines is in Union Township, Branch Township. They are concerned about the conflicting information regarding the impact wind turbines can have on rural, agricultural and lakeside communities being shared by DTE, the company wanting to erect the turbines. This group is not against anti-renewable energy, but is concerned about the location of the wind turbines without proper ordinances in place to protect the land use. There are no laws/ordinances in the State of Michigan concerning this. Each township has to pass their own ordinances governing industrial wind turbines. Three fact sheets were handed out to those in attendance. One fact sheet outlined who the Branch County coalition is made up of and what they are advocating for. The second was information from US Fish and Wildlife about the impact wind energy facilities have on bat populations. The third fact sheet listed myths and facts about the reality of industrial wind turbines. More information can be found by going to their Facebook page – Concerned Citizens of Branch County or email them with questions or concerns: Concernedcitizensofbranchco@gmail.com

There was a lot of discussion on the proposed project. Bill presented a letter they would like to have the Friends send to township trustees encouraging them to carefully look at the wind turbine proposal and pass ordinances for fair and equitable zoning.

Kim Sinclair suggested that the letter be forwarded to all of the board members before action is taken on the letter since several members are not present. Bill will email Dona a copy of the letter and she will get it to Jeff Reece. It will be reviewed and voted on at the next meeting in February.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Matt Meersman encouraged everyone to visit the interactive Smithsonian Exhibit on Waterways in Niles through February 26. He will be making a presentation there tonight – For Love of Water – and invited everyone to attend.
- Grant Poole reported that there was a DEQ hearing in Niles on last night, January 23 concerning the Pucker Street Dam.
- Kim Sinclair invited anyone who might be interested to a meeting – Farming for the Future – sponsored by the Van Buren Conservation District. Contact her for more information.

- Becky Shank reported there is a Chamber of Commerce Legislative meeting at Three Rivers Schools Superintendent's office on Friday.

Next Meeting – Scheduled for Thursday, February 28, 2019 at the Three Rivers Public Library, Three Rivers, Michigan at 1:00 p.m.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned on a motion made by Bill Courless and seconded by Kim Sinclair.