

**FotSJR**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday 8-22-2019**

**ATTENDANCE**

- Board: Jeffery Reece, Ron Niezgodski, Roxanne Barton, Matt Meersman, Danielle Meersman, Daragh Deegan, Carol Higgins, Carolyn Grace, Kim Sinclair,
- Jordan Bechler (Branch Co CD), Rebecca Shank, Conner Flora (Visitor), Jenifer Kanine (Pokagon), Doug McLaughlin (Kieser), Roey Marcon, LaGrange County SWCD

Conner Flora is intern for Daragh

**CALL TO ORDER** – Jeff Reece called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and asked for introductions of those present.

**MINUTES** of the June 27th, 2019 meeting were presented for approval. Carolyn Grace **made a motion to approve the minutes; motion seconded by Jeff Reece; motion carried.**

**TREASURER’S REPORT** – Kim Sinclair presented the Treasurer’s Report. Interest reported from CD maturation, and payment to support the virtual sandbox. Discussion of wild apricot membership management system. **The treasurer’s report was approved on a motion made by Danielle Meersman and seconded by Ron Niezgodski. Motion carried.**

**OLD BUSINESS**

- **STRATEGIC PLANNING** – Some discussion of a press release regarding announcement of the FotSJR Stewardship Award, and a contact list of news organizations. This can be provided by the Conservation Districts.  
The funding request sub-committee has not yet determined potential funding guidelines for small projects funded by the FotSJR.
- **Upcoming meeting locations:**  
  
Sept 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019: St. Patrick’s County Park, 50651 Laurel Road, South Bend, IN  
October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019: MACOG Offices, South Bend County Building  
(Attendees may need to look west of building to find free parking sites)
- **NEW BUISNESS** – Jeff is working on contact information for AEP sponsorship of the FotSJR for annual meeting.

- Carolyn Grace discussion the Parkville Dam Removal Project. The Conservation District is looking for a revised letter of support from the FotSJR. The low head dam on the Portage River is difficult for paddlers to pass over and exposed rebar is a safety hazard. The Project will be managed by the State DNR, and some funding is coming from the Sturgis public utility for river restoration. Landowners have again signed letters of support. It was noted that this was being done for a much lower cost than some other regional dam removals. **Danielle Meersman made a motion to write a letter of support, and Kim Sinclair seconded the motion. Motion carried.**
- The new virtual sandbox being prepared by Branch County is nearly ready for deployment.
- The Pucker St Dam removal on the Dowagiac Creek is beginning to be implemented. It was identified as one of the highest priority dams that were impeding fish migration in the watershed. Over the winter the water level will be taken down and spoils will be placed upon the banks. The City of Niles is providing some information sessions.
- Martin Franke and Roey, from LaGrange County Soil and Water Conservation District, will be covering the Middlebury Riverfest on behalf of the FotSJR.
- Jennifer Kanine, Director of the Pokagon Natural Resources Department, talked to the group about the Dowagiac River Restoration Project. The River was historically channelized, and the Tribe and partners are looking to restore river to original sinuosity. The project has been red-flagged for an additional review by the USEPA. Pokagon has been working on this project since 2002, and are already seeing differences in macroinvertebrates, water retention, and wetland creation.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS –**

- St. Joe River races are September 28<sup>th</sup>, canoe and kayak races, running races, gathering at the brewery afterwards.
- Kathy Worst sent a letter indicating she will not be able to attend FotSJR meetings, but a representative from Branch CD will be there.
- The Friends of Cobus Creek group will be dissolved, contact info will be changing.
- Andrews University is looking for a presenter from FotSJR and Matt Meersman volunteered to make a presentation.
- Nominations for the Indiana conservation awards are open
- Discussion of a future meeting in St. Joseph/Benton Harbor in an effort to reach other end of watershed. Consensus was that such a meeting could likely be arranged for some time in 2020
- St. Joseph County local food dinner, Van Buren County Healthy Food Fair
- Member advised Board of issues to consider in Constantine, Michigan milk producers, effluent, Portage River is orange next to St Joseph River, need some basic watershed information
- Inquiry was made by Jeff to Doug about getting assistance from Kieser & Assoc. to help with formatting and printing of newsletter like was done for the last newsletter; Doug indicated Kieser will be glad to assist.

**NEXT MEETING – Sept 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019: St. Patrick’s County Park, 50651 Laurel Road, South Bend, IN**

**Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned on a motion made by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Kim Sinclair**

**In the absence of Secretary Dona Hunter, the Minutes were recorded/transcribed by Eric Kerney, Board Member.**