

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 26, 2019 - 1:00 p.m.
St. Patrick's Park - South Bend, Indiana

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors: Daragh Deegan, Carol Higgins, John Law, Ron Niezgodski, Grant Poole, Jeff Reece, Kim Sinclair
- Watershed Council: Matt Meersman, Tara Lee, Don Stohler
- Visitors: Ross St. Clair, Bill and Carolyn Niedbalski

CALL TO ORDER - President Jeff Reece called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m., followed by introductions of those present. Prior to the meeting, members and guests gathered at the river for the fish presentation by Daragh Deegan, aquatic biologist for Elkhart. He gave an up-close view and description of about a dozen species of fish that had been shocked and collected earlier in the day. The fish were released following the presentation.

MINUTES of the August 22, 2019 meeting were approved following a motion by Ron Niezgodski, supported by Kim Sinclair. Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT was presented by Kim Sinclair who noted a generous donation of \$500. The Financial Report was accepted following a motion by John Law, supported by Daragh Deegan. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **STRATEGIC PLANNING – Newsletter:** Donna Hunter was unable to attend, but Eric Kerney indicated (via email) that he would be willing to spearhead the committee for the publication next spring. The committee will meet to determine content. Kaiser and Associates is willing to design again. We will ask if they will charge a layout fee, which was \$500 last year. Daragh Deegan offered to publish if it would save money. The quantity printed will likely remain at 2000.
- **Funding Request Guidelines Committee** - Jeff Reece reported that the four member committee has not yet met but he will initiate a meeting.
- **2019 Meeting Schedule:**
 - **October 24, 2019 - Meeting location** will be at Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) in the County-City building in South Bend, Indiana at 227 W. Jefferson Blvd., on the 11th floor. A two hour parking limit is in force close to the building, but free, unlimited parking is available about three blocks to the west and there are pay lots in the area also.
 - November and December - no meetings
- **I&M/AEP Sponsorship update** - Jeff Reece stated he has not heard back from his email contacts with the company but believes it may be due to a change in the person of contact. He feels there is still a good chance that the Friends of the St. Joe River will still be awarded the sponsorship.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Watershed Leadership Training** - Ron Niezgodski made a motion to pay for up to two scholarships to attend the academy at Purdue University in 2020, seconded by John Law; Motion carried. The training is open to anyone and applications are due by October 28, 2019. Cost is \$750. The River Basin Commission will give one or two scholarships also, depending on the applications received.

- **Board member resignation** - Jeff Reece announced that Bill Courliss has resigned from the board due to personal matters that are consuming too much of his time to be able to continue to attend the meetings. We will miss you Bill!
- **2020 Meetings** - Jeff Reece has requested the Three Rivers Library for our meetings in January and February but it is not available in March and April due to the library moving to a new location. Several suggestions were made for the remainder of the year including holding the March meeting at the location of the annual celebration/dinner (Sturges-Young Center for Arts in Sturgis, Michigan). Other suggestions included the Edward Lowe Foundation (Cassopolis, Michigan), the AEP Hydro office (Mishawaka, Indiana), ISD in Centreville, Michigan and four other possible locations (one in Dowagiac, Michigan; one in Benton Harbor, Michigan; one in St. Joseph, Michigan; and another in Paw Paw, Michigan). Anyone with suggestions for meeting locations and special topics should send them to Jeff. This item will be revisited again in the October meeting for further input.
- **Al Smith Watershed Stewardship Award** - nomination form is on the FotSJR website and forms with suggested recipients should be submitted by the January 2020 Board meeting.
- **13th Annual Watershed Council Celebration** - A motion by Kim Sinclair, supported by Ron Niezgodski, to hold the event at the Sturges-Young Center for Arts (Sturgis, Michigan) on either the 20th or 27th of March 2020 was approved. Jeff will check with the Center to ensure one of these dates gets reserved. Matt Meersman has agreed to return as Master of Ceremonies for either date. General consensus is to find a speaker to address a topic related to climate change. Matt will reach out to a couple of possible speakers. Other suggestions are welcome and more discussion will take place at the October meeting.

OTHER/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Inquiry was made by visitor Bill Niedbalski about whether the health of the river is changing and what data is available to the public. He would like to be able to identify trends that are occurring over time. Matt explained that there are many different organizations that participate in different aspects of the river including the flow, chemistry, biology, and habitat, but there is not a good location to find all the information in one spot. Nationally, there will be a source called the "Internet of Water" that is being developed and is expected to address some of the need. Carol suggested we include a list of the various data sources in our next newsletter.
- Matt Meersman announced that the new payment system, Wild Apricot is now working. He also stated that the 18th Annual St. Joe River Races in South Bend will take place September 28th. There is also a 5K race open to the public.
- Matt also announced that Danielle Meersman has been selected by Crow LLC as their Super Volunteer of the year and that she selected the Friends of the St. Joe River as the recipient of the \$500 award, which should arrive in the near future. Thank you, Danielle!!
- Carol Higgins shared the publication site of NRCS as a great place to shop for free information on conservation with many posters and colorful brochures available.

NEXT MEETING – October 24th, 2019: MACOG in 11th Floor Conference Room, County-City Building, 227 W. Jefferson Blvd., South Bend, Indiana.

Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 3:23 following a motion by Kim Sinclair and supported by Ron Niezgodski; Motion carried. The final meeting for 2019 will be held on October 24th in South Bend. (See above for details.)

In the absence of Secretary Dona Hunter, the Minutes were recorded/transcribed by Carol Higgins, Board Member.