

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 26, 2017—1:00 PM
Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

Directors: Carol Higgins, Dona Hunter, Bob Jones, Eric Kerney, Matt Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Grant Poole, Jeff Reece

Watershed Council: Daragh Deegan, City of Elkhart; Ron Johnson, Fabius Twp; Tara Lee, Steuben County SWCD

Visitors: Mara Kore and Rachel Kopka, Fabius Twp; Kieran Fahey, City of South Bend

CALL TO ORDER:

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:04 PM, welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for introductions.

Minutes of the September 28, 2017 meeting were reviewed. Ron Niezgodski moved to accept the minutes as printed, Jeff Reese seconded. **Motion carried.**

The **Treasurer's Report** was presented by Matt Meersman in the absence of Treasurer Danielle Meersman. Income for the month included \$0.09 for interest. The only expense was \$432.00 for website renewal leaving a monthly balance of \$ -431.91 and a year-to-date balance of \$-1,835.40. Danielle did get a CD from Fifth Third bank for 1% in the amount of \$45,000.00. The total Liabilities & Equity Balance is \$65,509.83. Jeff Reece moved to accept the treasurer's report as printed, Ron Niezgodski seconded. **Motion carried.**

OLD BUSINESS:

Strategic Planning

Matt opened discussion of goal ideas for strategic planning. It was suggested that we do a survey with those sub-watersheds, watershed council members, and conservation interest groups that we know of as to what their needs are and how the FotSJR can help. Any suggested questions for the survey should be forwarded to Grant Poole at Grant.Poole@pokagonband-nsn.gov as soon as possible (suggested by Friday, November 3rd). Grant will compile all the questions and create a survey. Matt will send the survey to our current contact list as a start for us to select projects in our strategic planning. Hopefully we can review survey results at our January 2018 meeting. This survey should give us direction in choosing specific projects.

Bylaws Update

Chairman of the Bylaws Committee Bob Jones along with committee members Ron Niezgodski, Jeff Reece, Grant Poole, and Matt Meersman shared several bylaws changes being discussed. One is to eliminate term limits for the board of directors. Another is to expand the scope of the FotSJR mission statement. Currently it is pretty much focused on the original purpose of implementing and coordinating the watershed management plan. It is being suggested we look at more educational and informational projects reaching out to other sub-watershed council members/organizations. A third change is revising the make-up of the Advisory Council of the FotSJR. The committee is meeting again in November and hopes to have revisions available to all board members and the Watershed Council by December for review and comment.

2018 Annual Meeting & Board Member Recruitment

Matt informed us that he had a reserve hold on the Sturges-Young Auditorium for March 9 and 16, 2018. Tara Lee from Steuben County SWCD suggested a program called "Dam Dangerous" concerning Indiana's low head dams. Matt asked her to go ahead and check with him on availability for those two dates. Matt also mentioned we had struggled with a name for this event as it is more a social event rather than a meeting. Several alternative names were suggested with "Watershed Council Celebration" receiving good support. Ron Niezgodski also mentioned we should be thinking of nominations for the Al Smith Watershed Stewardship Award.

NEW BUSINESS:

Brownfield Assessment Grant Support Letter

Matt had received a request for a support letter from the FotSJR in support of a \$600,000.00 grant from EPA for Elkhart and Kosciusko Counties. Ron Niezgodski moved to have Matt send a letter of support from the FotSJR, Carol Higgins seconded. **Motion carried.**

Other

- Bob Jones shared photos taken from the Middlebury Riverfest on August 26, 2017. The photos included the FotSJR display and Daragh Deegan's fish sampling demonstration.
- Daragh Deegan informed us that the Elkhart River Dam removal project is finally moving forward. This is a \$2 million project supported by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.
- Carolyn Grace of St. Joseph County, MI Conservation District is currently doing irrigation evaluation with RCPP funding.

NEXT MEETING: 1 PM, Thursday, November 16, 2017 at the Three Rivers Public Library, Three Rivers , MI

Adjournment: Dona Hunter moved to adjourn, Carol Higgins seconded. **Motion carried.** Meeting was adjourned at 2:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Jones