

Friends of the St. Joe River Board Meeting  
December 8, 2022  
Held Via Zoom

**Meeting Started** by Matt Meersman at 1:05pm

**Board Members Present:** Daragh Deegan, Matt Meersman, Jordan Shedd, Chris Temple, Ron Niezgodski, Grant Poole, Jeff Reece.

**Others Present:** Bill Tefft, Terri Loomis, Dan Petry, Amiee Wentworth, Jill Swartz, Len Kring, Patrick Wiltshire, Matt Diana, Kristi Todd,

**Minutes:** Chris Temple minutes from October meeting, motion to accept by Jordan Shedd, second Daragh Deegan. Motion passed

**Treasurer Report:** Kim Sinclair was absent, so there was no report to approve. However, Matt explained that two watershed leadership academy scholarships were paid for Shaun Grace and Monica Davis. In partnership with the St. Joseph River Basin Commission, two other people, Natasha Kauffman and Kyle Burchett, were also provided financial assistance for the academy. A non-profit registration fee of \$20.00 was also paid recently.

### **Old Business**

**No action via email**

**Meeting Schedule:** Plan to hold 3-4 in-person and 3-4 via zoom. January will be via zoom on the 26<sup>th</sup> as motioned by Chris Temple and seconded by Ron Niezgodski.

### **New Business**

**Collaborative Watershed Event:** Has been held virtually since Covid, but used to be in the Sturges-Young Auditorium in March. Want to try to hold another in-person meeting this year. Would like to hold our "Celebration" event in conjunction with the St. Joseph River Basin Commission's annual Symposium. The Friends would host the more social part in the evening with dinner, and the Symposium during the afternoon would offer more educational opportunities. Both events would be held on same day and place. Looking into a May date. Fernwood and Ed Lowe Foundation mentioned as possible locations. Grant Poole will look into the Pokagon Band's Community Center. Various ideas were discussed. Matt, Daragh and Annie will be working on the agenda and food situation.

### **Other Items for Discussion**

**Krisit Todd, IDEM:** discussed the upper and lower portion of Elkhart River watershed management planning effort, how that grant is moving along, and how the City of Goshen is participating. She also reported that the Indiana Lake Management Society conference will be held on March 9-10<sup>th</sup> in Bloomington IN and they are looking for abstracts.

**Grant Poole:** talked about phase 2 of the meandering project on the Dowagiac River. He also discussed a Gateway Foundation endowment to help the MEANDRS (Meeting the Ecological and Agricultural Needs

of Dowagiac River System) group. Any money earned with the endowment would be used on projects to help improve access to, and studies on, the Dowagiac River. Grant also recommended Patrick Ertel as a future energetic speaker on drains, culverts, and road stream crossings.

**Doug MacLaughlin:** shared the link of EarthViews to have a virtual tour of the St. Joseph River. Jeff Reece will work on getting this link on our web page.

**Dan Petry:** asked about the impact of river otters being reintroduced on fish populations. He catches a lot less rock bass, but small mouth bass seem to be thriving. Matt Diana and Daragh Deegan discussed how fish populations fluctuate and the natural cycling of a variety of fish populations.

**Jordan Shedd:** has used the virtual watershed sandbox with her students. Matt was happy to see this tool, which was sponsored by the Friends, being used.

**Aimee Wentworth:** March 8<sup>th</sup> for Steuben County SWCD Annual Meeting at Pleasant Township conference room. Other presentations will be held before the next Friends meeting included a Concrete washout procedure meeting and a how to use cover crops in gardens.

**Len Kring:** discussed his work in Georgia, which includes analyzing the impact of road/stream crossings, small dam removal and other projects for the passage of fish and other aquatic organisms. He explained how he works with DOT's to help increase awareness about the impact of culverts and proper alignment. Daragh discussed the importance of habitat and not just water quality.

**Jeff Reece:** motion to adjourn, Chris Temple seconded, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 2:25pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Carolyn Grace