

**Minutes of the January 28, 2010 Meeting  
Friends of the St. Joe River Association, Inc.  
Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, Michigan**

**In Attendance:**

- **Directors** – Eldred Adams, Amy Boetcher, Daragh Deegan, Jim Coury, Geoff Cripe, Dona Hunter, Danielle Meersman, Matthew Meersman
- **FotSJR Outreach Coordinator** – Leah Cooper
- **Watershed Council** – Jeff Reece, Indiana Michigan Power; Karen Mackowiak, St. Joseph River Basin Commission; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition; John Nelson, Klinger Lake Association; Don Sporleder, Michiana Watershed
- **Visitors** – Maria Schaefer, St. Joseph Co. (IN) SWCD; Jason Patnoude, Eric VerHey & Gesila VerHey, Society Protecting Environmental Assets

President, Matt Meersman called the meeting to order and asked for introductions. He then provided an update on Margaret Smith. He has been in contact with both Al and their daughter, Becky. They are seeing improvement in Margaret's condition and will be meeting with the doctors today to get a progress report. Their living situation will likely be changing soon and they may be selling their house. He encouraged everyone to send cards and call Al at home.

Since they are going to be moving, it is going to be necessary to establish another location for Friends of the St. Joe River Association (FotSJR) mail to be delivered. Matt suggested a post office box in South Bend, with a registered agent in Michigan, possibly Rudy Kappe.

**Minutes** of the December meeting were corrected as follows:

- Jeff Reece corrected the statement he made about having board meetings in Indiana. He encourages the board to have at least one board meeting in Indiana, not 2-3 as stated. Jeff also emphasized that this was only a suggestion.
- Ron Niezgodski's name should be removed from the board member nominating committee.
- A by-laws committee was formed made up of Jim Coury, Ron Niezgodski and Matt Meersman.

Jim Coury moved to accept the amended December minutes. Geoff Cripe seconded the motion; motion carried. Matt reminded watershed council members and visitors that they could not vote, just members of the board of directors.

**Treasurer's Report** – Danielle Meersman presented the Treasurer's Report for December 17, 2009 – January 28, 2010. Expenses for this period included contract labor for Leah Cooper amounting to \$5,320.00 and newsletter costs of \$699.23 (includes postage). Income included contributions and membership dues totaling \$725.00. Eldred Adams moved to approve the treasurer's report; seconded by Jim Coury; motion carried.

**Outreach Coordinator Report** – Leah Cooper reported that the newsletter had been completed and she has had positive feedback. She has about 140 copies left, if anyone needs additional copies. She also has posted it on the website. The next newsletter, scheduled to come out after

the annual meeting, will focus on hydrology. The website is not ready, but she is working on it. Wild Apricot provides tutorials and she is using those. She is customizing the membership database portion and wants to have it as seamless as possible. She will develop a flyer for the annual meeting scheduled for March 15 after she gets the speaker information. She will have a membership brochure with a cut off form to mail in and link to the electronic version.

Leah will be attending a meeting on February 4 with SWMPC and Marcy Colclough. Leah will be assisting with the marketing portion of their grant, which should last until May or June. Leah will also be attending a Harbor Authority Meeting related to the project.

**Board Meeting Nominating Committee Report** – Geoff Cripe discussed the board profile assessment form, which Matt created based on a spreadsheet developed by Geoff. He asked everyone on the board to fill it out by February 8. Daragh Deegan was added to the committee to help cover for Rachel, who has taken a new work position. The committee wants to re-visit the skills current board members have to determine what skills are lacking as new board members are recruited. Ruddy Adams developed a board member description statement. They will email it to all of the board for review. Geoff will use the form/matrix to help track board member demographics, experience, community influence, etc. The committee will report back in February with areas of expertise that need to be added to the board. Dave Foerster stated that it would be good to have this information for watershed council members sometime in the future. The committee will be contacting board members whose terms are expiring to ask them if they would like to continue on the board. A slate of board members needs to be ready by March 15.

**By Law Changes and Policy Adoption** – The by-law committee will be looking at suggested changes as discussed at the November meeting. If anyone has other changes they would like to see incorporated into the by-laws, please email that info to Matt, Ron or Jim Coury.

There were three policies presented for discussion and approval. These are policies that non-profit organizations should adopt. The policies were 1) Whistleblower Policy; 2) Conflict of Interest Policy; and 3) Document Destruction Policy. Dave Foerster asked if there was a need for a financial procedure policy. When the Two Rivers Coalition developed on their by-laws, their attorney suggested a financial procedure policy. The question was raised about the treasurer's ability to provide advice to the board on financial matters. Jim Coury moved to adopt the three policies with the option to make changes to any of them within the next month. Daragh Deegan seconded the motion; motion carried.

Danielle Meersman will be added to the by-law committee.

Matt discussed the advice of Pete Terlouw from the last meeting concerning the changing of by-laws. He suggested adopting a policy or passing a resolution to address items such as honorary membership positions, meetings held in Indiana/Michigan, etc. instead of changing the by-laws as different issues arise. The by-law committee may bring some additional resolutions to the board at the annual meeting in March.

**EPA Wetland Program Development Grant** – The grant has been awarded, but the budget had to be reduced. A new budget was presented, which removed the development of videos and

video clips and reduced the amount to be paid to MDNRE for their part in the grant. MDNRE can get some help for their portion of the grant from several other sources, which will cut their contract in half. The match that FotSJR will need to supply was reduced from \$30,000 to \$19,800. Need to look at other sources for about \$15,000 - \$20,000 in order to do everything suggested in the original proposal. Matt asked Amy Boetcher if the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi had a foundation that awarded small grants. Amy will inquire and let Matt know. Matt has the EPA forms to fill out and wants the board support to begin filing the paperwork so the contract can be developed. Matt would bring the contract to the board at a later date. It may be fall before all of the necessary paperwork is completed. This will be a three-year project and will provide good public relations opportunity once the contract is actually signed. Geoff Cripe made a motion to allow Matt to continue working through the grant paperwork with EPA in order to move the contract forward. Danielle Meersman seconded the motion; motion carried.

**Outreach Coordinator Contract** – Leah Cooper’s initial contract with FotSJR ended on January 8, 2010. This was a four month experimental contract. Matt had a revised contract for an additional six months beginning February 1 and extending to July 30, 2010. The contract amount would be \$7,280 plus expenses. The goal of this position is to make it self-supporting. Leah is a very skilled individual and she will soon be working on grant projects of FotSJR and its partners to aid in funding the position, along with membership funds. Eldred questioned the gap between the end of the first grant and the start of the second. Leah will need to be compensated for that time. Jeff Reece suggested a contract renewal date in June instead of July, since there is no meeting in July.

Danielle Meersman moved to pay Leah from the last time sheet until now, once a pay sheet is turned in, at the current pay rate. Dona Hunter seconded the motion; motion carried.

Daragh Deegan moved to approve the new 6 month contract for Leah; Geoff Cripe seconded the motion; motion carried.

A short discussion followed concerning the president’s ability to make motions. There is no reason the president cannot make a motion.

Geoff stated it would be helpful to develop a spreadsheet to track the money/time commitments made by the board in order to make future grant decisions. Matt and Geoff will work on this.

**Bustorf CAFO & SPEA Request** – Jason Patnoudé, Eric VerHey and Gesila VerHey with the Society Protecting Environmental Assets (SPEA) were present to request support from FotSJR against the Bustorf CAFO. Eric presented some background information on their challenges to the proposed CAFO which began in April 2008. A permit was approved from MDEQ in March 2009, but they have not moved forward. SPEA was able to block the permit, but have a hearing coming up on February 22. SPEA filed for a contested case to establish that there is no net economic benefit for this CAFO. Significant economic benefit was stated as one reason for granting the permit. SPEA has received letters of protest and engagement from several organizations and are pursuing more from lake associations and other watershed organizations. The St. Joseph County Parks adopted a resolution to oppose the CAFO. St. Joseph County Commissioners voted not to adopt a similar resolution. SPEA also needs an additional \$20,000

to help lend credibility to their case. SPEA cited several lawsuits already filed against the Vreba-Hoff Company for their mismanagement of other CAFOs.

Matt stated that supporting SPEA's effort could put the FotSJR in a very difficult spot. Over 70% of the land in the St. Joseph River Watershed is used for crop or animal production. In order to implement the Watershed Management Plan the FotSJR must work with those agricultural producers. Supporting SPEA's effort could be seen as anti-agriculture. It is a real challenge to maintain trust with all citizens in the community.

Matt admitted that many farmers don't even like large CAFOs. The Vreba-Hoff company in particular has a history of extreme abuse of natural resources and many farmers recognize that these operations give their business a bad name.

Matt Meersman made a motion to work with other board members to prepare a personalized official resolution concerning the Bustorf operation and present it to the board for an electronic vote by February 22. Amy Boetcher seconded the motion; motion carried.

Bob Glidden, Dave Foerster, and Daragh Deegan will work with Matt to develop the resolution.

Dave Foerster asked the board what their thoughts were on this. Daragh discussed the potential threat to the fisheries habitat in the St. Joseph River from mismanagement of the manure.

Eric and Jason thanked the board for their time and assistance.

**OTHER Announcements from the floor:**

- Don Sporleder mentioned a watershed protection grant program through River Network.
- Jeff Reece reported that the Fairbanks Morse Dam at Three Rivers has been sold. It was being operated under Grande Pointe Power Corporation and will now be owned by Jay Huddle of Napoleon, Ohio. 100% of the power is sold to Sturgis.
- Don Sporleder reported on the proposed Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail. It is moving ahead and plans are being formulated to fund and develop.
- Jeff Reece is hosting an event at the Notre Dame Convention Center on April 20-21. Matt will be doing a presentation.

Matt Meersman moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:10 p.m. Danielle Meersman seconded the motion; motion carried.

Minutes recorded by Dona Hunter, Secretary.