

Friends of the St. Joseph River
Board Minutes Jan 28, 2021
Respectfully submitted by Carolyn Grace

Call to order by Matt Meersman 1:04pm via zoom.

Introduction: Board Members Present:

Annie Klehfoth, Daragh Deegan, Carolyn Grace, Carol Higgins, Matt Meersman, Eric Kerney, John Law, Ron Niezgodski, Jeff Reece, Kim Sinclair, Jeff Wenzel

Others in attendance: Becky Shank, Bob Jones, Pat Wiltshire, Bill Tefft, Jan McGowen, Kyle Tryan, Grant Carlisle, Matt Diana, Mark Kieser, Cassey Stoffell, Kristi Todd.

Minutes: Reece motioned to accept the board minutes from December, Sinclair second. Motion passed.

Treasurer Report: Niezgodski motioned to approve the treasurer report as presented by Sinclair, Wenzel second. Motion passed

Old Business:

Board Action Taken via email: None this month

Annual Celebration on March 19, 2021: Discussion about this meeting was had by several board members. Discussion included cancelling, rescheduling, and booking for next year. Possible viewing of the "Kiss the Ground" soil health movie at Sturges-Young auditorium was also mentioned for the celebration

Sinclair made a motion to suspend the in-person celebration on March 18, 2021 if Sturges-Young needs to know soon. And reserve the room for Friday March 18, 2022 for our in-person celebration. Deegan second. Motion passed

Other discussion about the annual celebration included watching the premier of the PBS documentary about the St. Joseph River on Saturday Aug 28th. Grace mentioned they will be holding a fun day at the Three Rivers Covered bridge farm park that day as a fundraiser, and may work that viewing into her program

New Business:

Director Nominations: 5 board member terms are set to expire. A committee led by Ron Niezgodski will be contacting the 5 expiring members, and a slate of directors will be presented at the next meeting in February. Donna Hunter told Meersman that she would be willing to step down one year early to allow someone else to have a chance to step in. Meersman mentioned that Jordan Shedd was interested in serving on the board.

Stewardship award: The award winner is announced, and traveling trophy is traditionally presented, at the annual celebration event. Board members are encouraged to nominate someone who shares their passion for all or part of our watershed. Anyone interested in nominating someone can find the form on our webpage, but it should be turned in soon.

Other Business:

Higgins has been working on the Newsletter. She will send a rough draft to Eric Kerney and together they will have a final newsletter. Articles include information about dam removals, mussels, changes in St. Joseph watershed and one other, which had not been fully developed.

BCK and SWxSW CISMA's are having virtual series on Mondays in February. Tune in to learn a great deal about lakefronts, native plantings and how to have a natural shoreline. They will be featuring articles from the Shoreline Living book.

Kyle Tryan shared his screen for the attendees to see his flyer for Benton Charter Township Schools to participate in their stewardship program. This is open to any student within that district.

Daragh Deegan talked about the positive benefits of the Elkhart Dam removal. They have already seen 8 new fish species. It is wonderful to see such improvement 20 miles upstream and such quick positive outcomes.

Matt Diana discussed the stocking of Chinook in the St. Joseph River this year. He also talked about the new boat access at Dodd Park. Many exciting things happening in the watershed.

Becky Shank discussed the movie St. Joseph River: Witness to History. Check out YouTube for the trailer of the movie. Many cities along the river will be having some type of celebration throughout the summer to promote not only the movie, but the river itself. There have been many zoom meetings about these events. Contact Becky and others if you would like to get involved with the planning.

Matt Meersman and others discussed the IN Senate Bill 389, which would repeal the State's wetland regulations. This could have negative impacts in our watershed and others as it comes on the heels of Federal roll backs in wetland protection. Deegan motioned to write a letter in opposition to 389 senate bill from the Friends. Sinclair supported; motion passed.

Kim Sinclair from the Van Buren County Conservation District talked about the 9-acre property called their Conservation Campus. They hope to showcase a variety of BMP's for water quality, growing practices and other conservation practices at this property. They also are going to have recycling education and other outreach programs that the community can get involved in. She also discussed an article on saving the Great Lakes in the December issue of National Geographic Magazine, which featured several of their employees and projects. Many wonderful things coming from this district.

Kristy Todd discussed a floodplain management grant opportunity through the Army Corps of Engineers. It is a fully funded federal grant that doesn't require any local match and can be used for a wide variety of projects. Details are available on their webpage.

Kate Barrett from ND sent Meersman an invitation to share her work with others about using an isotope spectrometer to investigate the diet of macroinvertebrates within the St. Joseph River. She is willing to help sampling teams collect the macros and then put the information into her data base. Contact Kate for further information about your collection sights.

The next Friends of the St. Joe River Board meeting will be held Thursday February 25, 2021 via zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 2:40pm.