

Friends of the St. Joe River Association
Board Meeting, August 31, 2023

Respectfully submitted by Carolyn Grace

Meeting Called to Order by Matt Meersman at 1:09 pm

Board Members Present: Matt Meersman, Carolyn Grace, Ron Niezgodski, Jeff Reece, Eric Kerney, Shaun Grace, Doug McLaughlin, Jordan Shedd

Visitors & Watershed Council Members Present: Glen Shedd, Becky Shank, Kaitlin Renehan, Justin Norgan, Kristen Ploeger, Jessica Merklng, Teresa Ankney, Terri Loomis, Aimee Wentworth, Carl Merkh

Minutes: Jeff Reece moved to accept the June meeting minutes, second by Niezgodski. Motion passed.

Treasurer Report: Kim Sinclair was absent, and no report was given. Jeff Reece motioned to table until next month, Shaun Grace second. Motion passed.

Old Business

Board Action Taken via Email

- No action taken via email since last meeting

River Cleanup & Board Member Liability

- History with river cleanups was discussed. Questions were raised if there is a need for a general insurance policy and a board coverage policy. Chris Temple was absent, but he sent an email saying he could provide more information and coordinate a presentation by an insurance company at a future meeting. At this time the Friends do not have any insurance policy.
- Further discussion will take place at the next board meeting about both types of insurance coverage. Most of the board members present were in favor of resuming at least a basic Directors and Officers insurance policy like the group used to have.
- Two main questions for the board to answer: 1) Do we want board insurance? Many board members raised their hands in favor. 2) Do we want to sponsor/host river cleanup events in the future? And if yes, what kind of insurance should we have to cover that? Most attendees also raised their hands in favor of continuing to support river clean up events.

New Business

Partnership Opportunities:

- General outreach email box has not been maintained over the past few months and several emails asking questions never got responses. Matt asked if anyone present was willing to follow up on any of the following:
 - A middle school in Mishawaka was looking for information about a virtual tour of the St. Joseph River watershed. Jessica Merklng (Indiana DNR) will send some information and Doug will take on the answering of the questions about a virtual tour.
 - An email requesting information about possible grants was also sent. Jessica agreed to respond to that request as well.
 - Penny Brisco requested information about warblers and Nottawa Creek. Carolyn Grace will respond to that email and answer her questions.
 - Lippert Company inquired about participating in river clean ups. Carolyn Grace will respond about volunteer opportunities.

Next/future Meeting Locations

- Those present were in favor of holding September and October meetings in person before the weather gets bad. Kristen Ploeger offered to host the September meeting in the pavilion at Hermance Park in Bristol, IN. There was further discussion about other locations for October, but no decisions were made.

Items from the Floor

- **Jessica Merklng:** Jessica asked the friends help in spreading the word about invasive swans and knowing the difference between the invasive Mute swans and native Trumpeter swans. They have received a GLRI grant for removal, education and outreach to provide this information. She also explained that there is money for river restoration projects through the IDNR.

Motion to adjourn 2:12pm by Carolyn Grace; Second by Jordan Shedd. Motion passed unanimously.

Next Friends meeting at Hermance Park in Bristol IN on September 28, 2023 from 1-3 pm