

Friends of the St. Joe River Association  
September 22, 2022 Meeting Summary  
Submitted by Carolyn Grace

Meeting held virtually using Zoom. Matt Meersman started with introductions at 1:03pm

**Board Members Present:** Matt Meersman, Jeff Reece, Chris Temple, Annie Klehfoth,

**Others Present:** Aimee Wentworth, Steuben Co. SWCD; Jan McGowan, St. Joseph County (IN) Parks Dept.; Lisa Harris, League of Women Voters; Cortni Hull, Branch Co. CD; Kyle Burchett, LaGrange Co. SWCD; Jill Swartz, Town of Bristol; Doug McLaughlin, WaterWays; Kaitlin Renehan, St. Joseph Co. (MI) CD; and Matt Diana, MDNR.

Matt reported that we do not have a quorum, but he would move forward with the meeting.

Treasurer report: Treasurer was not present, but Matt reported that the insurance from the St. Joe River Races that was approved in August ended up costing \$95. He also reported that there were a couple of membership renewals over the last month.

Old Business:

No action taken via email.

Matt invited everyone to come out for the St. Joe River Races in South Bend on September 24<sup>th</sup>. The event is a fundraiser for the FotSJR and includes running races and canoe/kayak races. Volunteers are always welcome!

New Business

Matt reported that the St. Joseph River Basin Commission would also be providing up to two Watershed Leadership Academy scholarships. When combined with the FotSJR support that was pledged at the last meeting, this should allow up to four individuals from the watershed to attend at no cost. Matt encouraged everyone to apply and help spread the word about the opportunity. Annie Klehfoth and Chris Temple both volunteered to help select individuals from among the applications.

At the August meeting there was interest in holding another in-person meeting in October, possibly at the University of Notre Dame. Chris Temple researched options and found the Sacred Heart Parish Center to be the least costly option at \$100. Although it is a nice location near a lake there was interest in finding a location without any fees. Jan McGowan volunteered to ask for a free space for the Oct 27<sup>th</sup> meeting at St. Patrick's Park in South Bend from 1-3pm. After a suggestion by Jeff, Jill offered the indoor pavilion at Hermance Park in the Town of Bristol. After some discussion, the group preferred the St. Patrick's Park option for October and the Bristol location for a meeting next summer. Matt will get back to the group after Jan confirms the space at St. Patrick's Park.

Matt reported that Mary Kay Todd from the Three Rivers Woman's Club requested someone to speak about the river and our organization at one of their meetings. The meeting they are interested in would be held next summer at noon on August 21, 2023 in Three Rivers. Matt asked anyone willing to go to let him know. Carolyn Grace would be interested in doing this.

Other:

Jan McGowan reported that she's doing a Hoosier Riverwatch training October 8<sup>th</sup>. Participants will learn how to assess rivers and streams by looking at chemical, biological and other habitat related criteria. Very exciting to look at a waterway and learn techniques to share with others. Contact Jan and it is FREE!!!

Matt Meersman shared his ideas about the purpose of the FotSJR group and what he hopes it can provide is bring people together from a 15 county area to talk and share experiences about natural resources protection work, as a volunteer or professional!

Chris Temple and Jan McGowan shared stories about realizing just how much life there was in our watershed through looking at macroinvertebrates and participating in the collections.

Jeff Reece reported on a Michiana Watershed meeting that he attended. There was discussion regarding a memorial for founder Don Sporleder who passed away. He was also involved with the FotSJR and our group pledged some money last year for the memorial. The Michiana Watershed group did a lot of work on trails near the river, which helped people turn towards the river as an amenity. Jeff also reported that he was working with Berrien Township on opening up a trail where an old interurban railroad used to be. It would cross Lake Chapin on the old concrete abutments that are still there.

Matt Diana reported on the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi's restoration work on the Dowagiac River. They have completed phase one of a re-meandering project. Two large bends in the river were restored just south of Peavine Road. He toured the site after construction, and it looks clean and great! No sediment issues or problems from the public. Phase two will begin bidding soon. The project increased the length of that section from  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile to about 1.5 miles by meandering instead of being a straight channel. He encouraged everyone to check it out.

Matt Meersman briefly explained the Wetland Partnership project the FotSJR completed in the past. He volunteered to help Kaitlin use the GIS data to help identify priority wetland areas for her project. Local knowledge was used to narrow the list of landowners to understand who owned the largest "chunks" of wetland resources in different areas.

Matt adjourned the meeting and ended the Zoom at 2pm.