

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors – Eric Kerney, Jim Coury, Daragh Deegan, Rachel Smith, Danielle Meersman, Matt Meersman, Melanie Stoughton, Dona Hunter
- Outreach Coordinator – Leah Cooper
- Watershed Council – Chris Bauer, MDNRE-WRD; Angie Brown, IDEM; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Jeff Reece, Indiana Michigan Power; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition; Amy Deshon, St. Joseph Co. CD, MI; Kathy Worst, Branch Co. CD; Martin Franke, LaGrange Co. SWCD; Brian Musser, Steuben Co. SWCD; Jeff Wenzel, St. Joseph County Drain Commission
- Visitors – Bill Courliss, Union City Lake Association, Vice-President; Maria Schaefer, Michiana Stormwater Partnership

Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m. and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

MINUTES of the September board meeting were approved on a motion made by Jim Coury and seconded by Danielle Meersman.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Danielle Meersman presented a financial report for September. Matt Meersman made a motion to approve the report; Dona Hunter seconded the motion; motion carried.

OUTREACH COORDINATOR REPORT – Leah Cooper reported that the next newsletter has been sent to Matt for review and will be sent to the remaining review committee this week. It should be printed and sent out by the end of November.

COMMEMORATIVE BENCH/STONE – Rachel Smith had checked into some very rough prices for the memorial. A stone will range in price from \$300-\$400 plus engraving and a bench will run about \$400 plus engraving. She also suggested planting a tree with a small engraved stone beside it. To pinpoint the cost Rachel needs to know what the inscription will be. A suggestion was made to contact a contractor about donating or reducing the cost of a stone. There is a contractor in Osceola who might be good to work with. Discussion was held as to where to get the funds to pay for this. Matt Meersman moved that if the FotSJR board members raise/donate \$500 then up to \$500 could be matched from the FotSJR account. Melanie Stoughton seconded the motion; motion carried. It was suggested to contact other members of FotSJR for donations toward the memorial. Amy Deshon recommended making the appeal for donations before December 31, since this would be a tax deductible contribution.

Partner Project Grant Match Tracking Sheet – Geoff Cripe and Matt Meersman had been working on a tracking sheet for all project grants FotSJR are partnering with at various levels. This will be useful to use when preparing a yearly budget. At this time all of the projects are with Michigan partners, so we need to reach out to the Indiana folks. Discussion was held concerning sharing the proposals for director access only on the website with links to all projects, proposals, documents created, etc. This spreadsheet does not show letters of support that have been sent for various projects. It lists those where there has been a commitment made, showing approval, pending and/or completed. It was suggested moving the ones that were not funded to another spreadsheet. It is very important to be

able to track all contributions and everything else that can be in order to maintain good records of projects involved in.

Wetland Partnership Project Launch – The first meeting of the USEPA Wetland Partnership Project was held this morning with 21 people in attendance. There was a lot of good discussion from those present. Jim Coury stated that this is a great project and it's going to be a huge benefit across the watershed. The shared vision of the people sitting at the table increases the potential for a very successful project.

The Wetland Partnership project will be the biggest thing the FotSJR has done since the 319 grant for developing the watershed management plan. The 319 grant was kind of a mixed blessing for the group. It brought a lot of money into the watershed for conservation projects and it expanded the awareness of FotSJR, but it also changed the makeup of the group. Before the watershed management plan was completed there was one group working on protecting the river. During the writing of the plan another group started to form and after the plan was completed a new group has emerged. All three groups had and still have the same goal in mind, but the way it is being accomplished is expanding.

One of the next tasks needing to be completed is the written contract between Leah and FotSJR for grant administration and project outreach. Matt will be meeting with Leah soon to review the contract. The contract should be ready for approval by the next meeting. Once the contract has been signed, some of her time can be charged to the grant.

A new contract between Leah and FotSJR also needs to be developed for the outreach work not related to the Wetland Partnership. A contract will be developed that will provide more stability for Leah and FotSJR. It is important for Leah's involvement to continue throughout this project. A balance between general funds and grant funds will help increase the benefits of working with Leah. The question was raised about someone on the board having an HR specialty. It might warrant looking for advice outside the board on the pros and cons of contracting versus hiring.

The next meeting for the Wetland Partnership is scheduled for January 27, 2011 at 10:00 a.m. at the Three Rivers Library.

Paw Paw Village 319 Proposal – Unanimous approval was received from board members by Matt via email. When we do email votes, those responses need to be printed off and recorded in the minutes of the next board meeting.

Branch County's proposal was also re-submitted for funding.

Other Business:

- Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition reported on the progress being made by Kevin paddling from Paw Paw to Benton Harbor. His goal is to complete 5-10 miles each Saturday. There are a lot of photos and updated reports on the website to follow his trip. He continues to receive donations, which is providing an incentive for Kevin to keep going.
- Brian Musser, Steuben Co. SWCD, thanked Matt for attending a District Visit Tour they held recently highlighting the work that has been completed in Pigeon Creek. Brian has been working for about 6 months and Kaylene Hart has been with the district for 6 years.
- Matt and Marcy attended the Van Buren County Plan Commission meeting. They are looking at zoning issues related to water quality including low impact development, etc.

- Matt attended the Steuben County tour and also attended one in LaGrange County. It is really good to get out into the watershed and see what is being accomplished. Next month he hopes to have a map with the water bodies and partners identified. Matt is planning to meet with each conservation district in the watershed and update them on what FotSJR are involved in and what role the district can play. The districts are the main players in the watershed when it comes to implementing the plan.

Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 18 at the Three Rivers Library. Matt has the library reserved through May of 2011 for the fourth Thursday of each month, less March. March is the annual meeting and the date and location will be announced at a later date.

Today was a very special day for Matt Meersman – it was his birthday. The group recognized his birthday with a song and a snack. Jim Coury thanked both Matt and Danielle for their youth, vision, leadership and commitment to FotSJR. Jeff Reese has talked with Al Smith and said that Al was very comfortable with retiring from the organization knowing the leadership that is in place.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m. on a motion made by Matt Meersman and seconded by Jim Coury.

Minutes recorded by Dona Hunter, Secretary.