

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, December 18, 2014—1:00 PM
Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

- **Directors:** Matt Meersman, Melanie Stoughton, Bob Jones, Jim Coury, Ron Niezgodski, Danielle Meersman, John Law, Jeff Wenzel, Daragh Deegan
- **Watershed Council:** Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Kathy Worst, Branch County CD; Jeff Reece, IMP; Bill Courliss, Union Lake Association; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition
- **Visitors:** Rich Walag, I&M AEP; Kacey Worst; Patty Hoch-Meluish, Kieser & Associates

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and called for introductions.

Minutes of the November 2014 board meeting were reviewed. Motion to approve the November minutes was made by Jeff Wenzel, and seconded by Jim Coury. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report was presented by Danielle Meersman. Motion to approve the treasurer's report was made by Ron Niezgodski, and seconded by Jeff Wenzel. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Annual Meeting Planning: The nominating committee of Daragh Deegan and Bob Jones reported that they are working on contacting Board members. Board members up for re-election will be term limited after this election, and include Matt and Danielle Meersman, Rudy Kappe, and Eric Kerney. Matt reviewed the term limit policy with the board members.

Matt summarized progress on the silent auction. Tim Scott in South Bend has photo of the St. Joe River that will be donated by John Law (11x17 size print). Jon Law is working on securing a guided fly fishing trip as well. Bob Jones spoke with John Senecal about canoe trips along the Pigeon River, and should have package developed by January. Daragh ordered a rain barrel and asked if it could be decorated by Greening the Bend. Matt noted that he will speak with Kathleen Pettijean about painting the rain barrel for the silent auction. Matt will also be speaking with Don Stohler regarding silent auction items.

During the discussion regarding the silent auction, Matt announced that he had received word from Margaret Smith's daughters that she had passed away. Melanie Stoughton inquired about a way to memorialize Margaret through the Friends, and whether there was a way to create a gift showing the work of Al and Margaret Smith that could be given to their daughters. Discussion on ways to memorialize Margaret ensued, with a list of options discussed. Melanie

asked if there had been any memorials placed in the Athens area where Al and Margaret were from, and whether something like a bench with a plaque could be placed at the local park. Melanie Stoughton volunteered to look into memorial ideas, and will have information at the January meeting.

Jim Coury let the board know that he would bring bird houses for the silent auction. Bill Courliss also announced that he would bring maple syrup for the auction again this year. Ron Niezgodski committed to contacting the Ducks Unlimited for a silent auction item (photo) again this year as well.

Matt discussed with the group the task of naming the program for this year's Annual Meeting, briefly summarizing the keynote topics of the past three years. This year, the urban-residential community will be the focus of the keynote presentation, with Jim Patchett of the Conservation Design Forum set as the keynote speaker. Jim will discuss different techniques used to infiltrate storm water. Matt noted that he has been struggling with a catchy topic title for the keynote speaker. Melanie Stoughton recommended the title, "From Gray to Green—Bringing Infrastructure to Life" as a potential name, and noted it in the minutes. Matt discussed the associated benefits to the communities that adopt green infrastructure practices. Melanie reviewed the date of the annual meeting with everyone, and announced that it was Friday, March 20th in Sturgis. Matt asked Jeff to remind him to contact Jim Patchett for any pictures or other materials that could be uploaded or shared for the 8th annual meeting.

Matt urged people to nominate people for the annual Watershed Stewardship Award. To date, there have been no nominations for this year. The deadline for nominations is set for the January board meeting, where candidates will be voted upon at the February board meeting.. Matt announced that the nomination form is available on the website, and all reservations for the venue has been reserved. Matt will place a final reminder for nominations in the mail sent out prior to the January 22nd board meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Green Infrastructure Solutions in South Bend: Matt reported to the meeting attendees that the City of South Bend has had CSO's that EPA have identified as environmental issues within the city limits. Matt summarized the decree set forth by the EPA for the City of South Bend and some of the challenges posed to the city by the EPA. Matt shared with the group that he anticipated a request for a letter of support from the City of South Bend by the FotSJR be made in the near future. Jeff Reece suggested that the board consider drafting their own resolution that they would like to be passed that does not support one group over another, or does not side with one political mindset over the other as well. The board agreed that more information was necessary before any actions were taken by the board.

OTHER ITEMS

- Melanie Stoughton announced that that Kalamazoo Conservation District will be publishing a plat book for Kalamazoo County, and will have books available in April.
- Jim Coury announced an upcoming prescribed burn workshop on January 13th and 14th at Fr. Custer. Anyone interested may contact Michele Richards at Ft. Custer. Jim also announced the Stewardship Network conference to be held January 23rd and 24th.
- Kathy Worst announced a grant proposal submitted by the Branch County CD to the Michigan DNR that would include nine counties forming a Cooperative Weed Management Area to combat a list of invasive species. Kathy also announced this year's annual conservation expo is scheduled for March 14th at the Branch Area Career Center
- Marcy Colclough announced the upcoming MIFFS conference, and shared the work she has completed on the Michigan Water Trails.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on **Thursday, January 22, 2015 at 1:00pm** in Three Rivers at the Public Library.