

Friends of the St. Joe River Association, Inc.
Board Meeting Minutes
Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, MI
Thursday, January 27, 2011

In Attendance:

- Directors – Eldred Adams, Bruce Barton, Eric Kerney, Jim Coury, Geoff Cripe, Daragh Deegan, Rachel Smith, Dona Hunter, Danielle Meersman, Matt Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Melanie Stoughton
- Outreach Coordinator – Leah Cooper
- Watershed Council Members – Chris Bauer, MDNRE Water Bureau; Jeff Reece, Indiana Michigan Power; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Karen Mackowiac, SJRBC; Kathy Worst, Branch Co. CD
- Visitors – Allen Wesley, Citizens for a Quiet Countryside; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi; Wade Hawes, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi; John Graham, St. Joe Conservation District; Maria Schaefer, St. Joe County Dept. Public Works/Michiana Stormwater Partnership; Bill Courliss, VP Union Lake Community Association; Ray Leising; Derek Thompson, DC-NRCS LaGrange County

Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:15, apologized for being late and asked for introductions from those present.

Minutes – Corrections from the December Meeting: Eric Kerney was left off the list of those attending the December meeting. Chris Bauer corrected the MS4 permits that were withdrawn by MDNRE as being 2008 not 2003. The third correction concerned applying for grant funds through GLRI not GLCI.

The corrected minutes were approved on a motion made by Matt Meersman and seconded by Ron Niezgodski.

Treasurer's Report – Danielle Meersman, Treasurer, handed out the Profit & Loss YTD Comparison from December 17, 2010 – January 27, 2011. Total Liabilities and Equity are \$54,516.96. Ruty Adams asked about any donations for the memorial stone for the Smiths. Danielle has received one, but it is not reflected on this financial statement. Ron Niezgodski moved to approve the treasurer's report; Jim Coury seconded the motion; motion carried.

Outreach Coordinator Report – Leah Cooper reported that the winter 2011 newsletter has been sent to Matt for review. They hope to have it to the printer by mid-February and in the mail by the end of February.

Commemorative Bench/Stone – Rachel Smith is still working on the total costs. Bruce and Roxanne Barton may have some stones that could be moved. They do not have any costs for the moving. Rachel has a quote for the plaque. A 100% bronze plaque – 13" long by 10" high using ½" upper and lower case letters would be \$350.00. She does not have any contacts about the stone engraving, but will continue

to look into that. She also needs to look at costs of attaching the plaque to the stone. Jim Coury recommended contacting the conservation districts for a local contractor to help with moving the stone or even the road commission here in Three Rivers. Looking at the stone should be the next step. Matt mentioned that Al and Margaret would like to attend the annual meeting in March and it would be good to have our plans made by that time.

Project Tracking Sheet/Webpage – No changes have been made since the last meeting.

Wetland Partnership Project – The second meeting of the steering committee was held this morning with great attendance. This project will continue to be an agenda item over the next two years so that updates can be shared with the board. The website has a lot of really good information on the project and will continue to be updated.

Annual Watershed Council Meeting Plan – The meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 14 at the Sturges-Young Auditorium in Sturgis, Michigan. The charge from the auditorium will be \$17 per head, which includes the tip and use of the meeting room. The agenda for the evening will be similar to last year with two speakers – Kevin Kincare giving a history of the river and Matt Meersman the annual report for FotSJR. Leah will be updating the display boards to set up. Ruddy Adams will bring them to the next meeting. Dona agreed to print out pictures. Jeff Reece will check and see if AEP can donate folders for participants. Sponsorships for the meeting were discussed. Rachel Smith will contact Potawatomi RC&D and Dona Hunter will contact LaGrange Chapter of Pheasants Forever. They have both donated in the past. LaGrange has a large screen which they will bring up to use for the presentations. Donations were discussed for a silent auction to help raise money. Jim Coury will donate two birdhouses, Rachel Smith has some prints and LaGrange Co. SWCD will donate an Aldo Leopold book. Another item discussed for donation was a rain barrel by Maria Schaefer. There is always room to set up six to eight exhibits. St. Joe River Fly Fisherman may want to set up a display and also be a sponsor. Ask the conservation districts and other watershed groups if they would be interested in setting up a display. A display on the wetland project would also be a good one. There would be no charge for non-profit watershed related groups, but \$100 membership would be required for other groups. Final plans will be discussed at the February meeting.

Lawyer Contract Review – A couple of meetings ago it was discussed having a lawyer review the contracts with Leah Cooper. John Wuepper contacted Matt and recommended an attorney (Kevin Haight) who was environmentally minded who might be willing to help. Matt contacted Kevin and he agreed to help as long as it was understood that his opinion would not be considered official. He is a personal injury attorney, but he reviewed the contracts and had a helpful recommendation that Matt incorporated. Daragh and Geoff reminded the group that they know another attorney who might be willing to assist in the future.

Adobe Software for Outreach – Leah upgraded her computer software using the non-profit status of the Friends. She was able to get a \$900 piece of software – Tech Soup – for \$60. She will be using this for the newsletter, etc. She thanked the board for being able to purchase it this cheaply.

Annual Board Meeting Agenda and Nominating Committee – The business meeting in March is held before the Annual Watershed Council Meeting at about 3:00 p.m. and usually has a light agenda. One item needing to be addressed is expiring terms of board members. This year Geoff Cripe, Eldred Adams, Rachel Smith and Daragh Deegan are expiring. Matt appointed Melanie Stoughton, chairman, Ron Niezgodski, and Jim Coury as members of the nominating committee. It was recommended they review the by-laws and use the matrix developed by Geoff and Daragh last year to come up with a proposed slate by the February meeting. Ron asked about adding new members to the board. Matt said he does not want the Board to shrink. Matt also mentioned that this was a good time for any new by law amendments, if anyone has anything they would like to see changed.

Other Items from the Board:

- Jim Coury mentioned that the second round of GLRI funds will be about \$180 million with RFAs due in February.

Items from the Floor:

- Chris Bauer announced that EPA has Community Based Grant Proposals due March 22 and are open for local, county, etc. Contact her for more information.
- Marcy Colclough talked about the ongoing efforts of the Friends of McCoy Creek. She also said there will be a meeting on February 15 for a new watershed group covering Hickory Creek in Berrien County. On March 22 from 1:30 – 4:00 at Andrews University in Berrien Springs there will be a workshop on transportation issues and water quality addressing solutions and practices for less impact. The Friends will be a sponsor of the workshop with no cost to the organization.
- John Graham, St. Joseph County Conservation District, reported they will be sponsoring a river clean up this summer and are looking for volunteers and donations.
- Ruddy Adams shared information in the SJCD Michigan's newsletter – "Real Dirt". It was a very interesting newsletter and he suggested others might want to be on the mailing list.
- Kathy Worst is still working on the 319 grant for Prairie River. There will be a river clean up sometime this summer. Historically river clean ups for the Friends have been for litter collection.

Next Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 24, 2011 in the Three Rivers Public Library at 1:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned with a motion made by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Matt Meersman.

Minutes recorded by Dona Hunter, Secretary.