

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 28, 2012 – 1:00pm
Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors: Matt Meersman, Rachel Smith, Eric Kerney, Eldred Adams, Danielle Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Ray Leising, Jim Coury, Geoff Cripe, Maria Mast
- Watershed Council: Chris Bauer, MDEQ; Jeff Wenzel, St. Joseph County DC; Jeff Reece, IMP; Lucas Gabbard, Hillsdale CD; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians; Jen Miller, St. Joseph County CD; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Christine Kosmowski, Calhoun County Drain Commissioner; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition
- Visitors: Brian Cherry, Greening the Bend; Kathleen Petitjean, Greening the Bend; Becky Shank, Fabius Township Citizen's Coalition

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:00pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and called for introductions.

Minutes of the January 2013 board meeting were approved as submitted with a motion by Ray Leising and seconded by Ron Niezgodski.

Treasurers Report was presented by Danielle Meersman. Activity in the account shows a \$325 increase in funds for membership dues, \$250 of annual meeting registrations (10), and a \$75 contribution to the group for a total of \$650. Net profit after bank fees of \$630 for the month. Overall, we are at a loss of \$2,777 for the year. As of today, net assets equal \$47,768. A motion to accept the treasurer's report was made by Eldred Adams and seconded by Jim Coury.

Old Business

Wetland Partnership Project – Danielle Meersman provided a brief summary of the Wetland Partnership Project. Matt Meersman updated the group on the progress of the project. Wetland functional status and trends are now up on the FotsJR website in table format, sorted by county or sub-watershed. A public outreach meeting is currently being planned in the Dowagiac River/McCoy Creek/Pipestone Creek area of Berrien County. The event is being planned for mid to late April. Matt Meersman and Marcy Colclough will be meeting with Julie Pioch at MSU Extension to discuss targeting outreach towards local municipalities to help with local planning and zoning. Marcy Colclough also reminded the group to update their local match sheets regarding the wetland project and turn in forms. Any time spent promoting the event, completing GIS work, travel time and mileage can be included. There will be a quarterly report due at the end of March, and these match forms should be included in the report. Jim Coury noted that there is also an outreach workshop scheduled on April 3rd from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm at Glen Oaks Community College in St. Joseph County. Matt Meersman and Rachel Smith will be working on a targeted mailing for this event. The next quarterly meeting will be held on Thursday, April 25th at 10:15 am at the Three Rivers Library.

Membership Development and Fundraising— Geoff Cripe reported that he is continuing to contact local businesses and others regarding fundraising. Jeff Reece reminded Matt to contact the social media coordinator with IMP to discuss fundraising opportunities as well. More work on fundraising will happen after the annual meeting on March 18th.

Annual Meeting Planning – Matt Meersman reported that a lot of things have happened regarding the annual meeting. A press release has been developed and will be distributed to watershed council members, and others to spread across the watershed. Conservation Districts will be sent the press release with the request of using their media contacts to also pass the press release along. Matt Meersman let the group know that Leah Cooper, former Outreach Coordinator with the FotSJR was extremely helpful in creating the flyer for our annual meeting in March. The new flyer turned out very nice, and is available to download on the website. Daragh Deegan has also been extremely helpful in taking the lead on being responsible for any registrations by phone. His number is on the flyer as the contact for annual meeting registration. He also handled the outreach to potential exhibitors and partner project fact sheet contributions.

Eldred Adams reported that the auditorium in Sturgis is set up for the meeting. Eldred has also arranged for local beers to be available at the cash bar this year, as requested by other members. A room has been reserved for the business meeting that will be held prior to the annual meeting. Elections will be completed at the business meeting as well. Geoff Cripe reported that all the members that are up for re-election have been spoken to, and have agreed to run again. Dona Hunter and Martin Franke did email Matt asking about bringing the large projection screen that has been furnished by the LaGrange SWCD in the past, and they will make sure to have it available on March 18th.

Marcy Colclough asked a question to the group regarding annual meeting packets. In the past, folders have been put together providing annual meeting attendees project information from watershed council members and other groups. These fact sheets will be provided by groups. Melanie Stoughton offered to be responsible for providing the folders necessary for these packets, and for putting the informational packets together prior to the annual meeting.

Matt Meersman announced to the group that a special gift is being created for the women from the Pokagon Band that will be speaking at the annual meeting. No official count has been given to Matt for the total number of speakers, but Matt assured the group that there will be enough for all of them, with the possibility of extra available for future women who participate in the Potawatomi waterwalk. A motion was made by Eldred Adams to allow \$100 be spent on this gift in lieu of being spent as an honorarium, seconded by Ray Leising.

Progress on the silent auction was reported from Matt Meersman. Maria Mast was asked and agreed to provide three or more rain barrels for the auction. Birdhouses will be provided by Ray Leising and Jim Coury. Geoff Cripe and Eric Kerney have both acquired paintings from various artists to be auctioned off. Matt will be getting a gift package from local breweries and wineries, as well as items from Liquid Therapy canoe rental and a local fly fishing guide. Grant Poole will provide handmade ash baskets from the tribe. Kathleen Petitjean of Greening the Bend offered to provide a package of handmade notecards for the silent auction as well. A silent auction form will be sent out to those providing items in order to get the valuation information to Matt Meersman prior to the annual meeting. Matt will also be picking up the Watershed Stewardship Award trophy from the previous winner's local library and bringing it to the auditorium the day of the annual meeting to be presented to this year's winner.

Eldred Adams announced that there is an extra display available for use at the annual meeting for any group in need of one. Matt Meersman mentioned that Bob Owens, who organizes area river clean ups for South Bend may be interested in using it.

New Business

Watershed Stewardship Award—All votes for the Watershed Stewardship Award were due by the February 28th business meeting and will be tallied by the executive committee following adjournment of the meeting.

“Greening the Bend” Partner Support—Kathleen Petitjean and Brian Cherry from “Greening the Bend” presented to the group a project they are working on that would improve South Bend’s Century Center, a downtown convention center in the heart of South Bend. The project, if funded, will install a green roof on the Century Center building. Kathleen reported that there are many interested parties that would like to see this project happen, and that the City of South Bend is already agreeing to fund the completion of a structural analysis on the roof to determine if a green roof is feasible. Funding for converting the present roof to a green roof will be sought if the structural analysis comes back positive. Presently, “Greening the Bend” is in the process of becoming a 501c3, and is unable to apply for funds as a non-profit organization. “Greening the Bend” asked the FotSJR to consider being a fiscal sponsor for the project—a request that would require the FotSJR to serve as a fiduciary entity who would hold any money obtained from other organizations. This request was made to secure the opportunity for “Greening the Bend” to apply for funding without having an approved 501c3 status.

Ray Leising asked Matt Meersman whether discussing this request with a contract lawyer would be in the best interest of both parties. Danielle Meersman stated that she would contact an acquaintance who is a lawyer that focuses on non-profit law, and will have more information available to the group at the March 18th business meeting. Jim Coury noted that there are examples within Calhoun County that might mirror the request made by “Greening the Bend”—specifically the Calhoun County Trail Way Alliance and the Homer Foundation. Matt Meersman added that Roxanne Barton, wife of FotSJR board member Bruce Barton is a board member for the Homer Foundation, and may be able to give more insight into their partnership in Calhoun County.

Other Items

- Chris Bauer (MDEQ) reported that there were a handful of grants announced recently regarding water quality monitoring. Chris did not have detailed information available at the meeting, but would provide Matt further information to pass along to the group within the week.
- Marcy Colclough (SWMPC) reported that there is an upcoming watershed council member event being held on March 13th in South Haven. A clean water give back dinner will be hosted at the Thirsty Perch in South Haven from 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm. During that time, 15% of a person’s bill will go towards clean water efforts in the Black and Paw Paw River watersheds. More information is available at the Two Rivers Coalition website.
- Melanie Stoughton (Calhoun CD) reported that a steering committee meeting for the Portage River/Little Portage Creek watershed planning project will be held on Tuesday, March 12th at 1:00 pm in Athens.
- Jim Coury reported that the Michigan chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society is hosting an event at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing on March 6th. The topic will be regarding

what to do when an emergency strikes within our natural resources. Anyone interested in attending should contact Dan Kesselring.

- Jen Miller (St. Joseph County CD) reported that their annual meeting will be held Wednesday, March 20th at the St. Joseph County Sportsman Club from 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm. Steve Chadwick will be the keynote speaker and will address the EHD virus.
- Rachel Smith (Branch County CD) reported that the Branch CD will hold their annual meeting on Saturday, March 9th during their annual Conservation Expo. The expo will be held at the Branch Area Career Center.
- Becky Shank (Fabius Twp. Citizen's Coalition) noted that the television program "Everglades of the North" was very informative and urged the group to watch it if they can.

Next Meeting

Business meeting to be held prior to the annual meeting on Monday, March 18th at Sturges-Young Auditorium in Sturgis, Michigan at 2:00pm. The annual meeting will begin at 5:00pm.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm