

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association
Minutes of the March 15, 2010 Meeting
Sturges-Young Auditorium, Sturgis, Michigan**

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors – Eldred Adams, Amy Boetcher, Daragh Deegan, Jim Coury, Geoff Cripe, Dona Hunter, Rudy Kappe, Danielle Meersman, Matthew Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Rachel Dennis
- Outreach Coordinator – Leah Cooper
- Watershed Council Members – Angie Brown, IDEM
- Visitors – Gaye Blind, Karin Kappe

Matt Meersman, President, called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. Matt reported that Margaret Smith is doing well and may be getting home soon. Al and Margaret have made a decision not to stay on the board for another term.

Minutes of the February board meeting were approved on a motion made by Jim Coury and seconded by Ron Niezgodski.

The **Treasurer's report** was presented by Danielle Meersman, showing income of \$1,311.00; expenses of \$1,889.82; with total assets of \$57,188.17. This does not include all of the expenses and income for the annual meeting. The treasurer's report was approved on a motion made by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Eldred Adams.

Outreach Coordinator's Report – Leah Cooper reported she had been working on the following:

- Annual meeting preparation
- Website is up and running, with good feedback on the registration capabilities for the annual meeting and the website itself.
- 54 total registration for the annual meeting with an additional 4 who have registered at the last minute
- Completed a flyer with membership/donation information and had copies printed. She handed out copies for the board and a copy will be placed in each participant packet for the annual meeting.
- Spent time on the phone handling requests for presentations. She feels like people are starting to hear more about FotSJR and learning that we are here to help.
- Leah thanked Danielle and Dona for their help in preparing for the annual meeting.

Watershed Council Meeting (last minute items):

- Matt and Danielle had the time changed on the sign in front of Sturges-Young Auditorium.
- Marcy Colclough is bringing a power point projector.
- Leah worked on a power point of pictures in the watershed to play before the meeting and during dinner.

- AEP donated folders to put hand-out materials in for the meeting. Dona picked them up from Barry Visel. Membership brochures and newsletters will be added to the packets before distributing them to participants.
- Matt reviewed the agenda, which is included in the packets.

By Law Amendments:

- Article 4 – Section 4.1 – General Powers: “The Board of Directors shall consist of not less than eleven (11) and not more than seventeen (17) as may be determined by the majority of the Board” was changed as follows: “The Board of Directors shall consist of 15 members.”
- Article 4 – Section 4.2 – Election and Term of Office of Directors: “Directors shall serve terms of three years and be elected at the Annual Meeting of the Corporation” was changed as follows: Directors shall serve terms of three years and be elected at the Annual Meeting of the Corporation. A Director may only serve two (2) consecutive three (3) year terms. A Director may be re-elected to the Board after at least a one year absence from the Board.”
- Article 4 – Section 4.7 – Quorum and Voting: “At every meeting of the Board, a quorum shall consist of a majority of the current Directors serving on the Board” was changed as follows: “At every meeting of the Board, five (5) Directors shall constitute a quorum.”

Rutty Adams moved to adopt the by-law amendments; Rudy Kappe seconded the motion; motion carried.

Jim Coury thanked Matt for the work in updating the by-laws. There are several more changes that should be made to clarify and strengthen the board. The by-laws, along with resolutions and policies, adopted by the board will be placed on the website.

Change in location and time of board meetings – Geoff Cripe asked if there had been any decision made about moving the location of the board meetings into Indiana and having them in the evening rather than in the afternoon. The question was raised after contacting some potential new board members, who would not be able to attend meetings during the day and probably not make it to Three Rivers. Rudy Kappe suggested picking one date and trying it at a new location, possibly the April or June meeting. The board agreed to try a new location for the June meeting. Geoff will coordinate a location and report once a location is determined.

Election of New Directors – The nominating committee presented the following slate of directors for 2010: Jim Coury, Ron Niezgodski, Melanie Stoughton and Bruce Barton. The terms for these 4 board members will last until 2013 with the term limits starting with these nominations. Matt Meersman moved to accept the slate presented by the nominating committee; Rudy Kappe seconded the motion; motion carried. There are still two vacancies on the board. Geoff and Daragh have talked with some other individuals who might have an interest in becoming a board member. It was suggested inviting them to future board meetings, so they could become familiar with the board and the board could learn something about them. Ron Niezgodski stated it would be good to see where current board members

and watershed council members are located in the watershed to determine where new people are needed. Matt will update the new membership on the agenda.

Election of Officers – Officers will be elected to serve two years. The nominating committee presented the following officers for election: Matt Meersman, President; Rudy Kappe, Vice-President; Dona Hunter, Secretary; Danielle Meersman, Treasurer. Discussion followed concerning a second vice-president. Rudy Kappe will be gone in the winter and a second vice-president would be beneficial during this time. In the past there has also been an assistance treasurer and secretary. The nominations were expanded to include: 2nd Vice-President, Amy Boetcher; 3rd Vice-President, Geoff Cripe, Geoff asked what the duties might be and declined the nomination; Rachel Dennis was then nominated for 3rd Vice-President; Assistant Secretary, Eldred Adams; and Ron Niezgodski, Assistant Treasurer. The full slate of officers was then reviewed. Rudy Kappe moved to accept the nominations for officers; Daragh Deegan seconded the motion; motion carried.

Annual Report – Matt reviewed what he is going to present tonight at the annual meeting:

- Organizational Capacity - #1 goal in the SJRWMP and the first priority of the board is to establish the organizational capacity with the strength to implement the watershed management plan. There is a diverse board in place, watershed council members are increasing, and the outreach coordinator has been hired.
- Education & Outreach – With the upgrade to the website, important issues in the watershed can be posted, including Action Alerts. The new “River Currents” newsletter provides an avenue to share information to the members. FotSJR will be hosting several workshops in the future.
- Support to Partners – The size of the watershed means that we rely on partners at the local level to implement important projects on the ground. FotSJR is providing technical assistance and support to several of those watershed partners.
- Future – will include protection and restoration of the natural hydrology in the watershed. FotSJR can provide the tools through education and outreach but without membership and donations nothing could be accomplished. Grants help leverage dollars for implementation, not for overhead and operating expenses. Need the membership to step up and help create a sustainable organization.

Matt was encouraged to speak with the same passion he shows at the regular board meetings. Jim Coury talked about the importance of keeping Leah on to assist with activities. Leah is currently working on a grant to cover some media activities and is looking at ways to help fund her position. Ron Niezgodski complimented the board on moving forward and increasing the visibility of the organization. The board has worked hard over the last three years or so, with slow steps being taken and spinning our wheels, but now things are moving quickly.

Angie Brown mentioned that the IASWCD (Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts) has hired an individual to aid in district capacity building. She ran a non-profit in the past and is willing

to work with FotSJR if she can be of any assistance. This might help to increase the visibility of the organization in Indiana. Angie encouraged the Board to contact her for assistance.

Rutty Adams talked with the Sturgis Foundation and while they will not grant funds for an employee, there might be funds available for outreach and education. Maybe Leah could look into it.

A question was raised about having an audit. It had been decided not to pursue an audit at this time.

Other Items from the Board:

- Matt presented a resolution concerning lifetime honorary non-voting Board membership status for Al and Margaret Smith. Matt moved to accept the resolution; Rudy Kappe seconded the motion; motion carried. Matt will read the resolution at the annual meeting tonight. A gift or memorial was discussed, possibly a stone bench or rock with an inscription placed in a strategic location/park along the river. Amy Boetcher mentioned having a river clean-up day in their honor.
- Rudy Kappe stated that a gift was not necessary for his son's work on the website. A thank you note or letter would be enough.
- A suggestion was also made to honor Bob Owens for all of the work he has done with the river clean-ups over the years.
- Eldred mentioned he had found \$50 to help with the overrun costs on the annual meeting dinners.
- Rachel Dennis is getting married in July and they would like to make a donation to the Friends, instead of having favors at the wedding. They were thinking in terms of some type of promotional item to be handed out, such as window decals or clings with the logo. If anyone has any other ideas, please let her know.
- FotSJ River Clean up on March 27, 2010, 9:00 a.m. at Veterans Park, organized by Bob Owens.
- Sugar Maple Festival – March 19, 20 & 21 at Bendix Park
- Kalamazoo Urban Workshop scheduled for April 26 – watch for more details

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m. on a motion made by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Jim Coury.

Minutes recorded by Dona Hunter, Secretary.