

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, January 25, 2018—1:00 PM**  
**Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, MI**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

**Directors:** Bill Courliss, Bob Jones, John Law, Danielle Meersman, Matt Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Grant Poole, Jeff Reece, Kim Sinclair, Jeff Wenzel

**Watershed Council:** Chris Svoboda, Indiana Michigan Power

**Visitors:** Jason Tharp; Patty Hoch-Melluish, Kieser & Associates

**CALL TO ORDER:**

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM, welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for introductions.

**Minutes** of the November 16, 2017 meeting were reviewed. One correction was noted under New Business, Other. Jeff Reece said the word “*supporting*” should be changed to “*staying informed of*”. Bill Courliss moved to accept the minutes as amended, Kim Sinclair seconded the motion. **Motion carries.**

The **Treasurer’s Report** was presented by Treasurer, Danielle Meersman. Income included \$0.37 interest. Expenses included \$94.00 for the post office box leaving a monthly net income of -\$93.63 and a year-to-date net profit of -\$2,131.70. The total Assets and Liabilities & Equity Balance is \$65,213.53. Kim Sinclair moved to accept the treasurer’s report as printed, Jeff Reece seconded the motion. **Motion carried.**

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Bylaws Update for 2018**

Changes to the old bylaws had been e-mailed to all with the meeting minutes and agenda. Mat Meersman preceded the discussion letting everyone know that a lot of the changes reflected simpler language taken from the Two Rivers Coalition Bylaws. Bob Jones presented the sections where there were any significant changes. Article II Purpose was changed to Article II Mission. The mission statement was less related to the WMP and more back to the roots of the organization calling the group to protect and support the general condition of the St. Joe River. The sub-sections on Principal Office and Registered Office had been deleted. After some discussion, the consensus was to re-insert those sub-sections as it clarified where are mailbox was and that we do have a registered agent in Michigan where our non-profit status is located. Article III Membership was changed to Article IV Members. The only changes were a clearer definition of a member and the addition of an honorary member. Article IV Board of Directors was changed to Article V Board of Directors. The basic change is there are no term limits. Article V officers was changed to Article VI Officers (Executive Committee). Officers shall be president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer with one (1) year terms with no term limits. Article VI Advisory Council was changed to Article X Watershed Council. The main change is instead of trying to recruit county commissioners, we work to get county surveyors in Indiana and drain commissioners in Michigan. We also want to broaden the types of at-large members to include businesses, recreational groups, agricultural organizations, and hydro-power facilities. A new Article XI establishes our March Board Meeting as our Annual Membership Meeting. A revised set of bylaws will be sent before the February board meeting, so we can finalize any changes and submit the new bylaws for adoption at our February meeting. Adoption would then be voted on at our March board meeting.

**2018 Watershed Council Celebration**

The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual St. Joseph River Watershed Council Celebration will be held on Friday, March 16, 2018 at the Sturges-Young Auditorium in Sturges, Michigan. Registration/social time will be from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM with a welcome and award presentation, dinner, and presentation on “*Dam Dangerous*” to follow. A silent auction will also take place during

the social hour and dinner. Only one Al Smith Watershed Stewardship Award nomination was received. Matt will go ahead and have the name plate made for the presentation on March 16, 2018. Board members are urged to contact individuals and businesses for items for the silent auction. Description of items should be sent to Matt. Ron Niezgodski has agreed to do the set-up of the auction the night of the celebration. Those wanting to be exhibitors should also let Matt know.

### **2018 Annual Membership Meeting**

The Annual Membership Meeting will be Thursday, March 22, 2018. Jeff Reece is chairman of the nominating committee with Ron Niezgodski and Matt Meersman.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **Support Letters**

There were two (2) requests for support letters from the FotSJR. The first was from Daragh Deegan from the City of Elkhart. They are applying for a LARE grant to help with the removal of the Elkhart River dam. John Law moved to send a letter of support, Ron Niezgodski seconded. **Motion carried.** The second request was from the Berrien County Conservation District. They are applying for a Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to do restoration work along Ox Creek within Hall Park of Benton Harbor, Michigan. FotSJR will be offering in-kind services to help recruit volunteers and promote events at \$25.00 per hour for approximately 20 hours, for a total matching contribution of \$500.00. Jeff Reece moved to send a letter of support, John Law seconded. **Motion carried.**

Jeff Reece suggested sending a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission requesting notification of issues related to the re-licensing of the Constantine Hydroelectric Power Plant, Project No. 10661. A letter was drafted by Jeff and shared with the board. Danielle Meersman moved to approve Jeff sending the letter to FERC on behalf of FotSJR, Ron Niezgodski seconded. **Motion carried.**

#### **Partner Survey Results and Strategic Planning**

Matt Meersman shared some of the results of the FotSJR Watershed Partner Support Survey. Over 40 people responded to the survey. On the question about having small grants (\$2-5K) for water related projects available, 52% said yes, 10% no, and 37% maybe. Of the seven suggested resources that we might be able to provide, enhanced mapping /development of water quality related data and updating the St Joseph River WMP were the highest requested. Educational kits were on the low side. On the question of FotSJR being the “umbrella” organization, all respondents said either 3, 4 or 5 with five being “very important”; 55% of respondents answered 5. A couple comments suggested we have a dedicated outreach person and how could we incorporate the WMP to local issues. All in all, comments and results were positive and helpful as we look to our future planning.

**Next meeting is February 22, 2018 at 1:00 PM – Three Rivers Public Library, Three Rivers, Michigan.**

**Adjournment:** Ron Niezgodski moved to adjourn, John Law seconded. **Motion carried.** We adjourned at 3:02 PM.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*Bob Jones*