

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 25, 2019 – 1:00 p.m.
Steuben County Community Center – Angola, Indiana

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors: Carol Higgins, Dona Hunter, Eric Kerney, Ron Niezgodski, Grant Poole, Jeff Reece
- Watershed Council Members: Tara Lee, Steuben Co. SWCD; Matt Meersman, SJRBC Director
- Visitors: Kris Thomas, City of Angola; Janel Meyer, Steuben Co. SWCD; Dean Walrack, City of Coldwater; Sarah Fronczak, MSU Extension; Karen DeForest, Steuben Co. Lakes Council; Jessica Merklng, DNR Urban Wildlife Biologist

CALL TO ORDER – President Jeff Reece called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. He thanked everyone for coming. He also thanked Tara Lee and Steuben Co. SWCD for hosting the meeting and for the refreshments. Jeff then asked for everyone in attendance to introduce themselves and tell who they represented.

MINUTES of the March 28, 2019 were presented for approval. Dona Hunter made one correction. Grant Poole was not at the March meeting. **With no more corrections, Ron Niezgodski made a motion to approve the March minutes with a second by Carol Higgins. Motion carried.** Jeff Reece also made reference to the notes put together by Dona Hunter for the Watershed Council Meeting held on March 22, 2019.

TREASURER’S REPORT – In Kim Sinclair’s absence Jeff Reece reviewed the four hand-outs that Kim had prepared. They included a proposed budget for April 2019 – March 2020 compared to this year’s actual expenditures; a comparison of budgets for 2018 and 2019; actual budget expenditures for April 2018 – March 2019 compared to what was budgeted; and the balance sheet as of March 31, 2019. The balance sheet showed Total Liabilities & Equity as of March 31, 2019 were \$66,488.98. After a brief discussion of the new budget proposal, **the treasurer’s report was approved on a motion made by Carol Higgins and seconded by Ron Niezgodski.** The new budget will be discussed and adopted under old business. These four hand-outs are attached to these minutes.

Jeff Reece said that the fees for the Wild Apricot account were not reflected in the budget since they will not go in effect until the fall of 2019.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION:

Jessica Merklng, Urban Wildlife Biologist stationed in Columbia City was on hand to present information on the Urban Wildlife Program. She handed out a flyer with a brief explanation of the program. It is attached to the minutes. Jessica stated that most people are generally not

award of what happens with wildlife when habitat areas are altered. 90% of the land in Indiana is privately owned and as that landscape is altered there can be a huge impact on wildlife. The Urban Wildlife Program was started in 2016 with two wildlife biologists in the state. Jessica covers the northern part of the state, including Elkhart, Ft. Wayne and South Bend. Megan Dillon covers the southern portion of Indiana, including Indianapolis. For more information about the program go to www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Strategic Planning** – Two items were discussed. **SOCIAL MEDIA** - Grant Poole has the Facebook page for FotSJR up and available. The FotSJR website has icons for both Facebook and Twitter. Grant added a user name and needs to change the logo from black and white to color. He encouraged everyone who has Facebook to login to the site. He needs additional pictures, etc. to add to the site. **NEWSLETTER** - The newsletter committee made up of Carol Higgins, Grant Poole, Eric Kerney and Dona Hunter will try and meet before the June board meeting to critique the newsletter and make recommendations for another one. It was agreed by those in attendance that once a year was probably enough, due to not having hired staff that could work on it. It was suggested using the newsletter as a way to promote the watershed celebration each year. Of the hard copies that were mailed less than a dozen were returned. A few asked that their names be removed from the hard copy list since they are satisfied with getting an electronic copy. Grant Poole asked that his name be removed from the hard copy list. Dona is keeping a master list to be used for the actual mailing and Jeff has the electronic list.
- **Watershed Stewardship Award** – Jeff needs some information so that he can update the website. He needs a write up on Gene Lightner, along with pictures of Gene and Daragh Deegan. Matt will get Jeff information from the application for Gene. Tara Lee said she had pictures of Gene and Daragh that she will get to Jeff. Carol Higgins asked if anyone had seen a news release on the watershed celebration. Kim Sinclair was supposed to put one together and has been very busy. Someone needs to remind her.
- **Budget Adoption** – After some discussion on the proposed budget which Kim Sinclair had put together using discussion from the March board meeting, a budget for fiscal year April 2019 – March 2020 was adopted. It included income of \$5,500 with matching expenses.

Income:

- **Contribution expense \$1,200**
- **Event Income \$2,500**
- **Interest Income \$400**

Expenses:

- **Scholarship/Leadership \$1,000**
- **Bank Service Charges \$25**
- **Dues and Subscriptions \$150**

- **Membership Dues \$1,400**
For a Total of \$5,500

- **Event Expense \$1500**
- **Insurance \$500**
- **Licenses & Permits \$25**
- **Marketing \$600**
- **Travel \$500**
- **Postage \$100**
- **Printing & Reproduction \$500**
- **Website \$600**
For a total of \$5,500

Carol Higgins made a motion to approve the new budget; Dona Hunter seconded the motion; motion carried.

- **2019 Meeting Schedule** – May 22 meeting will be held at Three Rivers. June 27 meeting is scheduled for June 27 and will be held at Par Gil Natural Resources Learning Center north of LaGrange, sponsored by the LaGrange Co. SWCD. Dona will check with Martin Franke about either a presentation or a wagon ride, or both. There will be no scheduled meeting in July and the August 22 meeting will be held in Three Rivers.
- **Wind Farm Update** – Matt Meersman shared a letter from DTE the company proposing to install wind farms in the watershed. The letter stated that the US Fish & Wildlife guidelines will be taken into consideration during construction. Amy Picot's presentation at the watershed celebration touched on the fact that she is actually working with the energy companies to supply information relating to raptors and wind farm construction. This fit very well into the requests received for letters of support from the townships involved. After a discussion it was agreed to add the letters that were submitted to the townships to the minutes, so that anyone who was not in attendance at the meetings, could see the letters. This would make it an official part of the public records of the FotSJR.
- **Election of Officers** – Jeff Reece had been in contact with all of the current officers. They all agreed to serve another year in their respective positions, which are: Jeff Reece, President; Daragh Deegan, Vice President; Kim Sinclair, Treasurer and Dona Hunter, Secretary. Dona asked if Eric Kerney would agree to record minutes if she was not able to attend all of the meetings and he agreed. **Carol Higgins made a motion to accept the slate of offices for 2019; Ron Niezgodski seconded the motion; motion carried.**

Other Business and Announcements:

- Grant Poole asked about Jeffrey Sedlarik, who attended last month's meeting. Grant was wondering if there were different water quality problems or just more of the same in the

river near Mendon. Jeff Reece said no, he was just trying to find out what he should or could be doing. Kim Sinclair was able to give him additional names of people to contact who could look into it, including the St. Joseph County CD.

- Jeff Reece pointed out that there is a vacancy on the board, which occurred when Bob Jones left. Please contact him if anyone expresses interest in filling the vacancy.
- Jeff Reece also reported that the study plan for the Contantine hydroelectric project has been approved. It includes recognition of the Native American representation in the area and will include them in further discussions.
- Army Corp of Engineers is holding a meeting at the Mishawaka Public Library at 1:00 p.m. on May 21. The presentation is entitled “Waterways, Wetlands and You”.
- St. Joseph River Basin Symposium is scheduled for May 10 at Pokagon State Park.
- Grant Poole said that WNIT will rerun the video “7 Generation River” on April 28.
- Matt Meersman participated in the taping for public TV for the “Outdoor Elements” show. They were doing macroinvertebrate testing.
- Sarah Fronczak, Environmental Management Educator with Michigan State University Extension, is currently working with the City of Coldwater on the development of a canoe/kayak trail starting in Coldwater and linking with other water trails. She was asking for any information or assistance from others who had been involved in the development of these types of trails. Matt Meersman stated he would share some contact names with her.
- Dean Walrack with the City of Coldwater stated that the Branch County Plan Commission has been looking into the wind turbine issue. After some discussion, **Ron Niezgodski made a motion to submit the same letter concerning the wind turbines to Branch County; Carol Higgins seconded the motion; motion carried.** Dean said the letter needed to be sent to Bud Norman, County Administrator with Branch County Plan Commission. Jeff Reece will send the letter. A copy of the letter will be attached to these minutes.

Next Meeting – May 23, 2019 at the Three Rivers Public Library at 1:00 p.m.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned on a motion made by Dona Hunter and seconded by Grant Poole.

Minutes recorded by Dona Hunter, Secretary.