

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, September 27, 2018 – 1:00 p.m.**  
**Three Rivers Community Center – Three Rivers, MI**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

**Directors:** Carol Higgins, Eric Kerney, Grant Poole, Jeff Reece, Kim Sinclair, Dona Hunter

**Watershed Council Members:** Ron Johnson, Chris Svoboda, Matt Meersman, Roey Marcon

**CALL TO ORDER:**

President Jeff Reece called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Jeff welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for introductions. Matt Meersman referenced the watershed council list on the agenda. He suggested Roey Marcon be substituted as the LaGrange County SWCD representative in place of Martin Franke, since she has been attending the meetings in Bob Jones' place.

**MINUTES** of the August 23, 2018 were reviewed. Kim Sinclair made a motion to accept the minutes as presented; Eric Kerney seconded the motion. **Motion carried.**

**TREASURER'S REPORT** was presented by Treasurer Kim Sinclair. There was very little change from last month. Total Liabilities and Equity as of September 25, 2018 was \$67,749.51. Carol Higgins made a motion to accept the financial report as presented; Grant Poole seconded the motion. **Motion carried.**

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**STRATEGIC PLANNING – NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE UPDATE** – The newsletter committee, made up to Carol Higgins, Eric Kerney, Grant Poole, and Dona Hunter, met before the meeting. After some lengthy discussion, it was decided to recommend printing 500 copies of the newsletter and mailing to members and the watershed council members who we have addresses for which is approximately 250. If only email addresses are available the newsletter would be sent that way. The remaining newsletters would be distributed to the conservation districts in the watershed for them to share at local events. The newsletter would be published the first week of February on an annual basis in order to promote the Annual Watershed Celebration held in March each year. Included in the newsletter would be a note from the chairman, accomplishments throughout the year, educational pieces from across the watershed, and of course information about the Watershed Celebration. It would be nice to have a watermark of the watershed on the address label page, possibly with a brief explanation of the watershed. The format of past newsletters would be followed. Two individuals need to be identified. One who would be responsible for accumulating articles for the newsletter and a second to format the newsletter. Dona will contact Patty Hoch-Melluish with Keiser and Associates and see what type of assistance she was interested in providing. Tara Lee with Steuben Co. SWCD had at one time expressed an interest in helping put the newsletter together. Dona will contact Nathan with Spartan Printing to get a firm quote on printing, mailing and postage costs. Also at a past meeting the

committee wondered if the template for the old newsletters was available and if so in what format. Matt Meersman said there was a template and it was in Design Adobe.

Social media was another point of discussion with the committee. More and more young people are interested in receiving information through Facebook and other forms of social media. Grant and Jeff will look into Facebook and how a not-for-profit can set up a Facebook account.

Carol would like to see us research and create a list of all the lake associations in the watershed in order to be able to share information with them. Matt said there used to be a list that would be a place to start. The Conservation Districts should be able to assist with compiling that information.

The committee will meet again before the October board meeting to finalize a proposal to present to the board for their approval before moving forward.

**OCTOBER MEETING LOCATION & 2019 MEETINGS** – Jeff Reece has been in contact with the Three Rivers Library and has filled out a new form with them requesting the use of the library for meetings unless an alternative location is used. Jeff also advised that the library will be closing the current location in the fall of 2020 and relocating to another building in downtown Three Rivers. This proposed action also includes the Community Center, as both locations are owned by the City of Three Rivers. Future meetings can still be held there, but parking may be a problem at the new facility.

- **The October 25, 2018 meeting** will be in Dowagiac, Michigan. Grant Poole has scheduled the meeting location at the Pokagon Band Community Center, 27043 Potawatomi Trail in Dowagiac, MI 49047. The meeting will begin at 1:00 p.m. There will be no meetings in November and December.
- **The 2019 Meeting schedule dates are as follows:** January 24, 2019; February 28, 2019; March 15, 2019 (tentative date for Annual Watershed Celebration); April 25, 2019; May 23, 2019; June 27, 2019 (tentative location Par Gil NRLC in LaGrange County); July 2019 no meeting; August 22, 2019; September 26, 2019; October 24, 2019; No meetings in November or December. Steuben County has offered to host a meeting in their area sometime in 2019. Unless other locations are determined meetings will be held at the Library in Three Rivers.

**CAFO ISSUE – Response letter from the Friends** – Grant brought the packet of information that Matt had received from a private landowner on blue green algae/sludge on a stretch of the river from Three Rivers to Mendon. Grant drove the area today and took some pictures. It is hard to make a determination as to what is actually happening without some water testing. Right now the State of Michigan is asking for sites to conduct their 2019 water testing, in addition to ones already slated to be tested. Right now the Upper St. Joe is not scheduled for any state testing until 2020. Jeff will write a letter to the state requesting this site be added to their next round of testing. Carol reported that they have started applying manure again on this site. Also, Jeff will write a letter to the person who sent us the original complaint, just letting him know that this site has been brought to the attention of DEQ and a follow up will continue. Chris Svoboda suggested contacting DNR also and share this information with them. Carol Higgins stated that Michigan does not have good regulations for septic systems and

this may be a part of the problem here. This stretch of river has homeowners that have been there for years and may have failing septic systems or ones that have not been pumped in years. There is a lot of residential development along the river in certain areas with septic issues. It is important that water testing be done to determine the full extent of the problem.

**TWIN CITIES SUSTAINABLE HARBOR STRATEGY PROJECT** - Matt Meersman attended a focus group meeting of individuals having an environmental interest around the harbor at Benton Harbor. The meeting, sponsored by DNR, Twin Cities Harbor Conservancy, Michigan State University and Michigan Sea Grant, plus other partners, is a facilitated planning process where participants can offer ideas for improvements in the waterfront area. The area they are looking at is a small area around the marina. The Harbor Conservancy is creating a management plan and asked for input. The FotSJ were invited, along with 2 Rivers Coalition and SWMPC and others. Marcy Hamilton made the group aware of FotSJR and she suggested an invitation be sent to FotSJR. Benton Harbor is the end of all the water that flows through the St. Joe River Watershed. Grant was concerned about the railroad bridge, but Matt said it was outside the project area.

**LEADERSHIP ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIP** – St. Joseph River Basin Commission is sponsoring a scholarship for the Leadership Academy co-sponsored by Purdue University. Applications are due by October 22 and one will be awarded by the Commission. The classes are both on-site and on-line and run from January – May 2019. Once completed the individuals will be certified watershed planners. Matt encouraged anyone interested to fill out an application and submit it by the deadline.

**ST. JOE RIVER RACES** – Matt reported they were held last weekend. Iron Hand Winery and Wine Bar sponsored the event, which paid the insurance which is usually covered by the FotSJ. \$360 was raised as a result of the races, with all proceeds going to FotSJ. The race results are on the website.

**CONSTANTINE DAM FERC LICENSE APPLICATION** – Jeff attended the scoping meeting on August 28 where there was discussion about the renewal of the license for the Constantine Dam (built in the 1840s). I&M owns the dam and operates it under a federal license; that license is up for renewal. I&M has to do inventories and then present findings before the license will be considered. The license expires in 2024. Jeff discussed the invasive species that needed to be considered in their inventory process and encouraged I&M and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to utilize the MISIN. Comments need to be received by October 2; Jeff will put a letter together to send to FERC.

Jeff encouraged Eric and Grant to contact FERC on behalf of the tribes as FERC did not have either of the tribes listed. Chris Svoboda said there will be more opportunities to address issues to FERC going forward since this is a long process. Jeff will provide a link to the St. Joe River Watershed Management Plan along with the FotSJR website link in his letter (as was requested by FERC). Grant recommended the possibility of a seedbed inventory in the impound area. I&M will also be doing a fish study. Once all of the inventories have been completed the other regulatory agencies involved will discuss options.

**MARCH 2019 WATERSHED CELEBRATION PLANNING** - Discussion was started with topics for a speaker. The following is a list of potential speakers/topics:

- Dog Sniffer – Septic Tanks
- Ecoli – TMDL – DEQ
- One of the speakers from Fernwood
- WMIU – Effect of road salts on watershed
- Dean Baas – MSU – Phosphorus
- College Professor from Notre Dame ecology department on Juday Creek research
- Native Plants/Invasives – Douglas Tallamy from Delaware – entomologist has written several books. May be expensive. Grant suggested a Freshwater Futures grant to cover costs.
- MISIN – Midwest Invasive Species Network
- Tree Doctor – Dr. Robert?? MSU

Jeff will contact Sturges-Young Auditorium about the availability of March 15, 2019. Matt Meersman has agreed to serve as emcee. Dona will contact Martin Franke with LaGrange Co. SWCD about the AV equipment that Bob Jones always brought and set up. More details will be presented at the next meeting in October.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

- Jeff Reece had been contacted by Jeff Beebe inquiring if we ever talked about water trails. Jeff will contact him to find out exactly what he wants to know.
- Kim Sinclair invited everyone to an Open House on October 11 from 12 – 7 at the Van Buren CD in Lawrence at the Conference Center. She also reported they will start macro collection on September 30 from 9-1 with identification on October 1 from 9-1 at the Van Buren CD office. Contact Kim if you have an interest in helping.
- Jeff received information about renewal of membership for River Works and Go Daddy. He will send the information to Kim and Kim said she would contact Danielle to find out for sure.
- Eric Kerney showed a picture of a cultural event canoe tribe with Michigan Governor Rick Snyder. They used the tribal council's new 10 person canoe and spent an hour on Monday touring the Wild Rice Area on Nottawa Creek near Leonides. Representative Aaron Miller also attended.

**Next meeting will be Thursday, October 25, 2019 at the Pokagon Band Community Center, Dowagiac, Michigan beginning at 1:00 p.m.**

**Adjournment:** Kim Sinclair move to adjourn; Carol Higgins seconded the motion; **motion carried.**

**Meeting adjourned at 2:50 PM.**