

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 16, 2017—1:00 PM
Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

Directors: Roxanne Barton, Bill Courliss, Carol Higgins, Dona Hunter, Bob Jones, Eric Kerney, Matt Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Grant Poole, Jeff Reece

Watershed Council: Daragh Deegan, City of Elkhart; Marcy Hamilton, SWMPC; Jim Hess, Elkhart County SWCD; Ron Johnson, Fabius Twp.; Chris Svoboda, Indiana Michigan Power

Visitors: Jordan Beehler, Elkhart County SWCD; Jason Tharp; Greg Alimenti, City of St. Joseph, MI

CALL TO ORDER:

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

Minutes of the October 26, 2017 meeting were reviewed. Two corrections were noted under New Business, Other. Daragh Deegan said the reference to the dam removal moving forward should be "*Elkhart River Dam*" rather than Elkhart Dam. Carol Higgins said that the St. Joseph County, MI Conservation District "*is currently doing irrigation evaluation with RCPP funding.*" Bill Courliss moved to accept the minutes as amended, Ron Niezgodski seconded.

Motion carried.

The **Treasurer's Report** was presented by Matt Meersman in the absence of Treasurer, Danielle Meersman. Income for the month included \$100.00 for membership dues and \$0.17 interest. Expenses included \$2.50 for bank service charges, \$250.00 for River Network and Freshwater Future subscriptions, and \$38.34 for website domain name leaving a monthly balance of \$-190.67 and a year-to-date balance of \$-2,038.07. The total Liabilities & Equity Balance is \$65,307.16. Jeff Reece moved to accept the treasurer's report as printed, Carol Higgins seconded. **Motion carried.**

OLD BUSINESS:

Strategic Planning

Matt sent out a watershed partner support survey that included questions compiled by Grant Poole last week to around 300 contacts including FotSJR members and interested parties. So far there have been ten responses. It is early in the process and Matt will be sending a follow-up e-mail. It was encouraged for board members and Watershed Council members to forward to anyone they feel would be interested. Several topics already mentioned regarding strategic planning were highlighted again. Ron Johnson felt a mailing or newsletter would be good especially for those who are not social media savvy. This could maybe be done yearly instead of quarterly. Matt and the rest of the board felt this was a good idea but it takes time and commitment to make this happen. Anyone so inclined to take on this project as their contribution would be welcomed. Updating our website is another project in need of a manager. Matt also will be sharing some ideas as to how the St. Joseph River Basin Commission and the FotSJR can help each other with future endeavors.

Bylaws Update

Bob Jones informed the board and council that the bylaws committee will be meeting after the board meeting. They should be finishing up their discussion and revisions. It is the committee's intent to have copies of the bylaws revision to all board members by early December for review so we can have discussion at the January 2018 board meeting.

2018 11th Annual Watershed Council Celebration Planning

Matt informed the board that a date and program speakers have been set. The 11th Annual Watershed Council Celebration will be on Friday, March 16, 2018 at the Sturges-Young Auditorium in Sturgis, MI. The speakers will be Kenneth Smith of the Indiana DNR and Manuela Johnson of the Indiana Homeland Security on the topic of "*Dam Dangerous*". This topic is targeted on the dangers of low-head dams. Ron Niezgodski said he would take lead on the

silent auction set-up for that evening. Bob Jones said he would provide the computer, projector, screen, and sound system for the presentations. Matt reminded that we need to start considering nominees for the Al Smith Stewardship Award. Nominations can be made through the FotSJR website.

NEW BUSINESS:

2018 Annual Membership Meeting Planning

At a past meeting, the board had decided to have their annual membership meeting in February 2018. In looking at bylaws revision, the bylaws committee has gained a better understanding of our current bylaws and is trying to simplify some of the language and streamline our organizational procedures. After some of this review, Matt suggested that we move that annual membership meeting to our regular meeting date on March 22, 2018. This would give the board time to review revisions of the bylaws in January and February of 2018 so we could vote on the bylaws at the March meeting as required by our bylaws. After some discussion, Ron Niezgodski moved to set our 2018 Annual Membership Meeting on March 22, 2018 at 1:00 PM at the Three Rivers Public Library, Three Rivers, MI. Bill Courliss seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Other

- Jeff Reece suggested that the FotSJR become an interested party with I&M in supporting I&M's hydro-power projects as they need to be re-licensed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Bill Courliss moved that the FotSJR become an interested party with I&M in supporting their re-licensing of hydro-power projects, seconded by Ron Niezgodski. **Motion carried.**

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR:

Announcements:

- Daragh Deegan brought the new 2018-2019 Elkhart County Stormwater Calendars for distribution.
- Grant Poole announced the Two Rivers Coalition Annual Meeting on December 13, 2017 at 7:00 PM at the Van Buren Conference Center in Lawrence, MI.
- Bill Courliss updated us on recent projects with the Union Lake Association. They have been working on invasive species remediation spending between \$25,000.00 to \$28,000.00. Their next focus is on fish habitat development.

NO DECEMBER 2017 MEETING – Next Meeting – January 25, 2018 – 1:00 PM – Three Rivers Public Library

Adjournment: Bill Courliss moved to adjourn, Carol Higgins seconded. **Motion carried.** Meeting adjourned at 2:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Jones