

Friends of the St. Joseph River November 18, 2021
Board Minutes: Submitted by Carolyn Grace

1:01 pm Call to Order by Matt Meersman via Zoom

Directors Present:

Matt Meersman, Jeff Reece, Kim Sinclair, Grant Poole, Carolyn Grace, Carol Higgins, Eric Kerney, Annie Klehfoth, Daragh Deegan, Jordan Shedd, Ron Niezgodski

Watershed Council members and Guests.

Kyle Tryan, Lisa Harris, Melissa DeSimone, Kristi Todd, Chris Temple, Neil Bendixen, Kristopher Koko and Doug McLaughlin

Board Minutes:

Kim Sinclair motioned to accept the September board minutes, Jeff Reece second. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Reports: Sinclair shared the balance sheet before meeting through email and live via zoom. Reece motioned to accept the treasurer report as presented, Niezgodski seconded. Motion passed.

Sinclair discussed the \$55K CD at Fifth Third Bank that will be expiring soon and the need for cash on hand to pay for support committed to the St. Joseph County Conservation District. She recommended not renewing the CD and doing some research on other options for investment. She suggested putting \$15K from the CD into the money market account where it would be accessible and the reinvesting the \$40K balance after researching options and interest rates. Ron Niezgodski made a motion made to not renew the CD and follow Sinclair's of putting \$15K into the money market account and deciding what to do with the \$40,000 after looking at options. Jeff Reece supported the motion. After some discussion Niezgodski amended his motion to specify that the CD would not be renewed and all the funds would be transferred to the money market account until Sinclair reported back on options for reinvestment. Jeff Reece supported the amended motion. Motion passed

Old Business:

- **Board action via email: NONE Taken**
- **Sponsorship of the St. Joseph River Documentary:** Meersman shared one of the two Friends commercials that aired on the local PBS station WNIT. We received a total of 40 "spots" for the commercials as part of our sponsorship of the film. The Two Rivers Coalition will be showing the film as part of their annual meeting on December 1st at the Van Buren conference center. The film's producer and Meersman will be included in a panel discussion following the film.

New Business:

- **Watershed Leadership Scholarships:** Grace, Meersman and Reece met as a committee, and selected 2 people (Sarah Beam, City of South Bend MS4 Coordinator; Kayla Wright, Calhoun Conservation District Watershed Coordinator) to receive scholarships for the Watershed Leadership Academy hosted by Purdue University. The SJR Basin Commission also selected two individuals (Mattie Lehman, City of Goshen Stormwater Specialist; Steven Vaughn, LaGrange County Deputy Surveyor) to receive financial support for the Academy. However, it turns out Kayla Wright can use funds from their SAW grant to pay for her participation, so her scholarship will be offered to Donny Aleo who provides interpretive services for the Elkhart County Parks Department. Matt will reach out to Donny and provide an update at the next meeting.
- **Other Items:** Jeff Reece discussed the possibility of holding the Annual Watershed Celebration on Friday March 18th. The event could be held virtually or in-person. He will check with Sturges-Young Auditorium and get back with us. Discussion about what to do needs to take place soon. For now, save the date.

Other Announcements, Items from the Floor:

- **Neil and Kris** from the Lake Belair Association and Spicer Group discussed their plans for silt mitigation and/or a silt dam. They are trying to receive a permit from EGLE. They brought the information to the Friends for discussion, help, and/or guidance. Meersman gave some advice about grant support and project permits. It was apparent that it has been a frustrating process, and if it is possible, the Friends would like to support the Lake Association in their efforts to improve their lake provided it does not lead to degradation elsewhere in the watershed.
- **Melissa DeSimone:** Doug and Carolyn will be featured in the Riparian magazine. It is about the inventory of 210 miles of the St. Joseph River for invasives and mapping many other items. MLSA conference and MiCorps shared information about the conference. PFAS summit in December put on by EGLE. Stewardship network will be in the spring.
- **Eric Kerney:** Took a new position and will no longer be working with the NHBPI, but he would like to continue serving on the board of the Friends.
- **Carol Higgins:** Asked about potential opportunities resulting from new infrastructure funding. Meersman shared that an expanded view of water infrastructure could include two-stage ditches, floodwater storage areas, monitoring and sensing our watershed.
- **Grant Poole:** The Pokagon Band's re-meandering project on the Dowagiac River is expected to begin in 2022.

Motion to adjourn at 2:17pm by Reece and second by Sinclair. Motion passed. Zoom ended

Next Board Meeting: January 27th @ 1pm via zoom.