

Friends of the St. Joe River Association  
Board & Annual Membership Meeting  
March 25, 2021  
Minutes respectfully submitted by Carolyn Grace

Call to order by Matt Meersman 1:00 pm via zoom.

**Introduction:** Matt Meersman introduced himself and called on others to do the same.

**Board Members Present:** Matt Meersman, Daragh Deegan, Carolyn Grace, Carol Higgins, Eric Kerney, Ron Niezgodski, Jeff Reece, Kim Sinclair, Annie Klehfoth, Grant Poole and Danielle Meersman

**Others in attendance:** Becky Shank, Bing Johnson, Amie Wentworth, Jim Hess, Jordan Shedd, Lisa Harris, Jared Harmon, Roberta Colwell, Ryan Wheeler, Chris Temple, Doug McLaughlin, Josh Dickson, Melissa DeSimone, Pat Wiltshire, Kristi Todd and Bill Tefft

**Minutes:** Reece motioned to accept the board minutes from February with one change, Higgins second. Motion passed. The change was that Reece sent the letter of support in February for Pokagon Band, not Meersman.

**Treasurer Report:** Kim Sinclair explained she was closing the books for the year with \$68,702.46 in checking. At year end income of \$3,461.54 and an expense of \$1,173.60. We came out almost \$2K ahead of our budgeted net income due to COVID related cancelations. Niezgodski motioned to approve the treasurer's report as presented by Sinclair, Reece second. Motion passed

**Old Business:**

- **Board action:** No board action taken via email
- **Stewardship award:** After describing the purpose of the award, Meersman announced that a nominee was forthcoming and invited attendees to submit a nomination in the future. Next month the nomination will be sent to board via email. The presentation of the award will be discussed at the next meeting.

**New Business:**

- **Election of Directors** Meersman explained that Niezgodski confirmed that all directors whose terms are expiring were interested in serving again. Meersman asked for nominations from the floor three consecutive times with no response, nominations from the Floor were closed. The slate of directors up for reelection include Daragh Deegan, Carolyn Grace, Eric Kerney, and Danielle Meersman. These positions are a three year term. Kim Sinclair made a motion to accept the slate of existing directors as presented. Niezgodski seconded. Motion passed.

Meersman explained that there was a vacancy to be filled on the board. Donna Hunter stepped down and submitted a formal letter of resignation. Jordan Shedd was nominated by Grace to fill the vacant seat, Reece second, motion passed. Meersman congratulated and welcomed Shedd to the board. Her term will expire in 2022.

- **SJCCD GLRI Presentation:** Carolyn Grace from the St. Joseph County Conservation District and Doug McLaughlin, consultant, showed a power point about their data collection along the St. Joseph River. There were many questions and great discussion about this big project. Grace asked for financial support for the continuation of this project. Grant Poole asked for a write up

about the project. Meersman asked Grace to provide further information about data collection, materials needed to complete the project and data entry information. This summary will include the amount of money being requested for the completion of the project, and also how the materials will be used for the public to check out once the project has been done.

**Other Business & Announcements:**

- **Kristi Todd** at IDEM explained the grants available to IN for development of watershed management plans and implementation of watershed plans due June 1<sup>st</sup>. New acceptance of innovation grants up to \$50,000. But monitoring projects are not included.
- **Senate Bill 389**, which would repeal state wetland regulations in Indiana was introduced by Kristi Todd and further discussed by Meersman and others. A variety of possible amendments to the bill have been presented. All would avoid a full repeal, but many still include a lot of exemptions that would significantly reduce what is regulated. An amendment to change the bill to being about further studying the issue would be preferred by partners and stakeholders. There is much opposition to this bill, and many stakeholders have not been able to express how regulations with wetlands have been addressed. Groups should have been involved and they have not had a voice. A scheduling conflict will push the voting until April 5<sup>th</sup>. At the next meeting, an update will be provided.
- **Melissa DeSimone** announced that MiCorps program is back. Stream program grants were due in February, however, the 2021 lake monitoring will be open soon. The training for the cooperative lakes monitoring program is Thursday April 29<sup>th</sup>, a free training that sets you up for lake monitoring program grants. Also, on April 30<sup>th</sup> the Michigan Lakes and Streams conference will take place featuring Matt Meersman as a guest speaker. Check out the MLSA web page to sign up.
- **Becky Shank** reminded the group about the St. Joseph River documentary being developed by Patty Wisniewski and how it will address the value of wetlands. Jeff Reece suggested placing the sponsorship of the film on the agenda for next month.

**Adjournment:** Reece motioned to adjourn, and Niezgodski second. Meersman concluded meeting at 2:51pm

Next meeting April 22, 2021 on zoom.