

Friends of the St. Joe River Association
Board Meeting
April 22, 2021
Minutes respectfully submitted by Carolyn Grace

Call to order by Matt Meersman 1:01 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, Annie Klehfoth, Grant Poole, Jordan Shedd, John Law, and Danielle Meersman

Others in attendance: Becky Shank, Bing Johnson, Matt Diana, Amie Wentworth, Jan McGowen, Jim Hess, Lisa Harris, Kristi Todd, Kate Barrett, Chris Temple, Doug McLaughlin, and Pat Wiltshire

Minutes: Jordan Shedd motioned to accept the board minutes from March, Niezgodski second. Motion passed.

Treasurer Report: Kim Sinclair sent the financials to the board via email. Matt Meersman reported that there are currently \$69,000 in net assets. Jeff Reece motioned to approve the treasurer's report from Sinclair, Grace second. Motion passed

Old Business:

- **Board action:** Request to sign on to coalition letter for Senate 389 Bill. Our organization was added to a list of 90 other names currently on the letter.
- **Stewardship award:** After describing the purpose of the award, Meersman announced that a nomination was received. The nomination was shared with the board via email. Meersman said the presentation of the award could coincide with a watershed meeting or an event connected to the release of the documentary about the St. Joseph River. Daragh suggested potentially presenting the award at an event associated with the nominee. Discussion was had, but the nominee's name was not revealed.

New Business:

- **Election of officers:** The existing officers agreed to serve again resulting in a slate of officers including Matt Meersman as President, Jeff Reece as Vice President, Carolyn Grace as Secretary, and Kim Sinclair as Treasurer. Motion made by Ron to accept the slate and Danielle Meersman second the motion. Motion Passed
- **GLRI project funding:** Carolyn Grace and Doug McLaughlin provided additional information regarding their funding request from the last meeting. Two levels were presented and discussed. Grace explained that this would be an amazing project for the friends to take ownership of and be able to share with the community. Discussion resulted in the formation a committee to review and discuss the project further. The small committee will include Meersman, Deegan, Poole, Kerney, Grace and Niezgodski. At the next meeting funding will be discussed once again. Grace thanked the board for listening, and getting excited about the variety of possibilities at completing this project and supporting at any level. Meersman was excited to have the public look at all the data available and be able to use this data for their own

projects and grants and just for education. Grace will continue to search for grant to support this project. Niezgodski asked to table until next meeting, Deegan second and motion passed.

- **Sponsorship of the St. Joseph River documentary:** Meersman reviewed the sponsorship levels offered by WNIT in the “Gold level” support, which includes our name read aloud at the end of the movie along with our logo and tag line. Reece indicated there could be many benefits from this movie, the DVD’s and our official connection to it. Meersman agreed that the group should be connected to the film and supported the “Gold level” of sponsorship at \$5,000.00. A motion was made to sponsor at the Gold level by Reece, and second by Niezgodski. Motion carried.
- **Senate Bill 389:** Although not in its original form, but still damaging, the bill to remove state wetland protections in Indiana was passed by the legislature. Meersman reported that a letter asking the Governor to veto the bill was being circulated that we could sign on to. The letter also asks the Governor to create a task force to study the issue. Motion made by Reece to add our name to the letter being sent to the Governor, second by Niezgodski. Motion passed.

Other Business & Announcements:

- **Becky Shank:** Shared concerns about a solar project in Fabius Township.
- **Matt Diana:** Angler reported a grass carp with eggs in the lower St. Joseph River. A monitoring plan is in the works, because the DNR is concerned that there have been eggs found. It is a type of Asian carp, but not the big head variety that has caused so much concern. They are trying to be very careful about the media reporting on this to avoid too much alarm.
- **Kristi Todd; Grant season open** for 319 grants. Develop and rewrite management plans. Also innovation grant. Grace will discuss with Todd about potential projects. Data collection will be investigated. Deegan asked about funding for the Elkhart River management plan grant, and Todd reported that it has been approved.
- **River Basin Symposium:** Meersman announced that the 21st Annual Symposium would be hosted by the St. Joseph River Basin Commission on Friday, May 14th. The event will be held virtually again with Daragh Deegan and Marcy Hamilton speaking about dam removal projects.

Adjournment: Danielle Meersman motioned to adjourn, and Deegan second. Meersman concluded meeting at 2:27pm

Next meeting May 27, 2021 on zoom.