

Friends of the St. Joseph River Annual Membership Meeting.  
March 28, 2024  
Board Minutes: Submitted by Carolyn Grace

1:00 pm Call to Order by Matt Meersman via Zoom

**Board Members Present:**

Matt Meersman, Jeff Reece, Kim Sinclair, Grant Poole, Carolyn Grace, Ron Niezgodski, Eric Kerney, Annie Klehfoth, Daragh Deegan, Jeff Wenzel, Grant Poole, Doug McLaughlin, Chris Temple, and Jordan Shedd.

**Watershed Council and Others Present;** Amiee Wentworth, Matt Diana, Pat Wiltshire

**Minutes:**

Jeff Reece motioned to accept the February board minutes, Jeff Wenzel second. Motion passed.

**Treasurer's Report:** Meersman shared the statements on his screen and Sinclair explained them to everyone present. She stated that the Balance Sheet is close to the year end financial statement with a small plus or minus. Total assets are \$58,378.89.

Motion to adopt the treasurer report by Ron Niezgodski second by Jordan Shedd. Motion passed.

**Old Business:**

- **Board action via email:** None
- **Updates on Insurance:** Chris Temple explained the insurance estimate he received and shared with the Board. The insurance company could not recommend what coverages we need but in general refer to March 9<sup>th</sup> email that Temple sent to the board. The first \$650 is the premium for general liability and the premium for Directors and Officers is \$671 for a total of \$1321. The general liability would cover our events like the Celebration and trash pickups. The Directors and Officers policy would protect Board members from liability for decisions they make. A long discussion was had by the board about paying for the entire premium, concerns about the cost and other ways to protect the board. Temple and others expressed a desire to make it feel safer for new individuals to join the Board. Sinclair made a motion to approve Temple to secure the general liability and D&O insurance policies from Aliant at the cost of 1321 to and at the end of year review the need to continue the policies. Second by McLaughlin. Niezgodski voted NO, but everyone else voted to approve. Meersman asked if a roll call vote should be taken, but everyone agreed it wasn't necessary. The motion passed. Temple will move forward as the primary point of contact person with the insurance company.
- **Watershed Celebration: May 10, 2024 Covered Bridge Farm Park.** The St. Joseph River Basin Symposium will also be held earlier in the day at the same place. A link to register

will be uploaded to the webpage as soon as possible. Catering options and speaker are still being explored.

### **New Business**

- **Election of New Directors** Meersman and Niezgodski explained that all five of the Directors with expiring terms (Deegan, C. Grace, Kerney, D. Meersman, Wenzel) said they would be willing to serve another 3 year term. They proposed a slate of Directors with those five individuals. The floor was then opened to accept new nominations for the Board of Directors. There were none given. Meersman asked for nominations three times. None given. He closed the nominations. Motion by Kim Sinclair to accept the slate of Directors presented. Second by Doug McLaughlin. Motion passed.
- **2023 Watershed Stewardship Award:** Need nominations for deserving candidates. Get your name to Matt ASAP!
- **Presentation: Dowagiac River Longitudinal Survey:** Grant Poole and Doug McLaughlin presented information from the river survey completed in 2023. Doug presented a story map he designed and created and Grant explained the DNR project on the Dowagiac River. The funding came from the GLRI. A 360 degree camera, and other water quality monitors were purchased to complete the project. The main objective was to collect data to help assess and protect the riparian corridor, water quality and biodiversity along the river. Habitat assessments completed along the way provided a great deal of data to be added to the online Earth views platform. The FotSJR, Pokagon Band DNR and SJCD, will host links on their web pages this project. The story map and Earth Views platform access will go live soon. **Thank you Grant and Doug for your work on this exciting project!**
- **Other Business:** Several Board members discussed the proposed State of Michigan Budget changes to the Conservation Districts. 1/3 of the funding will be decreased and the MAEAP has also been proposed to be removed from CD's and moved to a state agency. There was interest in rallying the governor, state reps and others to vote No on this proposed change to the budget. Meersman suggested that a letter from the Friends could be crafted and used by others as an example for engagement. Deegan motioned to write a letter of opposition to the changes to the MAEAP program and CD budget items. Shedd second. Motion passed.

**Other Announcements, Items from the Floor:** none

**Adjournment at 2:50pm**

**Next Board Meeting: April 25, 2024 at 1pm via zoom.**

