

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday June 28, 2018 – 12:00 Noon
Par Gil Natural Resources Learning Center, LaGrange, IN
Hosted by; LaGrange Co. Soil & Water Conservation District

IN ATTENDANCE:

Directors: Carol Grace, Dona Hunter, Eric Kerney, John Law, Danielle Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Grant Poole

Watershed Council: Matt Meersman, SJRBC; Jessica Faust, IDEM; Janel Meyer, Steuben Co. SWCD; Martin Franke, LaGrange Co. SWCD

Visitors: Nicholas Miller, Pokagon Band; Bob Jones, Member; Patrick Wiltshire, Member; Howard Avildsen, SJCCD Michigan; Roey Marcon, LaGrange Co. SWCD; Lauren Malcolm, LaGrange Co. SWCD

CALL TO ORDER:

In the absence of President Jeff Reece, Ron Niezgodski called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m., welcomed everyone and asked for introductions. After lunch provided by the LaGrange Co. SWCD, introductions were asked for again for the benefit of those who arrived late.

MINUTES of the May 24, 2018 meeting were reviewed. John Law moved to accept the minutes as printed; Danielle Meersman seconded the motion. **Motion carried.**

TREASURER’S REPORT – Treasurer Kim Sinclair was not able to attend the meeting but had sent the financial report for June. Total Liabilities & Equity of \$67,646.95 was reported on the balance sheet. The Profit & Loss YTD Comparison showed a net income for the month of \$.19 with YTD of \$297.72. Carol Grace made a motion to accept the presented Treasurer’s Report; seconded by John Law; **motion carried.**

OLD BUSINESS:

2018 Meeting Schedule/Locations

The following is a list of scheduled meetings for the remainder of 2018. Since it was agreed to try and hold meetings at various locations across the watershed, if anyone is interested in hosting a meeting, please let the directors know at upcoming scheduled meetings.

- July – No meeting scheduled
- August 23, 2018 – Kim Sinclair will host the meeting in Paw Paw, Michigan at the Paw Paw Township Hall with a presentation on invasive species. More information to follow.

- September 27, 2018 – Three Rivers, Michigan Library (Unless another location is determined)
- October 25, 2018 – Grant Poole volunteered to put together a meeting for October. Details will be provided later.
- November & December – No meeting scheduled

Janel Meyer with Steuben Co. SWCD volunteered to host a meeting at Fremont, Indiana at the Library in the spring of 2019. Martin Franke also stated that the LaGrange Co. SWCD will host at least one meeting a year at Par Gil. Jessica Faust with IDEM was asked if it was hard for her to attend the meetings out of state. She stated it depended on her schedule and availability.

NEWSLETTER

Dona Hunter had agreed at the last meeting to try and get some costs for the printing of a newsletter. So far she had received information from one printer, but was waiting on information from two others. There are still several questions that need to be answered before any kind of definite decisions can be made about having a newsletter printed and distributed. Questions included:

- Who was going to be responsible for assembling the newsletter in copy ready format for a selected printer? Tara Lee, Steuben Co. SWCD, expressed interest in helping, but she is off on sick leave until sometime in September. Matt Meersman mentioned that Patty with Keiser and Associates had expressed an interest in helping with a newsletter. Also Matt mentioned that Lisa Phillips is also interested in assisting. He will get that information to Dona. Carol Higgens had expressed interest in assisting during last month's meeting.
- Eric Kerney asked if the old Adobe format newsletters are still available?
- What is the purpose of the newsletter, who should be the target audience, what types of articles should be included? Who will generate the articles?

Dona agreed to take the lead on a committee to look into these questions and come up with a plan. Grant Poole and Eric Kerney volunteered to be a part of the committee. Dona will contact Carol Higgens to see if she would be willing to help. The committee could meet before or after regular schedule board meetings and there might be a way to communicate through email also.

NEW BUSINESS:

MIDDLEBURY RIVERFEST BOOTH

Matt had received information on the Middlebury Riverfest along with an invitation to set up a booth. The Riverfest is Saturday, August 25, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Daragh Deegan will be conducting a fish shocking demonstration, which is a very popular event for youth and adult alike. There is a FotSJ display which can be set up. Matt and Danielle have it. Last year Bob Jones set up and manned the

display along with an Envirothon watershed display that the LaGrange Co. SWCD has. If someone is available and interested contact Matt and he will make arrangements to get the display to that individual.

Other Business:

Matt had received a letter send to the Friends post office box concerning a “toxic sludge” issue on the river south and east of Schoolcraft, Michigan in St. Joseph County. There is a large cattle farm in the area near this location that spreads a lot of manure. The individual who wrote the letter had been in contact with DEQ requesting an update on this farming operation, but never received any follow-up information. Carol Grace has talked with the landowner who is in fact one of her neighbors. They have been fined in the past. They just pay the fine and continue the same spreading practices. Howard Avildsen with the conservation district says that Carol has built a good relationship with the farmers in the county and has to be very careful not to breakdown that trust by aggressively dealing with one landowner. DEQ right now does not have the manpower to follow up closely with all complaints. These types of complaints are usually directed to MDARD.

Grant Poole volunteered to look into it and report back at the next meeting. Grant said they should have a manure spreading plan with DEQ which they are supposed to be following. Grant also stated that as a representative of the Pokagon Tribe they can contact EPA directly and encourage someone to look into it. John Law made a motion to officially have Grant contact the proper authorities to see if he can get some answers. Danielle Meersman seconded the motion; motion carried.

Water testing, especially E coli testing, in this area was also discussed. Not much sampling is being done. Both Grant and Eric Kerney do some testing and there are a few volunteer groups doing some testing. The State of Michigan tests on a rotational basis every 5 years.

Next meeting will be on Thursday, August 23, 2018, at 1:00 p.m. – Paw Paw, Michigan at the Paw Paw Township Hall.

Adjournment: Danielle Meersman moved to adjourn; Dona Hunter seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Minutes recorded by Dona Hunter, Secretary