

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, October 25, 2018 – 1:00 p.m.**  
**Pokagon Band Community Center – Dowagiac, MI**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

**Directors:** Bill Courliss, Daragh Deegan, Carolyn Grace, Carol Higgins, Grant Poole, Jeff Reece, Dona Hunter

**Watershed Council Members:** Matt Meersman, Roey Marcon

**Visitors:** Kyle Boone, Pokagon Band; Joshua Schwalm, Public Works; Nancy Carpenter, Berrien CD; Jared Harman, Berrien/St. Joseph Co. CD/SMIS & CISMA; Patty Hoch-Melluish, Keiser & Associates

**CALL TO ORDER:**

President Jeff Reece called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. He thanked Grant Poole for setting up the meeting at their beautiful facility. Jeff then asked for introductions.

**MINUTES** of the September 2018 were reviewed. Dona noted and apologized for the misspelling of Carol Higgins last name. It was spelled Higgens in the minutes. With that correction Carol Higgins made a motion to accept the minutes as amended; Grant Poole seconded the motion. **Motion carried.**

**TREASURER'S REPORT** as of October 25, 2018 had been submitted electronically by Kim Sinclair. She was not able to make the meeting. The Total Liabilities & Equity was \$67,407.59. There was very little change from last month. Jeff Reece stated that the membership to River Network and the renewal fee for Wild Apricot were included in the budget and would be paid. He was going to check with Kim and Danielle to see if a donation had been made to the Three Rivers Community Center for use of the room for the last meeting. Carol Higgins asked about the CD that is coming due on December 23, 2018. She noted that there will be no meeting if December if any action needs to be taken. There is no need to make any changes, as long as it will automatically roll over. Bill Courliss made a motion to accept the financial report as presented; Daragh Deegan seconded the motion. **Motion carried.**

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**STRATEGIC PLANNING – NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE UPDATE** – The newsletter committee, made up to Carol Higgins, Grant Poole, and Dona Hunter, along with Jeff Reece met before the meeting. Eric Kerney was not able to make the meeting. Dona had talked with Tara Lee with Steuben Co. SWCD and she will not be able to help with formatting the newsletter due to a heavy work load in the local office. Dona has been trying to follow-up with Nathan with Spartan Printing, but has not heard back from him. She will continue to reach out to him. Patty Hoch-Melluish with Keiser and Associates is willing to provide assistance with formatting and will be getting a quote to Dona soon. It was still determined to print 500 copies and mail approximately 100 to members that we have a mailing address for. The remainder will be distributed to conservation districts for their use. Jeff reported there

are 236 contacts in the data base and those with just email addresses will receive an electronic version of the completed newsletter. A target time to print would be early January 2019 in order to promote the watershed celebration, but that will depend on getting articles to insert. Bill Courliss asked where to send information. Jeff Reece said to submit them to him. The newsletter committee will be sending an email request to approve funding, once final quotes are received. Also discussed was asking for donations to help fund a portion of the newsletter. Dona will contact Pheasants Forever in LaGrange, as they have donated in the past. Jeff Reece will find out who to contact with AEP as they have donated toward the annual watershed celebration in the past.

Grant Poole will look into setting up social media accounts in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. by the January meeting.

Just remember – anyone having articles to submit – send them to Jeff Reece.

**ADDITIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING** – Carol Higgins had two ideas for promoting FotSJR and she has volunteered to work on both ideas. She will begin work on compiling a list of newspapers in the watershed in order to submit at least 3 news releases a year announcing activities in the watershed, including the Annual Watershed Celebration. She will work with the local conservation districts to get this information. This will be a good way to reach a large number of people across the entire watershed with no financial outlay.

The second idea is to promote a “Watershed Action Day/Week” across the watershed during the last week of April or the first week of May. There is a National River Clean Up Day scheduled for May 18, 2019. It would be beneficial to have a proclamation of the celebration through the governors or congressional representatives to make it official. One thing to do would be reaching out to conservation districts and encouraging them to spearhead a river clean up or event with FotSJR helping to promote and assist in some way. Bill Courliss suggested a week rather than a day giving groups more flexibility to plan and hold events. Bill talked about a recreational awareness activity they do with middle schoolers through Community Unlimited funded through the Union Lake Association. They take them out on the river in canoes and talk about the river and the opportunities for fun activities. Carol will work more on this idea and have something to present at the next meeting in January.

**MARCH 2019 12<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL WATERSHED CELEBRATION** – Jeff Reece has been in contact with Sturges-Young Auditorium, but has not confirmed the date. He should be able to do that this week. A speaker for the event was discussed including invasive species and report from Notre Dame on Juday Creek. It was agreed that there has been a lot of information sharing through CISMA and maybe another topic would be more beneficial. Nancy Carpenter suggested a presentation on fish/birds of prey/raptors in the watershed. Jeff Reece has worked with IN Raptors Central out of Nashville, Indiana who actually have birds of prey as a part of their presentation and talk about them. This program could be very easily tied in with the improvement of water quality in the watershed. Carolyn Grace also has worked with Amy Pico with Milton Raptor Center, Union, Michigan. They usually request a \$250 donation for their program. Daragh Deegan mentioned that the purpose of the watershed celebration

was to bring members together, but why not make this a family event on a Saturday with a brunch. This was a great idea, but maybe for another event sponsored by FotSJR in the summer. Everyone was interested in pursuing the raptor presentation, so Jeff will check with Sturges-Young Auditorium to make sure they would allow this in the facility and then both Jeff and Carolyn will check with the two raptor groups. Jeff Reece will also check on moving the date from March 15 to March 22, 2019. Matt Meersman who has agreed to be emcee has a conflict on March 15. Dona reported that the audio equipment would be available from the LaGrange Co. SWCD to use for the event.

**2019 MEETINGS** – Jeff Reece reported that the meeting dates for 2019 have been confirmed with the Three Rivers Library. They have his contact information if any changes are necessary. One date that needed to be added was the Annual Membership Meeting on March 28, 2019. Five board members will be up for re-election or replacement at that time. There will be no meetings in November or December of 2018.

- **The 2019 Meeting schedule dates are as follows:** January 24, 2019; February 28, 2019; March 15 or 22, 2019 (tentative dates for Annual Watershed Celebration); April 25, 2019; May 23, 2019; June 27, 2019 (tentative location Par Gil NRLC in LaGrange County); July 2019 no meeting; August 22, 2019; September 26, 2019; October 24, 2019; No meetings in November or December. Steuben County has offered to host a meeting in their area sometime in 2019. Unless other locations are determined meetings will be held at the Library in Three Rivers.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

- Jeff Reece will be having knee surgery in December and will not be available to chair the January or February meetings. The Vice-Chairman Daragh Deegan will be unavailable also. Jeff will check with Ron Niezgodski to see if he would be available. If not Dona Hunter, Secretary or Kim Sinclair, Treasurer can handle the meetings.
- Jeff Reece also reported that a letter will be mailed today to the individual who sent information to FotSJR about the pollution concerns on the river from Three Rivers to Mendon. Jeff updated him on the contacts that have been made concerning the problem and that follow-up will continue.
- **LEADERSHIP ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIP** – Matt Meersman reported that there were 6 applications for the scholarship with 4 exceptional ones. Two of the four are from Indiana and two are from Michigan. St. Joseph River Basin Commission currently sponsors one scholarship for the Leadership Academy co-sponsored by Purdue University. Matt stated that at the Basin Commission meeting in December he is going to ask them to fund two scholarships instead of one. Matt asked if Friends of the St. Joe would be willing to sponsor the other two. Cost for one scholarship is \$750. Comments made were as follows: Good program; good opportunity; Grant Poole has a watershed certificate through Michigan State program; benefit outweighs the cost; question raised about funding partial scholarship; ask for volunteer assistance from those who are sponsored; good investment in the youth. Matt stated that each person who completes the program has to complete a project that will benefit the mission of this organization. Bill Courliss

made a motion to support two scholarships at the amount of \$1,500; Carolyn Grace seconded the motion. After some additional discussion, including requesting a report back from the individual(s) who received the scholarship an amended motion was submitted. The amended motion was made by Bill Courliss to support up to two scholarships to match what the Basin Commission funds; motion seconded by Daragh Deegan; **Amended Motion carried.**

**NEW BUSINESS:** Grant Poole had the equipment set up to screen the PBS Documentary produced out of Detroit about the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi and Water. “The Seventh Generation River” showed some of the history of the Pokagon Band and how important water was to them in the past and in the present day. It was a 30 minute video showing an excellent overview of what they are trying to accomplish to protect and improve water quality. Grant wanted the board to see it with the idea that sometime FotSJR might want to work with PBS to share watershed information with the public.

**Next meeting will be January 24, 2019 at the Three Rivers Public Library beginning at 1:00 p.m.**

**Adjournment:** Bill Courliss made a motion to adjourn; Daragh Deegan seconded the motion; **motion carried.**