

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, December 17, 2015—1:00 PM
Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

Directors: Melanie Stoughton, Bob Jones, Ron Niezgodski, Ray Leising, Matt Meersman, Danielle Meersman, Jim Coury, Jeff Wenzel

Watershed Council: Kathy Worst, Branch CD

Visitors: Patty Hoch-Melluish MDEQ , Reynaldo Hernandez, South Bend League of Women's Voters

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and called for introductions.

Minutes of the November 2015 board meeting were reviewed to approve. Matt Meersman noted that a correction under the annual meeting planning section needed to be made to change Texas to Florida for where Don Stohler will be in the winter. Melanie noted a correction to the director attendee list to remove Bob Jones' repeated name. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ray Leising, and seconded by Bob Jones. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report was presented by Danielle Meersman. Danielle noted that the Nottawaseppi Band of Potawatomi Indians paid \$100 for a business membership in December. As of December 17th, net income was \$372, with total liabilities and equity at \$60,399.94. A motion to approve the treasurer's report was made by Bob Jones, and seconded by Ron Niezgodski. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Regional Conservation Partnership Project Update—Matt reported that he has met with NRCS from both Michigan and Indiana regarding wetland restorations, and ranking for RCPP. Matt noted that the LLFWA was used to help identify high priority areas for wetland restorations, which in turn added two new ranking questions for applicants in this program. Matt also noted that the ranking also took into consideration status and trends over the past years regarding drainage loss, giving higher point values to projects that would restore wetlands in areas with greater historic loss. Patty Hoch-Melluish asked Matt if the LLFWA information and GIS data was available online. Matt reported that he did not believe there was online access to the information. Kathy Worst announced that there was information on the Branch CD about the watershed management plans that included data from the LLFWA.

Annual Meeting Planning— Matt briefly summarized the progress on the Annual Meeting that was also discussed at the November board meeting. Matt discussed the keynote topic of hydrologic alterations, and methods to restore hydrology via drainage practices (i.e. two stage ditches, culvert improvements, etc.). The talk will be based on what we can do to restore drainage to reduce flooding. Bob Jones reported that he spoke with Jon Senecal regarding the donation of a kayak for the auction. Bob noted that John offered to sell us a kayak at a deeply reduced price for the annual meeting auction. Matt asked Bob to look into whether John would allow the kayak to be sold on consignment like the previous owners of Fluid Fun had done. Jeff Wenzel asked the group whether it would be a good idea to have larger auction items be raffled off instead of being auctioned off. Discussion regarding the positives and

negatives to this idea ensued. Matt noted that more information would be gathered before the January board meeting, and further discussed at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

St. Joseph River Basin Commission Projects— Matt reported that Jeremy Reiman was originally planning to attend the December meeting to discuss the project in the Cobus Creek Watershed. The first steering committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 6th at 2 pm--possibly at the Elkhart Conservation Club, and that anyone interested is invited to attend. Ron noted that the group has worked on finding funding to allow for work to be completed within the Michigan portion of the watershed, and that the total amount needed may be reduced to \$2000. Matt updated the group on the request for MDEQ to add sampling points along Cobus Creek, and that he submitted a request on behalf of FotSJR. Matt provided information regarding a second project that the SJRBC is working on in the Elkhart River Watershed regarding widespread flooding. Jim Coury asked if Indiana had worked with NRCS to complete a floodplain study. A consortium named the "Silver Jackets" formed to work on the project, which included USGS and ACoE, among other agencies.

OTHER

- Reynaldo Hernandez raised the question on fracking in Michigan. Matt Meersman noted that he did not have up to date information on the issue, but that the Two Rivers Coalition had a couple of speakers on the topic speak at their annual meeting a few years ago.
- Matt Meersman announced that Don Stohler from Cristiana Creek Coalition (CCC) contacted him regarding the FotSJR being a fiduciary for them if their application for 501c3 status is not approved. The CCC is considering approaching a local business about a large donation and would like a non-profit to accept the funds on their behalf. Discussion regarding past requests from other organizations, and the legal liabilities ensued. Jim Coury suggested speaking with a community foundation about the logistics for FotSJR to take on this responsibility.
- Jim Coury announced EPA's Natural Resources Damage Assessment came out for the Kalamazoo River oil spill, noting that the Nottawaseppi Band was named one of the trustees for the funds.
- Kathy Worst announced that the Branch CD will be holding a strategic planning meeting on January 19th for the Branch CD's Five Year Plan. Kathy also noted that their annual meeting is February 27th at the Branch Area Career Center with bee health being the keynote topic. Kathy noted that the DNR is looking for large portions of land to purchase for state game areas. Lastly, Kathy reported that the Branch CD completed 38 acres of prescribed burning in December—a record for their CD for this time of year.
- Bob Jones passed out 2016 calendars that include the LaGrange SWCD Annual Report. Bob noted that the calendar highlights the partnership between their SWCD and FotSJR.

Motion to Adjourn at 2:10 pm was made by Jeff Wenzel, seconded by Bob Jones.

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting scheduled for Thursday January 28, 2015 at 1:00 p.m. at Three Rivers Public Library.