

Friends of the St. Joseph River
Board meeting held via Zoom, January 18, 2024
Respectfully submitted by Carolyn Grace with the help of Chris Temple

Meeting Started by Matt Meersman at 1pm

Board Members Present: Carolyn Grace, Shaun Grace, Annie Klehfoth, Doug MacLaughlin, Matt Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Jeff Reece, and Chris Temple

Watershed Council & Others Present: Kate Barrett, Matt Diana, Lisa Harris, Matt MacLaughlin, Jan McGowan, Jessica Merklng, Aimee Wentworth, and Brian Will

Minutes: Niezgodski motioned to accept the minutes from the board meeting on December 14th, seconded by S. Grace. Motion passed.

Treasurer Report: Kim Sinclair was absent, and Doug MacLaughlin motioned to table until next month, Temple seconded, motion passed.

Old Business

- **Board Action taken via email:** None
- **Insurance:** Chris Temple gave a brief update about needing an ad hoc subcommittee to complete the paperwork to get an insurance quote. Alliant which is a national corporation that insures a lot of organizations similar to the Friends. Alliant's "Conserve-A-Nation" Insurance Program was established in 1994, and Temple shared the url at the meeting - <https://alliant.com/risk-management/risk-solutions/conserves-a-nation/> . Temple, D. Meersman, M. Meersman, and R. Niezgodski volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. There was a good discussion, and the subcommittee will proceed with submitting the information and checking back with the group next month.
- **Watershed Celebration:** Matt discussed planning for the Friends watershed celebration in combination with the St. Joseph River Basin Commission's Symposium on May 10, 2024, at the covered Bridge Farm Park. Niezgodski motioned to authorize C. Grace to make the reservation and submit the deposit for the park. MacLaughlin seconded. Motion passed. A short discussion about recouping some of the expenses with a silent auction and increasing the admission charge. However, nothing was decided.

New Business

- **NIPSCO:** Kate Barrett explained to the board and visitors about the opportunity to apply for a grant from NIPSCO to support an AmeriCops member and research on the Bowman Creek watershed. She needs a non-profit to apply for the grant and thinks the St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District (SJCSWCD) will be able to do it. She asked, just in case the SJCSWCD falls through, would the Friends be willing to serve as the fiduciary for the grant she is applying for. Niezgodski made a motion to serve as fiduciary for the NIPSCO grant if needed. C. Grace second and motion passed. Also, the board agreed to write a support letter if Barrett needs one.

Other Items for Discussion

- Matt MacLaughlin from the IN Toll Road, and IWLA scholarship recipient, addressed the board in appreciation for the scholarship. He asked how he could help our group and the response was that by attending we hope that any recipient would further their knowledge and provide extra

growth in their own field. There was general agreement and hope that he would share his experience after he completes the academy. Given Matt MacLaughlin's position on the Indiana Toll Road, Meersman suggested that one possible project for consideration would be signage that heightens the awareness of watersheds crossed by Indiana Toll Road and their connection to the St. Joseph River and Lake Michigan.

- Matt Diana from the DNR of Michigan left information for Matt Meersman to share about the Prairie River fish survey to be conducted due to the redesignation of the river's temperature status in Michigan. If the DNR finds strong enough evidence, the state could make changes related to water withdrawal permitting. Also, Meersman shared information about the stocking of Walleye in Long and Palmer Lakes near Colon, MI. Other lakes received fish as well.
- C. Grace asked Chris Temple if he could please record the February Minutes as she will be on vacation at that time. Temple agreed and Grace thanked him.
- Doug MacLaughlin explained he had authored several FaceBook posts during the year, however, this one particular post caught a lot of attention. The Kalamazoo Watershed Council posted information about the watershed and several people liked or commented about the post.

Motion to adjourn 2:27 pm by Doug MacLaughlin, seconded by R. Niezgodski. Motion carried.

Next Friends meeting, via ZOOM, February 22, 2024, from 1-3 pm