

Friends of the St. Joseph River
Board meeting, January 26, 2023
Via zoom
Respectfully submitted by Carolyn Grace

Meeting Started by Matt Meersman at 1:00 pm

Board Present: Daragh Deegan, Matt Meersman, Chris Temple, Carolyn Grace, Ron Niezgodski, Grant Poole, Jeff Reece, Kim Sinclair, Eric Kerney, Annie Klehfoth and Carol Higgins

Visitors Present: Doug McLaughlin, Lisa Harris, Aimee Wentworth, Bob Jones, Jennifer Kanine, Matt Hanauer

Minutes: Jeff Reece motioned to accept the November board minutes, Second by Ron Niezgodski. Motion passed.

Treasurer Report: Kim Sinclair, reviewed the numbers from the profit and loss and balance sheet statements while Matt shared them on the screen. Currently the Friends have \$56,537.72 in the bank with \$50,000 of it invested in a CD. Grace made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report, Chris Temple second, motion passed.

Old Business

No action taken via email

Watershed Collaborative Event Friday May 12, 2023

Several board members discussed locations and guest speakers for the combination of the River Basin Symposium and the Friend Watershed Celebration, and to date the Pinhook Community Center in South Bend seems to be the best option to hold our meetings. A few other details need to be worked out, however the discussion will continue next month.

New Business

Watershed Stewardship Award

Matt asked for people to go online and nominate a person for the award. He apologized to Grant Poole and the Pokagon Band for not getting the traveling trophy to him for display as tribal council member Andy Jackson won the award last year. The award will be presented at the Watershed Celebration.

Meeting Schedule for 2023:

February 23rd will be via zoom

March 23rd Elections place TBD

April 27th place TBD

May 25th place TBD

June 22nd Elkhart Environmental Center

July TBD possibly cancelled

Aug 24th Conservation Park

Sept 28th TBD

Oct 26th TBD

Board members will be checking on other locations and reporting back next month

Other Items for Discussion

Grant discussed the Phase II of the Dowagiac River Meandering project. He asked for a letter of support from the Friends. Kim Sinclair motioned to write a letter of support for the additional meandering project of the river. Grace second. Motion passed. Matt will draft/send the support letter.

Sinclair would like Grant to look into having a Friends meeting in the fall at the Pokagon Band's community center.

Higgins brought up concern about PFAS in the watershed and the MDNR's potential change to the Prairie River's temperature designation. Other members joined in the discussion and Poole reported that mercury may have more dangerous levels than PFAS. There is a PFAS response team and it can be googled for further information.

Grace addressed the possible changes by the DNR to the Prairie River's temperature designation and will send out any information she has about these changes. The DNR will vote late February on this issue.

Bob Jones shared that Kendallville was in the news for the Kraft factory discharging untreated water into the Bixler Lake which connects to the N. Branch of the Elkhart. Check the local newspaper for details.

Meersman shared that there are several bills coming up in the Indiana General Assembly worth paying attention to. One in particular would repeal the use of the best available data for local flood plain regulation. He recommended and shared a link to an article in the Indiana Environmental Reporter for further details.

Motion to adjourn was made by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Jeff Reece.

Next Friends meeting will be via zoom on February 23rd at 1pm