

Friends of the St. Joseph River
Board Minutes: February 25, 2021
Submitted by Carolyn Grace

Call to Order by Matt Meersman at 1:01 pm via Zoom

Directors Present:

Jeff Reece, Matt Meersman, Daragh Deegan, Jeff Wenzel, Carol Higgins, Danielle Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Eric Kerney

Others in attendance:

Becky Shank, Bob Jones, Nancy Carpenter, Pete Kelly, Jordan Shedd, Kate Barrett, Kristi Todd, Matt Diana, Lisa Harris, Patrick Wiltshire, Barb Carmichael, Jan McGowen,

Approval of January Board Minutes: One change regarding the date for the watershed celebration from March 18 to March 19, 2021. Reece motioned to accept with change, Higgins second. Motion approved

Treasurers Reports: Sinclair absent; Matt Meersman noted \$1K donation from the Evergreen Foundation; Treasurer Report tabled until March Meeting

Board action taken between meetings via Email: One letter of support to Pokagon Band of Potawatomi on Feb 5, 2021. The letter was approved by the board and Meersman sent the letter supporting their GLRI grant request for the Dowagiac River meander restoration project.

Old Business:

- **Watershed Celebration:** Danielle Meersman motioned to cancel the March 19th celebration. Niezgodski second and motion approved.
- **March 25th meeting via zoom:** The March 25, 2021 meeting will be held via zoom and will serve as the Annual Membership Meeting where Directors are elected. The nomination committee contacted the five people up for re-election, all expressed an interest in serving another term. Matt Meersman had a conversation with Dona Hunter about resigning in order to allow Jordan Shedd to serve on the board. Reece will ask Hunter for a formal letter of resignation to make room for Jordan Shedd.
- **Stewardship Award:** Matt Meersman said Kim Sinclair has a person to nominate and it will be revealed only to the board and then announced at the March meeting.

New Business

- **Letter of support:** The Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi has asked for another letter of support through the Great Lakes Fishery Trust to restore habitat along the Dowagiac River. This would be complementary to the GLRI grant. Niezgodski motion to send the letter and Wenzel supported. Motion passed
- **Wetlands:** A motion to send a letter opposing Senate Bill 389, which would repeal Indiana's state wetland regulation, was approved last month. Matt Meersman said the

bill was waiting to be assigned to a committee in the House and he would send the letter to the appropriate committee members if/when it is assigned. A discussion was held by several attendees regarding the bill and the need for wetland protection. Several board members and other meeting attendees had already submitted letters and comments regarding the bill.

Announcements:

- **Middlebury Riverfest:** The Town of Middlebury will be holding their annual festival celebrating the Little Elkhart River on Aug 28, 2021. This year it will be held in conjunction with the St. Joseph River documentary that is being developed by the local PBS station WNIT. The organizer, Tom Enright invites the Friends to participate.
- **NIPSCO Grant:** A grant opportunity for \$500-\$5,000 for projects in IN was announced by Matt Meersman and Kristi Todd. Check out this grant opportunity due April 2nd for money to support a variety of water quality, education and land management projects.
- **Documentary Sponsorship:** Jeff Reece announced that the Friends were invited to be a sponsor for the new PBS movie, however any level of support would be welcome.
- **Goose Control:** An urban geese task force is being formed in Elkhart. Daragh welcomed ideas of how to help control, reduce and or eliminate some of their population. Several suggestions were shared and others can be sent to Daragh at the City of Elkhart.
- **Three Rivers Water Festival:** June 17-19th Come join the fun.
- **Michigan DNR:** Matt Diana announced that the DNR has lost an opportunity to secure an access site on the St Joe River in Hillsdale. Slow funding was the cause and property was purchased before DNR could. The Fisheries Division is going to be doing a survey for Grass Carp on the St Joseph River this year. If you would like to help contact Matt Diana.
- **Newsletter:** Eric Kerney announced that the newsletter he and Carol Higgins are putting together is moving along. If you have any water resource contacts to share please do. They would also welcome articles geared toward paddlers and others who have an interest in the river.

Motion to adjourn at 2:24 by Reece and second by Higgins. Motion passed. Zoom ended

Next Board Meeting and Annual Membership Meeting: March 25, 2021 via zoom