

ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION

MINUTES March 1, 2016

The first quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission was held on March 1, 2016, in the Elkhart County Public Services Building, in Goshen, Indiana. Paula Reinhold, Secretary, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Roll call was taken and it was noted a quorum was present with the following members in attendance:

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paula Reinhold – St. Joseph County
Dona Hunter – LaGrange County SWCD
Frank Lucchese – Elkhart County
Bill Hartsuff – Elkhart County
Joe Foy – City of Elkhart
Martin Franke – LaGrange County
Alfredo Garcia – LaGrange County
Jeff Moore – Town of LaGrange
David Abbott – Noble County
Roger Nawrot – St. Joseph County
Karl Kopec – City of Mishawaka
Kieran Fahey – City of South Bend
Craig Williams – City of Angola
Neil Ledet – Department of Natural Resources

OTHERS PRESENT: Lisa Gilkey-Schoetzow, Legal Representative, Thorne Grodnik LLP
Matt Meersman – Van Buren County Conservation District
Ron Niezgodski – Friends of the St. Joe River
Jason Kauffman – City of Goshen
James Turnwald – MACOG
Jeremy Reiman – MACOG
Lori Ratliff – MACOG
Shirley Czerna – MACOG

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 1, 2015 and DECEMBER 1, 2015

There were no corrections or additions to the minutes of the September 1, 2015 and December 1, 2015 meetings. The following action was taken.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 1, 2015 AND THE DECEMBER 1, 2015 MEETINGS WERE MADE BY FRANK LUCCHESI AND SECONDED BY DONA HUNTER. THE MOTION CARRIED.

FINANCIALS

Financial Report

Lori Ratliff reviewed the SJRBC Financial Reports for the 1st Qtr of FY 2016 and 2nd Qtr of FY 2016 and then asked for any questions. There being none, Lori asked for the Commission's approval of the Financial Reports.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE FINANCIAL REPORTS AS PRESENTED WAS MADE BY MARTIN FRANKE AND SECONDED BY ROGER NAWROT. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Approval of Claims

A list of the last two quarterly SJRBC claims and a description of the bills paid by MACOG were distributed to the Commission members for their review. It was noted that the State Board of Accounts recommended one change in protocol on the SJRBC Claims Submittal form to include the three governing signatures; President, Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer. The new procedure went into effect with the current vouchers. There were no questions on the claims. Lori asked for the Commission's approval of the claims.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE SJRBC CLAIMS FOR THE JULY 2015 THROUGH DECEMBER 2015 MACOG REIMBURSEMENTS AND FOR THE DECEMBER 2015 AND MARCH 2016 ATTORNEY FEE WAS MADE BY FRANK LUCCHESI AND SECONDED BY CRAIG WILLIAMS. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Budget Revision

Lori Ratliff explained a budget revision would be necessary. The current state audit was a 5-year audit, instead of the standard 2-year audit, which increased the cost for auditing services by \$1,600. Since the SJRBC received \$1,876.67 in additional funds from the State than was originally anticipated, it would be viable to increase the Audit line item by \$1,600 to cover the audit cost increase, and place the remaining funds of \$267.67 into the Postage line item, to balance the budget.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE BUDGET REVISION AS INDICATED WAS MADE BY ROGER NAWROT AND SECONDED BY FRANK LUCCHESI. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Audit Report

James Turnwald, SJRBC Executive Director, gave a brief summary of the Audit Report performed by the State Board of Accounts for the period July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2015. He explained there were no material items that warranted comment on the part of the State Budget Agency, which meant the SJRBC was given a clean bill of health. It was also noted that due to a recent change in State Legislation, the SJRBC anticipates being audited every 5 years, rather than the required 2-year interval. The Audit Report was provided to the Commission members for their review and acceptance.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE JULY 1, 2011 TO JUNE 30, 2015
AUDIT REPORT WAS MADE BY DONA HUNTER AND
SECONDED BY FRANK LUCCHESI. THE MOTION CARRIED.

OLD BUSINESS

Basin Updates – Basin Commission Members

Karl Kopec reported that as a part of the Combined Sewer Overflow-Long Term Control Plan (CSO-LTCP), the City of Mishawaka has started the design phase of a 7,000 foot long, 11 foot inside diameter storage tunnel for wet weather flow. It will hold about 4,700,000 gallons of water and will virtually eliminate CSO's in years of average rainfall. The design should be completed by the end of 2016, with construction beginning in late 2017. The estimated cost of the project is in excess of \$80 million.

Martin Franke informed the Commission that Lagrange County SWCD recently completed a 205j watershed management plan grant for the Fawn River drainage area. An additional grant is underway through the Great Lakes Commission for sediment and erosion control in the Little Elkhart River Watershed.

Kieran Fahey announced the City of South Bend will host a public meeting on Thursday, March 3rd at the Morris Bisto, to discuss the reassessment of the City's CSO-LTCP. The City is in the process of reassessing the plan, which involves a more innovative and technical approach, with the idea of protecting the environment through increased efficiency.

Dave Abbott reported in hope to alleviate the flooding issues on the West Lakes Chain, Noble County applied for a LARE grant for log jam removal on the Little Elkhart River. The idea of voluntary buy-outs for property owners was also considered, but the Noble County Commissioners had concerns with the maintenance that would be required with the vacated properties. Alternative plans are being investigated.

Joe Foy reported the City of Elkhart has just completed installing the second and third CSO underground storage facilities.

Election of 2016 Officers

Paula Reinhold presented the Commission members who have agreed to run as officers for calendar year 2016:

President: Jon Roberts
Vice-President: Paula Reinhold
Secretary-Treasurer: Martin Franke

MOTION TO CLOSE THE NOMINATIONS AND ACCEPT
THE SLATE OF CANDIDATES AS PRESENTED AS 2016
OFFICERS, WAS MADE BY KARL KOPEC AND SECONDED
BY DONA HUNTER. THE MOTION CARRIED.

St. Joseph River Basin Filter Strip Initiative

The SJRBC has developed an education outreach initiative to encourage landowners to install filter strips on their property. An application process has been developed for landowners to apply, through each specific county, for the filter strip initiative program. Currently, Jeremy and the steering committee are in the process of updating the existing filter strip brochure to further promote the use of filter strips. In addition, the education outreach initiative is looking into creating an informative filter strip workshop for farmers and property owners to attend.

Dave Abbott asked if the benefit of \$1 per acre applies only to the area that is affected. Jeremy said that is accurate. Matt Meersman asked if the filter strip initiative only pertains to public drains. Jeremy said that is correct. Martin Franke asked if a farmer has filter strips, could he turn his farm equipment around on the headland area. Jeremy said the NRCS would allow the use of farm equipment on the filter strip area provided that the filter strip is operating correctly, meaning the equipment is not tearing up the filter strip vegetation or degrading the vegetative color.

Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy Scholarship

Randy Sexton, Noble County surveyor, received the first Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy scholarship presented by the SJRBC, to a professional in the St. Joseph River watershed. The 2016 academy is scheduled to run from January through May. The Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy focuses on watershed efforts that improve water quality across Indiana. The SJRBC plans to provide the same scholarship in 2017.

Cobus Creek Watershed Diagnostic Study

In January, the SJRBC hosted the Cobus Creek Watershed study steering committee meeting and a public meeting. These meetings provided stakeholders with an overview of the watershed and study outcomes, as well as gathered information about the watershed from concerned citizens and organizations. In the upcoming months, the Commission will work with the consultant to collect GIS data and historic water quality data.

Water Monitoring Program Update

An updated report of the 20 sampling sites selected for Phase II of the water monitoring program was distributed to the Basin Commission. At the end of the third quarter of monitoring, the data results look very good, compared to Phase I. Dave Arrington, with SNRT will provide an in-depth analysis of Phase II at the end of sampling, in March 2016. Dave and Jeremy are in the process of choosing the next 20 sites, with testing to begin in April of 2016. Jeremy invited the Commission to assist in the selection of the next 20 sites.

Elkhart River Conservation Initiative

The Elkhart River Conservation Initiative originated from local groups in Rome City and Noble County, in search of better ways to manage their drainage issues and environmental concerns. As a result, the SJRBC has taken on the role of facilitator, moving forward to improve conservation in the Elkhart River watershed. A steering committee was formed. The first meeting was held on November 4th, which discussed major environmental concerns in the watershed. The Commission is in the process of assembling a workshop where focus groups can begin the process of identifying potential projects that would benefit the watershed as a whole and provide multiple environmental benefits to the residents in the watershed.

Dave Abbott asked how the individual projects would be funded. Jeremy said most projects would presumably be funded through standard 205j, 319, LARE, FEMA, and other various forms of grants. The basic mission for the Commission would be to help with grant applications.

NEW BUSINESS

Inter-Local Memorandum of Understanding – Ontwa Township Michigan

The Commission reviewed a draft copy of the Inter-Local Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Ontwa Township and the SJRBC. James explained the MOU states that Ontwa Township agrees to provide the SJRBC with \$3,600 in local funds. The money would be used to support the physical work needed to be done in Michigan, for the Cobus Creek Watershed diagnostic study. In return, the SJRBC agrees to have Ontwa Township participate in the steering committee and would be provided a copy of the electronic files of water quality data collected.

A MOTION TO ACCEPT AND APPROVE THE INTER-LOCAL
MOU BETWEEN ONTWA TOWNSHIP AND THE SJRBC
WAS MADE BY KARL KOPEC AND SECONDED BY
FRANK LUCCHESI. THE MOTION CARRIED.

16th Annual IN-MI St. Joseph River Basin Symposium – Request for Presenters

Jeremy announced the 16th Annual Indiana-Michigan St. Joseph River Basin Symposium is scheduled for May 20, 2016 at the Fernwood Botanical Gardens, in Niles. The plan this year is to offer an “ignite style presentation” format. There would be four or five, ten minute presentations related to exciting, new water quality projects across the watershed. If anyone is interested in presenting a project, contact Jeremy for further information.

PRESENTATION

Van Buren County Drainage Assessment Project – Matt Meersman, Watershed Coordinator, Van Buren County Conservation District

Matt Meersman, Van Buren County Conservation District Watershed Coordinator and President of the Friends of the St. Joe River (FotSJR), described a new drainage assessment program started in Van Buren County. FotSJR hopes to continue the program across the St. Joseph River basin with plans to submit a Healthy Watershed Consortium grant application, by March 14th. The purpose for the grant is to encourage conservation through drain assessments in the St. Joseph River Basin, which would include Michigan and Indiana. The project strategy is to develop a new assessment method that rewards landowners who use conservation practices by creating incentives for better management through drain maintenance apportionment, with the use of a GIS Sediment Calculator.

The GIS Sediment Calculator is comprised of automated GIS watershed analysis tools for Rusle/Sedmod soil erosion and sedimentation modeling. The new assessment method could help provide a foundation that would guide future drain assessment practices, reduce long-term maintenance costs, and increase the protection of waterways throughout the St. Joseph River Basin. Reducing erosion and runoff within these public drain watersheds would have a positive impact on water quality throughout the basin.

Matt asked if the SJRBC would consider writing a letter of support for the Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant proposal and to provide in-kind services on the Indiana side of the watershed. James said it would be feasible for staff to provide in-kind services for the project. The duties would include staff time to attend project meetings; participate in Sediment Calculator, GIS data analysis, and Conservation Practice Certification Training; promotion of the project via mailings, meeting, website and social media; and hosting meeting and training sessions. Paula Reinhold asked for approval from the Commission.

MOTION TO WRITE A LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THE HEALTHY WATERSHED CONSORTIUM GRANT APPLICATION AND PROVIDE IN-KIND SERVICES FOR THE PROJECT ON THE INDIANA SIDE WAS MADE BY DONA HUNTER AND SECONDED BY CRAIG WILLIAMS. THE MOTION CARRIED.

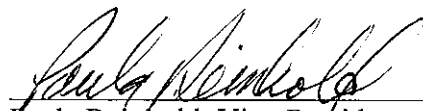
ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

Ron Niezgodski acknowledged that it has been a pleasure to be associated with the SJRBC for 18 years. He anticipates the Commission will continue to excel on improving water quality issues for years to come.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Basin Commission, the following action was taken.

MOTION TO ADJOURN WAS MADE BY CRAIG WILLIAMS AND SECONDED BY KIERAN FAHEY. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED.


Paula Reinhold, Vice-President