

**ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
MINUTES
December 6, 2016**

The fourth quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission was held on December 6, 2016, in the Elkhart County Public Services Building, in Goshen, Indiana. Jon Roberts, President, 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: Jon Roberts – Kosciusko County
Dona Hunter – Governor’s Appointee
Bill Hartsuff – Elkhart County
Karla Kreczmer – Elkhart County
Martin Franke – LaGrange County
Jerrod Nisley – LaGrange County
David Abbott – Noble County
Roger Nawrot – St. Joseph County
Paula Reinhold – St. Joseph County
Kieran Fahey – City of South Bend
Kris Thomas – Steuben County

OTHERS PRESENT: Joseph Zakas – Legal Representative, Thorne Grodnik LLP
Jason Kauffman – City of Goshen
James Turnwald – MACOG
Matt Meersman – MACOG
Lori Ratliff – MACOG
Shirley Czerna – MACOG

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 6, 2016

There were no corrections or additions to the minutes of the September 6, 2016 meetings. The following action was taken.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE
SEPTEMBER 6, 2016 MEETING WAS MADE BY
DONA HUNTER AND SECONDED BY DAVID
ABBOTT. THE MOTION CARRIED.

FINANCIALS

Financial Report

Lori Ratliff reviewed the SJRBC Financial Report for the period ending September 30, 2016 and then asked for any questions. There being none, Lori asked for the Basin 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 quarterly SJRBC claims and a description of the bills paid by MACOG were distributed to the Commission members for their review. Lori asked for the Commission's approval of the Claims.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE SJRBC CLAIMS FOR THE JULY, AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2016 MACOG REIMBURSEMENTS AND FOR THE DECEMBER 2016 ATTORNEY FEE WAS MADE BY DONA HUNTER AND SECONDED BY KIERAN FAHEY. THE MOTION CARRIED.

ORGANIZATIONAL ANNOUNCEMENT

New River Basin Program Director

Matt Meersman was introduced as the new River Basin Program Director. He will direct the administrative and professional services MACOG provides for the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC). With over 15 years of experience working on watershed management in the St. Joe River Basin, most recently as a Watershed Coordinator at the Van Buren Conservation District, Matt will be a great asset to the SJRBC. Matt plans to schedule introductory meetings with each SJRBC appointee or representative before the next meeting, in March.

OLD BUSINESS

Basin Updates – Basin Commission Members

Martin Franke updated the SJRBC on the progress of the \$200,000 cost share grant the LaGrange County SWCD received from the Great Lakes Commission. It is a nutrient and sediment reduction grant for the north branch of the Elkhart River. Preliminary findings in this unique watershed reveal, even though there are water quality issues, the problems tend to be more water quantity issues. Since the watershed has its own character, the SWCD in conjunction with the county surveyor and area lake associations will be attacking the problems with a slightly different perspective.

Additionally, the LaGrange County SWCD submitted a 319 grant application with IDEM for water treatment in the north branch of the Elkhart River drainage area. Unfortunately, the grant request was denied. Nevertheless, it is anticipated the Great Lakes Commission grant will make a predominant difference in the area.

David Abbott reported the LARE grant for Elkhart River logjam removal was approved for 3 logjams, rather than the requested 70 logjams. As a result, many West Lakes residence have been independently removing debris from the riverbanks.

St. Joseph River Basin Filter Strip Initiative

The final proof of the updated St. Joseph River Basin Filter Strip Initiative brochure was distributed to the Basin Commission, which has been redesigned to be more concise and financially informative. The finalized brochure will be printed and distributed to SWCDs, NRCS, FSA, and local Farm Bureau offices. Going forward, the steering committee will need to reunite to brainstorm for potential filter strip law education and outreach activities in assist with the implementation of the program. In review, the mission of the initiative is to raise awareness of the filter strip incentive to increase the use of filter strips, with the hope of improved water quality across the basin.

Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy Scholarship

The SJRBC agreed to sponsor a professional in the St. Joseph River Watershed to complete the 2017 Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy, which focuses on efforts to improve water quality. Alicia Czarnecki, Bowman Creek Educational Ecosystem, was awarded the scholarship and has been enrolled. Following completion of the program, Alicia will be invited to give the SJRBC a short presentation on her experience at the academy.

Cobus Creek Watershed Diagnostic Study

The study of Cobus Creek watershed began in the winter of 2015. The historical watershed data and in-field data collection were completed in the summer of 2016, which was followed by modeling and data analysis in the winter of 2016. In November 2016, the SJRBC hosted a public meeting to present data collected, initial findings and management recommendations. A draft copy of the Diagnostic Study should be available for public comment in January, with the final documents approval by March 2017. The study will provide valuable insight as to how the creek and its resources can be best managed.

Martin asked if the E. coli concentrations are directly related to septic systems. James said, initially, the issue of E. coli arose from the proposal of a wastewater treatment plant in Ontwa Township, MI. However, septic systems and E. coli are not the only issue in the watershed. With a strong mix of urban and rural land in the watershed, nutrient concentrations and sediment inputs are also a concern.

Water Monitoring Program Update

Phase 3 of the water monitoring program began in April 2016. Thus far, there have been 4 samples pulled from the 20 sites selected in Baugo Creek, Turkey Creek and Brandywine Creek located in Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties. The majority of sites looked very good with regard to all of the parameters being analyzed, with the exception of some spikes in E. coli and nitrates on site 42.

Before the 3-year sampling period ends in March of 2017, it will be necessary to send out a new Request for Proposal (RFP) for Water Quality Assessment activities for the next cycle period, April 2017 through March 2020. A similar scope of work will be required, and a SJRBC review committee will be assigned to evaluate and choose the contractor for services. Prior to the meeting, Daragh Deegan volunteered to be on the review committee. Matt will search for other volunteers as he meets with SJRBC members individually.

Joe Zakas asked what may have reflected the good test results for Phase 3 testing sites. Matt said since this is the first round of testing, there is not a baseline to follow. Once a baseline is established, future testing should indicate changes for better or worse.

Elkhart River Watershed Conservation Initiative

The Elkhart River Conservation Initiative is a collaborative effort to implement sustainable projects in the Elkhart River watershed. It originated from local groups in Rome City and Noble County, in search of better ways to manage drainage issues and environmental concerns. The intention is to choose projects that would provide multiple benefits to the watershed, without creating a negative impact downstream. The steering committee identified potential projects that would benefit the watershed as a whole and provide multiple environmental benefits to the residents in the watershed. Potential projects have been prioritized for implementation. The program will move forward with discussions on the type of funding alternatives that would be most effective for each project chosen and who would be responsible for completing each project.

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting Schedule for 2017

Matt Meersman presented the following meeting schedule for calendar year 2017.

March 7, 2017
June 6, 2017
September 12, 2017
December 5, 2017

All meetings will be located at the Elkhart County Public Services Building.

Election of 2017 Officers

Jon Roberts presented the following slate of officers chosen for calendar year 2017. It was noted that the 2016 officers agreed to serve in their respective office for a second term.

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

MOTION TO CLOSE THE NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2017 SLATE OF OFFICERS WAS MADE BY DONA HUNTER AND SECONDED BY ROGER NAWROT. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Jon Roberts asked for the acceptance of the 2017 slate of officers.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE SLATE OF OFFICERS, AS PRESENTED, WAS MADE BY DONA HUNTER AND SECONDED BY KIERAN FAHEY. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Martin Franke asked if there is a limit on consecutive terms of service for SJRBC officers. James said a consecutive 2-term limit has been in practice for several years, but the process should be reviewed, when the bi-laws are updated.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

Paula Reinhold addressed concern for the demolition of the old Holiday Inn Hotel on the southwest corner of the toll road and US 933 North, in Roseland. The hotel is in the flood plain of Juday Creek, which is one of a few trout streams and cold water streams in St. Joseph County. Paula was concerned that the hotel was not being demolished properly and with the correct permits in place. Roger Nawrot recommended discussing the matter with the St Joseph County surveyor and engineer, who could assist with drainage and permit issues. Matt said he would meet with the Juday Creek Task Force to discuss the situation.

Matt informed the SJRBC of the annual Great Lakes Day event in Washington, D.C. that will take place on March 16, 2017. The events feature discussion on Great Lakes priorities by regional leaders and members of Congress who play a critical role in shaping Great Lakes policies. Matt has been involved with the event for the past couple of years and would be interested in representing the SJRBC regarding potential water related projects and funding issues this year. He will address the topic again at the next SJRBC meeting, in March.

Daragh Deegan asked Matt to inform the SJRBC that Neil Ledet, IDNR, will be retiring at the end of the year. He has been a Basin Commission member for several years and the fisheries point person for the region since the 1970's. Martin Franke suggested the SJRBC act on a motion to recognize Neil for his several years of dedicated service to the SJRBC and IDNR.

MOTION TO RECOGNIZE NEIL LEDET FOR HIS YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND HIS WORK AND DEDECATION TO THE SJRBC WAS MADE BY MARTIN FRANKE AND SECONDED BY PAULA REINHOLD. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Martin Franke asked if there was a way the SJRBC could reduce the consumption of paper. James said the quarterly meeting packet could be sent out electronically, a week prior to the meeting. A printed copy of the meeting packet would only be supplied at the meeting.

MOTION TO APPROVE RECEIVING ONLY AN ELECTRONIC COPY OF THE SJRBC MEETING PACKET PRIOR TO THE QUARTERLY MEETINGS AND A PAPER COPY SUPPLIED AT THE MEETINGS WAS MADE BY MARTIN FRANKE AND SECONDED BY ROGER NAWROT. THE MOTION CARRIED.

ADJOURNMENT

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

MOTION TO ADJOURN WAS MADE BY DONA
HUNTER AND SECONDED BY DAVID ABBOTT.
THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED.

Jon Roberts, President