

ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
MINUTES
September 7, 2017

The third quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission was held on September 7, 2017, 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
Frank Lucchese – Elkhart County
Bill Hartsuff – Elkhart County
Daragh Deegan – City of Elkhart
Martin Franke – LaGrange County
Jarod Nisley – LaGrange County
Jeff Moore – Town of LaGrange
David Abbott – Noble County
Karl Kopec – City of Mishawaka
Kieran Fahey – City of South Bend
Tara Lee – Steuben County
Craig Williams – City of Angola

OTHERS PRESENT: Joseph Zakas – Legal Representative, Thorne Grodnik LLP
Mark Espich – St. Joseph County Health Department
Jessica Faust – IDEM
Matt Meersman – MACOG
Lori Ratliff – MACOG
Shirley Czerna – MACOG

MINUTES OF JUNE 1, 2017

There were no corrections or additions to the minutes of the June 1, 2017 meetings. The following action was taken.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE
JUNE 1, 2017 MEETING WAS MADE BY DONA
HUNTER AND SECONDED BY DARAGH DEEGAN.
THE MOTION CARRIED.

FINANCIALS

Financial Report

Matt Meersman reviewed the SJRBC Financial Report for the period ending June 30, 2017 and then asked for any questions. There being none, Matt asked for the Basin Commission’s approval of the Financial Report.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE FINANCIAL REPORTS AS PRESENTED WAS MADE BY CRAIG WILLIAMS AND SECONDED BY DAVID ABBOTT. 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 SJRBC members for their review. Lori Ratliff asked for the Basin Commission's approval of the Claims.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE SJRBC CLAIMS FOR APRIL, MAY, AND JUNE 2017 MACOG REIMBURSEMENTS AND THE SEPTEMBER 2017 ATTORNEY FEE WAS MADE BY CRAIG WILLIAMS AND SECONDED BY MARTIN FRANKE. THE MOTION CARRIED.

OLD BUSINESS

Basin Updates – Basin Commission Members

Daragh Deegan announced that he would be going before the Elkhart City Council next week to request support for the removal of a dam in downtown Elkhart that will increase public safety and improve fishing opportunities. The City of Elkhart was awarded \$1.5 million from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) to assist with the dam removal.

David Abbott reported there were three meetings involving West Lakes residents looking for concise direction to solve the flooding problems in their area. The DNR, Army Corps of Engineers, and Noble County officials attended an additional meeting, where a great deal of information was shared about the Silver Jackets study. Currently, two residences have shown interest in applying for a FEMA grant to do a floodplain buyout, with assistance from Noble County. West Lakes flooding issues will be further discussed with various agencies to determine the best strategies for moving forward.

Tara Lee informed the Commission that Steuben County SWCD received a Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program grant for Pigeon Creek watershed. The 3-year cost share program is primarily for agricultural landowners, focusing on filter strips, fencing, bio-mass planting, cover crops, and tree planting.

GLPF Conservation Incentive Project

The SJRBC has entered into a subcontract with Kieser & Associates for \$30,000 over 3-years to help develop and promote new drain taxing methods that create incentives for conservation. The SJRBC has identified a drain official in the Indiana portion of the basin who is interested in participating in the project. Rex Pranger, LaGrange County Surveyor, has agreed to use the new method of apportionment on the Hogue 68 ditch flowing to Westler Lake. In addition, the SJRBC has been working with the Van Buren County Drain Commissioner on a similar project for the Health & Cemetery Drain. The goal of the project is to provide a foundation for future drain assessment practices, reduce long-term maintenance costs, and increase the protection of waterways throughout the St. Joseph River basin.

Directors & Officers Insurance Policy

At the June meeting, Matt asked the SJRBC to consider purchasing a Director & Officers Insurance Policy for the SJRBC, to reduce the risk of a potential lawsuit in the future. Before moving forward on the matter, the Basin Commission presented Matt with a list of questions to be answered. After speaking with the insurance agent, Matt reported the SJRBC would be responsible for the \$2,500 deductible, local government employees would be covered, even if they are already covered at their place of employment, and lastly, the deductible is collective and “per incident”. The insurance agent also suggested purchasing a General Liability Insurance Policy, which would cover any lawsuit brought against the SJRBC during meeting/events and travel.

The SJRBC has budgeted \$1,500 for insurance. Therefore, Matt recommended purchasing both policies, which would total \$1,150; Directors & Officers Insurance Policy, at \$750 and General Liability Insurance Policy, at \$400. After a discussion, the Basin Commission agreed to purchase both insurance policies.

MOTION TO PURCHASE A DIRECTORS & OFFICERS INSURANCE POLICY, AT \$750, AND A GENERAL LIABILITY INSURANCE POLICY, AT \$400, WAS MADE BY MARTIN FRANKE AND SECONDED BY CRAIG WILLIAMS. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Local Government Contribution Requests

Presentations and formal contribution requests have been made to all local units of government. The SJRBC received a commitment for the full requested amount from the Cities of Goshen and Angola as well as Elkhart, St. Joseph, and Noble Counties. In addition, there was a recommendation of \$1,000 from Kosciusko County, which was an increase from previous years. Matt will follow up with the remaining local governments in advance of the October budget finalizing.

It was reported the City of Kendallville in Noble County and the Town of Syracuse in Kosciusko County are not aware they are eligible for membership in the SJRBC. Matt suggested offering both Cities the opportunity to become members. The Basin Commission agreed.

Martin Franke asked why the Governor’s Appointee has always been designated from LaGrange County. Matt said he believes the process for selecting the Governor’s Appointee was decided long ago, by the Basin Commission. However, he would research old records for documentation that explains the process for selecting the Governor’s Appointee, by convention or by choice.

NEW BUSINESS

Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy Scholarship

After looking at the budget for the upcoming year, Matt determined there should be sufficient funding to sponsor an individual for the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy in 2018. The cost of the academy is \$700. The scholarship program has been included in the FY 2018 Work Plan, and the application process is in place from last year.

Matt asked if three Basin Commission members would volunteer to be on the subcommittee, to review the applications once they are submitted. Tara Lee, Daragh Deegan, and Kieran Fahey volunteered to be on the subcommittee.

MOTION TO AWARD A SCHOLARSHIP, AT \$700, TO THE INDIANA WATERSHED LEADERSHIP ACADEMY IN 2018 WAS MADE BY DONA HUNTER AND SOCONDED BY DARAGH DEEGAN. THE MOTION CARRIED.

2018 Meeting Dates

A discussion of alternative meeting dates for the 2018 meeting schedule was introduced. It was noted the Elkhart County Public Services meeting room would be available on the first Tuesday and first Thursday of the meeting months. After a discussion, the consensus was to continue holding the meetings on the first Thursday of the meeting months. The 2018 meeting schedule will be presented at the December meeting.

Noble County/West Lakes Support

There have been three meetings that discussed potential solutions to resolve the West Lakes flooding issue. On July 5th, Matt participated in a planning meeting with Noble County officials and stakeholders of West Lakes. After ample conversation, it was unclear on the best way to proceed. On July 12th, Matt provided a presentation at the “Call to Action” meeting, organized by the West Lakes Association. On August 8th, the Army Corps of Engineers organized a Silver Jackets meeting. The team of experts proposed the formation of a Flood Focus Committee to work together on putting projects and programs in place at the local level to help improve flooding issues. In addition, it was suggested to once again install a gauge on Waldron Lake to help monitor water flow. The SJRBC would consider participating in a cost share program to help fund the gauge.

2018 Symposium Location

Matt asked for assistance from the Basin Commission to plan next year’s symposium. Twenty-five people responded to a survey that was sent out after the last Symposium, generating a variety of suggestions. With the focus on Location and Venue, the concern was finding a more centralized location, while keeping the venue nature oriented. Based on the discussion that ensued, a variety of ideas were proposed. Eventually, it was decided Fernwood is inclined to be the best location for an event that would provide a nature theme as well as accommodate a large group of people. The matter will continue to be explored.

Water Monitoring Program Final Report

The Final Report for the first 3-years of water monitoring testing was completed and released in July 2017. Dave Arrington, with SNRT, Inc., will be at the December SJRBC meeting to present his findings and answer questions about the monitoring efforts. Surprisingly, findings indicate the majority of sites looked good with the exception of some spikes in E. coli around animal operations. The Basin Commission was encouraged to review the report on the website at www.sjrbc.com/resources/monitoring, prior to the next quarterly meeting.

INAFSM Conference

The 2017 Annual Indiana Association for Floodplain and Stormwater Management (INAFSM) Conference is being held on September 6th – 8th in South Bend. INAFSM is a group of professionals interested in and responsible for floodplain and stormwater management in the State of Indiana. Yesterday, Matt manned a booth with watershed information from the SJRBC & FotSJR in the vendor area of the conference. He reported having some great networking with participants about activities in the St. Joseph River basin and the purpose of watershed groups. Matt suggested the Basin Commission members attend one or more sessions at the conference if possible.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

There were no comments.

ADJOURNMENT

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

MOTION TO ADJOURN WAS MADE BY DAVID
ABBOTT AND SECONDED BY DARAGH DEEGAN.
THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED.

Jon Roberts, President