

ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
September 5, 2019

The third quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) in 2019 was held on September 5, 2019, in the Elkhart County Public Services Building, Goshen, Indiana. Martin Franke, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:05 am. Matt Meersman introduced himself and discussed the purpose and makeup of the SJRBC. Roll call was taken and it was noted a quorum was present with the following members in attendance:

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Martin Franke, LaGrange County
Phil Barker, Elkhart County
Mark Espich, St. Joseph County
Jim Hess, Elkhart County
Ray Hoover, Town of LaGrange
Dan Lash, Noble County
Tara Lee, Steuben County
Sue McGee, City of Kendallville

John McNamara, St. Joseph County
Lydia Mertz, Elkhart County
Jim Moyer, Kosciusko County
Jarod Nisley, LaGrange County
Jason Pippenger, Noble County
Steven Vaughn, LaGrange County
Robert Weaver, Kosciusko County
Suzie Weirick, Elkhart County

OTHERS PRESENT:

David Abbott, State Representative
Bill Hartsuff, Elkhart County
Jenna Lee, Elkhart Co SWCD
Jeff Moore, Town of LaGrange
Ron Niezgodski, FotSJR

Scott Pelath, Kankakee Commission
Diann Scott, West Lakes Assoc.
Mike Yoder, Elkhart Co. Commissioner
Brandie Ecker, Thorne Grodnik
Matt Meersman, MACOG

MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 6, 2019

Martin Franke, SJRBC Chair, asked the Commission members to consider the minutes of the June 6, 2019 meeting. There being no additions or corrections, the following action was taken:

JOHN MCNAMARA MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE
2019 REGULAR MEETING. LYDIA MERTZ SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR.
THE MOTION CARRIED.

FINANCIALS

Financial Report

Matt Meersman, SJRBC Director, provided the financial report for Fiscal Year (FY) end 2019 (07/01/18 – 06/30/19). Financial reports and bank statements were provided to the members of the Commission for review in advance of the meeting.

Matt drew the Commission’s attention to the Statement of Financial Activities. He noted a change in net assets of \$58,914; largely due to not expending all the funds budgeted for Special Projects. Matt suggested that planning projections indicate that Special Project funds should be used more effectively in FY 2020. Additionally, there was an increase in Interest Income and good support from local governments.

The Statement of Net Assets (Balance Sheet) was then presented. Matt shared the Total Fund Balance was \$184,899.55 and indicated the Commission was in a strong financial position.

Matt reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows and pointed out nearly \$11,000 was received through the Great Lakes Protection Fund grant project. All disbursements made in the fiscal year are listed on the Statement.

Martin asked if there were any questions or discussion regarding any of the financial statements. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve the 2019 Fiscal Year End financial statements.

DAN LASH MOVED TO APPROVE THE FINANCIAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2019. SUZIE WEIRICK SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Approval of Claims

A list of the quarterly claims and a description of invoices received was distributed to the SJRBC members for review. Claims included invoices from MACOG for April, May, and June expenses, as well as an invoice for legal services

Hearing no additional questions or comments, the Chair called for a motion to approve the payment of claims.

SUZIE WEIRICK MOVED TO APPROVE THE CLAIMS AND PAYMENT OF THE EXPENSES AS PRESENTED. LYDIA MERTZ SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

OLD BUSINESS

Fiscal Year 2020 Local Government Appropriations

The Town of LaGrange and the Town of Syracuse are the two smallest member communities (by population) in the basin. Matt has recently made an effort to meet with both communities and provide formal appropriation requests. Both towns have now budgeted the requested appropriation amounts for the SJRBC in FY 2020 budgets.

Matt reported that Steuben County is the only local government member that has not budgeted the requested appropriation amount. Steuben County is split between two major river basins; 75% of the area flows into the St. Joseph River Basin and 25% flows into the Maumee River Basin. The Maumee River Basin Commission has existed longer than the SJRBC and they have been active with Steuben County. However, over 80% of the County's watershed management funding is currently going to 25% of the County. Matt indicated he would continue working toward a more equitable division of the County's available funding between the two watersheds.

Tara Lee noted she is open to suggestions or any assistance other Commission members can offer in addressing the funding need with Steuben County officials. Discussion occurred regarding ways to provide deliverables in an effort to demonstrate value to the County.

NEW BUSINESS

Calendar Year 2020 Meeting Schedule

Matt provided the proposed meeting schedule for calendar year 2020. Over the past couple of years, the Commission has met quarterly on the first Thursday of the month. Matt noted the September meeting historically conflicts with the annual Indiana Association for Floodplain and Stormwater Management (INAFSM) Conference and suggested the September meeting move to a Wednesday for the Commission members who attend the Conference.

Following some discussion, Martin Franke called for a motion to approve the 2020 Meeting Schedule with the exception of moving the September meeting from the first Thursday to the first Wednesday of the month.

DAN LASH MOVED TO APPROVE THE CALENDAR YEAR 2020 MEETING SCHEDULE WITH THE SEPTEMBER EXCEPTION.
SUE MCGEE SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Calendar Year 2020 SJRBC Meetings will be held at 10:00 AM, at the Elkhart Public Services Building as follows;

- Thursday, March 5, 2020
- Thursday, June 4, 2020
- Wednesday, September 2, 2020
- Thursday, December 3, 2020

20th Annual Symposium Planning

Matt opened the discussion for planning the May 2020 Symposium. He suggested the event return to Fernwood Botanical Gardens in Niles, Michigan and noted the venue is available on May 1 and 8. Martin indicated he was in favor of returning to Fernwood and his preference to hold the event on May 8. The Commission needed no formal action but Matt stated he is open to any topic or location suggestions.

Other Business / Updates

Martin Franke enquired about an article he saw in the paper about a legislative representative getting a conservation tour in Steuben County. Tara Lee responded the SWCD put together a tour at the request of Senator Mike Braun's Regional Director, Mary Martin, to help Mary learn about conservation practices and partnerships in the County.

Martin then noted that LaGrange County is hosting a similar event for Extension and County officials, along with extending invitations to various legislators.

The Commission discussed the importance of advocacy at all levels of government and stressed the importance of local government investment.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Matt Meersman focused his report two particular areas of effort that were not addressed in other items on the agenda.

The first related to Planning. Matt stressed that having a systems assessment and implementation plan in place is critical for securing funds to complete on the ground projects. Matt has been working with the West Lakes Association and the Conservation Law Center on a grant proposal to Indiana University for studying the feasibility of regional water storage (flood reservoirs) in the North Branch of the Elkhart River Watershed. He reported that IU has indicated they would not be able to provide the funding requested, but a lesser amount of funding might still be available. Matt said he would like to work with Bob Barr of IUPUI and Christopher B. Burke Engineering, who were critical on the Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission's plan, to put together an alternative grant proposal. Although the grant would be smaller than anticipated, if the Commission matched the grant funds, it could be enough to begin an assessment of a critical area of the basin.

The second area Matt reported on was Education. The St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) hosted a floodplain workshop with the Indiana DNR on Wednesday June 19 at the Wolfe Community Building in Shipshewana. The event provided training for local floodplain administrators and water managers on the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Floodplains are areas adjacent to rivers, streams and lakes that flood when water levels rise. Development in these areas must be regulated locally for community residents to be eligible for the NFIP. The NFIP provides affordable insurance for flood damage, which is not typically covered by homeowners or renters insurance. Over 30 people attended the event, including floodplain administrators from all six SJRBC counties, to learn about program compliance and creating opportunities for reduced premiums for community members.

Matt is also working with State Rep. Abbot on a watershed presentation by Dr. Jerry Sweeten regarding soil and water conservation initiatives that have been implemented in Wabash County.

The Commission discussed providing financial assistance for select individuals to attend the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy. Matt indicated it would be helpful to have a few volunteers from the Commission or other interested attendees to form a selection committee. Lydia Mertz, Tara Lee, and Ron Niezgodski volunteered to serve.

PRESENTATION

Scott Pelath, Executive Director of the Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission provided a presentation on the impact of House Bill 1270. He provided a brief history of the Kankakee River and the efforts of the original commission created to address it. He then described changes to the organizational structure, powers and funding mechanism of the new commission, which resulted from the passage of HB 1270. There has

been talk among state legislators that the new Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission could be a model for other river basin commissions in the state.

Mr. Pelath discussed the importance of the work plan developed by Christopher B. Burke Engineering. He highlighted some of the recommended strategies and explained how the new commission planned to implement them with their new powers and funding. Matt stated that he would like the SJRBC develop a similar work plan. Differences between the Kankakee River and St. Joseph River were discussed. Matt explained that rather than a work plan for the St. Joseph River, the SJRBC could focus on plans for significant tributaries that have been altered like the Kankakee River, such as Pigeon Creek, Turkey Creek and the North Branch of the Elkhart River. SJRBC members and other meeting attendees asked questions throughout the presentation.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

Martin Franke expressed the importance of finding an additional SJRBC staff person.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the St. Joseph River Basin Commission, Martin Franke called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

DAN LASH MOVED TO ADJOURN THE SJRBC MEETING. SUE MCGEE SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Martin Franke, SJRBC Chair