

ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
September 2, 2021

The third quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) in 2021 was held on September 2nd, at the Schrock Pavilion in Goshen. The meeting was also livestreamed on YouTube and made available here: <https://youtu.be/UMWgSkeqPAc>

Daragh Deegan, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Matt Meersman, River Basin Director, introduced himself, reviewed instructions for participation 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:

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON:

<i>Chair:</i> Daragh Deegan, City of Elkhart	John Law, St. Joseph County
<i>Vice-Chair:</i> Kris Thomas, City of Angola	Janel Meyer, Steuben County
<i>Secretary:</i> Alicia Walsh, Steuben County	Jim Moyer, Kosciusko County
Phil Barker, Elkhart County	Jarod Nisley, LaGrange County
Bill Hartsuff, Elkhart County	Jon Roberts, Kosciusko County
Anita Hess, Noble County	Brad Rogers, Elkhart County
Jim Hess, Elkhart County	Mike Ruff, Steuben County
Ray Hoover, Town of LaGrange	Jewel Wise, Kosciusko County

OTHER PROXY MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON:

Dan Lash, Noble County

OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON:

Todd Clark, Elkhart SWCD	Jenna Wait, Elkhart SWCD
Steve Cords, Town of Wolcottville	Jack Wittman, INTERA
Jason Kauffman, City of Goshen	Brandie Ecker, Thorne Grodnik
Mattie Lehman, City of Goshen	Kate Barrett, MACOG
Jamie Miller, IDNR	Zach Dripps, MACOG
Jeff Reece, Friends of the St. Joe River	Ashley Matthews, MACOG
Diann Scott, West Lakes Assoc.	Matt Meersman, MACOG
Jean Thomas, West Lakes Assoc.	

CONSENT AGENDA

Daragh Deegan, SJRBC Chair, stated that our statute requires roll call voting for all actions if any members are attending the meeting virtually. He explained that the consent agenda is used to reduce the number of votes required at the meeting. He reminded members that they can request to have any item removed from the consent agenda if they believe it warrants its own separate vote. Due to concerns raised at earlier meetings, Daragh also requested that the member who seconds a motion be from a different county than the one who makes the motion.

Minutes – June 3, 2021

Matt Meersman, SJRBC Director, asked the Commission members if there were any comments or questions about the minutes of the June 3, 2021, meeting. Hearing no corrections or additions, Daragh moved on to the next item on the consent agenda.

Financial Report

Matt provided the financial report for the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2021 (04/01/21 – 06/30/21). He noted that the Fiscal Year End (FYE) was on June 30, 2021. Financial reports were provided to the members for review in advance of the meeting.

Matt discussed the Statement of Financial Activities (Profit & Loss) and noted that interest was less than expected, bank charges were down and travel miles were reduced due to pandemic related factors. Matt also explained that Special Project expenses were limited due to timing and opportunity, additional MACOG staff expenses were lower due to the delayed hiring of a Coordinator, and Education/Outreach expenses were reduced due to the virtual format of the Annual Symposium.

The Statement of Net Assets (Balance Sheet) was then presented. Matt noted two receivables from the State of Indiana and the City of Kendallville. The Total Fund Balance for the FYE was \$304,698.89.

Matt reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows and mentioned that the statement is prepared on a cash basis ending on 06/30/21. Matt explained that state funds were approximately \$22,000 lower due to a delay in processing, but they were received after the FYE. He also noted that the appropriation from the City of Kendallville was issued in June, but it was not received until after the FYE.

Matt asked if there were any questions on the financial report. Hearing no questions, he moved on to the next item in the consent agenda.

Claims – June 3, 2021

A list of the quarterly claims and associated invoices totaling \$19,786.36 was distributed to the SJRBC members for review prior to the meeting. Claims included invoices from MACOG for April, May, and June expenses, and Thorne Grodnik for quarterly legal services. Matt asked if there were any questions about the claims, or any other items from the consent agenda.

Hearing no further questions or comments, Daragh called for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

ANITA HESS MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.
RAY HOOVER SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

OLD BUSINESS

Existing Projects

Matt noted that all of the existing projects fall under the heading of Special Projects in the budget, and they would not be possible without the financial support of the local government members of the Commission, which cover the cost of basic operations.

Urban Tree Canopy Project

Matt stated that the Urban Tree Canopy Project is almost complete and the final meeting to provide analysis results is scheduled for September 20, 2021 with the Town of Syracuse. The project included the analysis of six communities to determine the best place to plant trees to mitigate storm water runoff.

Drainage Project

Matt stated there are over 4,000 miles of regulated drains in the basin and a goal of the drainage project is to create an incentive for private landowners to store water on their land as much as possible. Matt said he is primarily working with Lagrange County to determine how much each landowner pays per acre in taxes to maintain the drains in selected watersheds. He has also met with Kosciusko County to discuss the project. Matt also noted that he has been assisting LaGrange County with automating the process of mailing public notices to landowners. Public notification is required when a change in the maintenance fee/rate is considered.

Water Monitoring Updates

Kate Barrett stated that since the last meeting, 12 sites were selected in small streams and tributaries throughout the basin. She is currently in the process of retrieving samples from all of the sites. Kate thanked Daragh for helping her with the methodologies used for water monitoring research. Matt noted that the new sampling efforts were focused upstream because Daragh already densely samples the downstream portion of the basin through his program. Kate stated she will be collecting additional information from the 12 sites to measure elemental composition and will be collaborating with researchers from Notre Dame where she will have access to conduct additional analysis. Kate explained that once samples are analyzed, findings will be shared in written reports and presentations at future meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

2022 Meeting Schedule

Matt presented the 2022 SJRBC meeting schedule with the first Thursday in March, June, September and December. He was able to reserve the Schrock Pavilion for the morning on each of these dates for 2022.

Hearing no questions or comments, Daragh called for a motion to approve the 2022 SJRBC meeting schedule.

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE 2022 MEETING SCHEDULE.
ALICIA WALSH SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

Watershed Leadership Academy

Matt explained that Purdue University hosts a Watershed Leadership Academy and SJRBC typically provides financial support for 1-2 individuals from the basin to attend. Participants who complete all requirements earn a Purdue University Continuing Education Professional Certificate in Watershed Management. Matt stated that SJRBC does try to send its own members when possible and is hoping Kate would be interested in attending. Matt said the enrollment deadline is November 5, 2021 and asked for approval to send up to two people in 2022.

With no further discussion, Daragh called for a motion to approve financial assistance from SJRBC to send up to two people to the Watershed Leadership Academy.

JON ROBERTS MOVED TO APPROVE SENDING TWO PEOPLE TO THE
WATERSHED LEADERSHIP ACADEMY. JOHN LAW SECONDED. ALL
IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Forestry Grant Opportunity

Matt stated there is \$30,000 of funding available through the Indiana DNR to follow up on our urban tree canopy work, but it requires 1:1 match. He proposed working with MACOG to hire a part-time regional forester to assist communities and private landowners across the basin with a water-focused approach to forest management. Matt explained that MACOG would be the employer and provide some of the in-kind match needed to secure the funding. Matt said he is requesting approval to provide up to \$10K of Special Project funds (from partner support and/or resource development) towards the project if the remaining match can be secured. Alicia Walsh asked if the grant would require any specific deliverables. Matt explained that there was not any set number of hours, communities, individuals or plans that needed to be completed to secure the funding. He stated that the grant would provide funding for 12-18 months with the potential for additional funding in the future. Alicia asked for clarification on the scope of work, and what would be achieved in that timeframe. Matt explained that several small to medium size communities, and private landowners could be engaged and benefit from the assistance during that time. He also noted that in order to receive funding, the assistance would have to be available to communities and landowners across the entire basin.

Hearing no further questions or comments, Daragh stated that he thought it seemed like a good opportunity to leverage some of our funding to support our smaller communities. He asked if anyone would like to make a motion to approve the spending of \$10,000 of Special Project Funds for the forestry grant opportunity.

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO APPROVE THE SPENDING OF \$10,000 OF SPECIAL PROJECT FUNDS FOR THE FORESTRY GRANT. ANITA HESS SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Noble County Flood Resilience

Matt reported that the Flood Resilience project has started after signing the agreement with Burke that was approved at the last meeting. Matt will be going to Noble County for a meeting with Anita Hess and the commissioners on September 27, 2021. He said one of the goals of flood resilience planning is to help local government officials understand they are not doing their residents any favors when they waive requirements or choose not to enforce the existing floodplain ordinance. Matt stated Sheila McKinley of Burke has started to review relevant plans and codes. She will also be recruiting county officials for the Flood Resilience Planning Team including one of the commissioners, the Surveyor, the Floodplain Administrator, the Emergency Manager, a member of the Plan Commission and someone responsible for economic/community development.

Ray Hoover asked if the new wetlands legislation prevented local governments from passing their own ordinances to protect wetlands and floodplains. Matt said it was his understanding that communities could still pass local ordinances to protect those natural features, but he does not necessarily think it is a viable solution, especially for smaller communities who do not typically have the personnel to enforce those ordinances. Matt also noted that it is likely that the wetlands that lost state regulated status will now be regulated under an expanded federal program.

Janel Meyer asked if Matt had heard anything in regards to the Wetlands Task Force. Matt said the governor's office contacted him and asked him to be on the task force and Matt accepted. He is waiting on the chairperson to call the first meeting.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Matt stated that he and Kate moved into their new office at MACOG. He also presented budget requests to three of the six member counties. Matt said he was involved in several interviews and presentations, including interviews with WNIT and NBC News, and he participated in panel discussions at the Indiana Water Summit with Kate. He also has been meeting with the Wetlands Coalition and corresponding with Governor's office regarding Wetlands Task Force. Matt informed the Commission that he won the big canoe race he mentioned at the previous meeting, beating the record time, and appreciated everyone's patience with him while he was preparing for the race.

STEUBEN COUNTY WATER AVAILABILITY STUDY

Jack Wittman of Intera, gave a presentation about a regional water supply study he is conducting in Steuben County. He also discussed how the SJRBC could potentially play a role in regional water infrastructure planning and management. The presentation can be viewed as part of (minute 53:44) the meeting recording available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMWgSkeqPAC>

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

Daragh asked if there were any items from the floor. Hearing none, Matt thanked the members for attending the meeting. He reminded everyone that he is available for questions or discussion outside of the quarterly meetings as well.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Daragh Deegan called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. JOHN LAW
SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.



Daragh Deegan, SJRBC Chair