

**ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
December 5, 2024**

The final quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) in 2024 was held on December 5th, at the Schrock Pavilion in Goshen. The meeting was also livestreamed on YouTube and made available here: <https://www.youtube.com/live/VvKY7DwEVJY>

Adam Bowden, SJRBC Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Matt Meersman, River Basin Director, introduced himself and Ashley Matthews from the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG). He briefly 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:

Chair: Adam Bowden, City of Mishawaka

Vice Chair: Jim Hess, Elkhart County

Secretary: Jewel Wise, Kosciusko County

Treasurer: Ray Hoover, Town of LaGrange

Phil Barker, Elkhart County

Daragh Deegan, City of Elkhart

Kieran Fahey, City of South Bend

Martin Franke, LaGrange County

Bill Hartsuff, Elkhart County

Zach Holsinger, LaGrange County

Chad Jonsson, Town of Syracuse

Clint Knauer, Steuben County

Greg Knauer, Steuben County

Dan Lash, Noble County

John Law, St. Joseph County

Sue McGee, City of Kendallville

Janel Meyer, Steuben County

Jim Moyer, Kosciusko County

Jarod Nisely, LaGrange County

Jon Roberts, Kosciusko County

Kris Thomas, City of Angola

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jason Arney, Steuben Co. Health Dept.

Todd Clark, Elkhart Co. SWCD

Trevor Hampshire, City of Kendallville

Ryan Miller, City of Goshen Stormwater

Michael Novotney, Wessler Engineering

Charlie Pettibone, Steuben Co. Planning

Camille Sczervowicz, IASWCD

Cory Stewart, LaGrange County

Bailey Temple, Steuben County

Brandie Ecker, Thorne Grodnik

Ashley Matthews, MACOG

Matt Meersman, MACOG

CONSENT AGENDA

Adam Bowden, SJRBC Chair, introduced the consent agenda and reminded members that they can request to have any item removed if they believe it warrants its own separate vote.

Minutes – September 5, 2024

Adam asked the Commission members if there were any comments or questions about the minutes of the September 5, 2024, meeting. Hearing no comments, Adam asked Matt to briefly review the next item on the consent agenda.

Financial Report

Matt presented the financial report for the first quarter of FY 2025 (07/01/24 – 09/30/24). Financial statements were provided to the members for review in advance of the meeting.

Matt discussed the Statement of Financial Activities. He noted the Water Monitoring expenses included webmap development and the Additional Staff expenses included AmeriCorps fees.

The Statement of Net Assets was then presented. Matt noted the Accounts Payable was for services provided by MACOG for July, August, and September as well as legal expenses, webmap development, and the AmeriCorps service site fee for Shae Medlin. The total Fund Balance for FY25 Q1 was \$433,079.87.

Matt reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows and reminded everyone that the statement is prepared on a cash basis ending on 09/30/24. Matt noted that the Special Project Revenue is from Steuben County, City of Angola, and the Town of Bristol for the flow monitoring cost-share. The local government appropriation from Steuben County includes the second half of CY 23 and the first half of CY 24. Invoices for the 2024 appropriations have been paid by all members. The City of South Bend and the Town of Syracuse included extra funds in their appropriations.

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

Claims – December 5, 2024

A list of the quarterly claims and associated invoices totaling \$36,928.68 was distributed to the SJRBC members for review prior to the meeting. Claims included the accounts payable as well as invoices for mileage, webmap development, water monitoring and legal counsel.

Matt asked if there were any questions about the claims, or other items from the consent agenda. Hearing no questions or comments, Adam called for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

DAN LASH MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA
KIERAN FAHEY SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

OLD BUSINESS

Water Monitoring Program

Matt provided an update on the SJRBC Water Monitoring Program. There are 12 biological monitoring locations that complement existing efforts by various partners throughout the basin. The 2024 data is currently being analyzed and results are expected in late spring of 2025.

Matt then discussed Kate's support of a strategic water quality sampling program in Steuben County. Through a cooperative agreement with MACOG, two AmeriCorps members based out of Trine University assisted with the program. Matt said Kate submitted the End of Year Grant Report to the Steuben County Community Foundation. She is working on summarizing the 2024 data and hopes to have a draft report in the spring.

Matt stated Kate has also been helping partners in LaGrange County with a similar program that sampled 13 sites for 20 consecutive weeks. SJRBC supported the program by providing the service site fees for an AmeriCorps member. Matt said Kate and Shae presented their data to the LaGrange County Soil and Water Board last week.

In addition to the SJRBC's support of water quality monitoring Matt said they are also monitoring water quantity through USGS gauges and 8 real-time water level monitoring devices

throughout the basin. Tritium has been taking field measurements at each of those sites in order to develop stage-discharge curves, which allows the estimate of the volume/discharge at each site. He said there is opportunity to place more water level monitoring devices in other locations and would like input from partners who are participating in the cost-share program.

Watershed Study

Matt reviewed his interest in studying factors such as land cover, management practices, and soil conditions in order to develop a model for predicting the impact of changes. Prioritizing land for conservation and apportioning water management fees are two potential uses. Matt explained a proposal he received from Intera for developing a Five Year Technical Strategy and Workplan. He said the proposal does not include the actual development of a model, but it further defines and investigates what such an effort would entail. It also considers additional monitoring, water demand/availability analysis, and early warning systems in the strategy/workplan development. Matt said it could be a good first step before investing in a full scale technical study or planning and management tool. Matt would like time to review the proposal and compare costs before making a final decision. He provided copies of the proposal and welcomed feedback. He said the project would not exceed \$40,000, but would require a budget amendment and board approval.

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO AMEND THE BUDGET TO INCREASE PLANNING AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT TO \$45,000 AND GIVE THE DIRECTOR AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH INTERA AS DESCRIBED. SUE MCGEE SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of 2025 Officers

Matt explained the traditional process the Commission has used to create a Slate of Officers for election. Historically, the Vice Chair is nominated for Chair, Secretary for Vice Chair, and Treasurer for Secretary, leaving the Treasurer position to be filled each year. He stated Sarah Longenecker, who represents St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District, expressed a willingness to serve as Treasurer. Adam Bowden asked if there were any other nominations from the floor. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the slate of officers presented with the addition of Sarah Longenecker as Treasurer.

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO APPROVE THE SLATE OF OFFICERS PRESENTED WITH THE ADDITION OF SARAH LONGENECKER AS THE TREASURER. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

Compliance Engagement

Matt stated the State Board of Accounts completed a Compliance Engagement for SJRBC. There were no reportable findings but they identified a need for a capital asset policy. He discussed the purpose of the policy and the need to designate a capital asset threshold. Matt requested a budget amendment to cover the expected cost of the Compliance Engagement, which could be as much as two to three times what was budgeted.

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO AMEND THE BUDGET TO INCREASE THE AUDIT LINE ITEM TO \$9,000. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

25th Annual Symposium

Matt discussed the 25th Annual Symposium and his desire to partner with the Friends of the St. Joe River again. He asked for topic, speaker and venue suggestions. He proposed scheduling the Symposium on May 16th instead of the usual second Friday in May due to a schedule conflict.

Other Business/Updates

John Law reported that he applied for a LARE grant to construct a half mile of “two-stage” along Gast Ditch. A study of Cobus Creek found eroded stream banks and other issues on the tributary in St. Joseph County. Creating floodplain benches along the ditch should help address the issues.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Matt reported on several administrative tasks over the last quarter. He also announced the recipients of financial support for the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy from both the SJRBC and Friends of the St. Joe River. The recipients are Carrie Brunson of the Elkhart County Health Department, Jordan Ware of the City of Elkhart, Lisa Kuntz of Berrien County Conservation District, and John DiTillo of Good Shepherd Montessori School.

Matt said he received a letter from the Lieutenant Governor appointing him to the Indiana Drainage Handbook Advisory Board. The first meeting is in two weeks. He has also attended drainage board meetings and city council meetings to support members and partners.

Matt said he worked with Matthew McLaughlin, MS4 Coordinator for the Indiana Toll Road, on signs that designate the Contintal Divide and Great Lakes Watershed boundaries at the edges of the basin along the Indiana Toll Road. He shared images of the planned signs and their locations. Matt also spoke with ABC57 on the impacts of new development on water. The full story can be found at <https://www.abc57.com/news/the-silicon-prairie-water-worries>.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

There were no items from the floor.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Adam Bowden called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Jim Hess, SJRBC Chair

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