

**ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**September 6, 2018**

The third quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission was held on September 6, 2018, in the Elkhart County Public Services Building, in Goshen, Indiana. Jon Roberts, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Roll call was taken and it was noted a quorum was present with the following members in attendance:

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jon Roberts, Kosciusko County  
Adam Bowden, City of Mishawaka  
Daragh Deegan, City of Elkhart  
Kieran Fahey, City of South Bend  
Martin Franke, LaGrange County  
Zach Holsinger, LaGrange County  
Dona Hunter, LaGrange County  
Dan Lash, Noble County  
Tara Lee, Steuben County  
Sarah Longenecker, St. Joseph County  
Sue McGee, City of Kendallville  
Stacey McGinnis, Noble County  
John McNamara, St. Joseph County  
Lydia Mertz, M.D., Elkhart County  
Janel Meyer, Steuben County  
Jeff Moore, Town of LaGrange  
Jim Moyer, Kosciusko County  
Steve Schweisberger, Elkhart County  
Suzie Weirick, Elkhart County  
Craig Williams, City of Angola  
Jewel Wise, Kosciusko County

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Jamison Czarnecki, Elkhart Environmental Center  
Jason Kauffman, City of Goshen  
John Law, St. Joseph County Public Works  
Jamie Miller, Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
Jeffery Reece, Friends of the St. Joe River Association  
Diann Scott, West Lakes Association  
Troy Sutton, Shipshewana Community Lake Improvement Association  
Cindy Vanderbosch, West Lakes Association  
Steve Weideman, Shipshewana Community Lake Improvement Association  
Matt Meersman, MACOG  
Leah Thill, MACOG

Matt Meersman welcomed the members of the newly expanded St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) to the quarterly meeting. He explained the St. Joseph River basin includes six counties in northern Indiana and eight counties in southern Michigan. The governance and funding for the SJRBC comes from the six Indiana counties including; Elkhart, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, St. Joseph, and Steuben.

The SJRBC exists to conserve, enhance, and promote the natural resources and benefits of the Watershed for present and future generations by providing vision, leadership, and means. Membership includes the Director of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and at least five representatives from each member county.

### **SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 7, 2018**

Jon Roberts asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the June 7, 2018 special meeting. Hearing none, he called for a motion.

SUZIE WEIRICK MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 7, 2018 SPECIAL MEETING. CRAIG WILLIAMS SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 7, 2018**

Jon then asked for the Commission to consider the minutes of the June 7, 2018 meeting. There being no additions or corrections, the following action was taken:

LYDIA MERTZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 7, 2018 REGULAR MEETING. ADAM BOWDEN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

## **FINANCIALS**

### **Financial Report**

Matt noted the financial report for June 30, 2018, is also the end of the fiscal year for SJRBC. The Travel/Mileage and Printing line items on the Statement of Financial Activities were adjusted at the last meeting. Most items were on target for the fiscal year with Special Projects falling short of meeting anticipated expenses.

Suzie Weirick asked why the SJRBC Director, Matt Meersman, appears to be under paid. Matt explained the budget amounts came in under for the staffing items because of the way the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) and SJRBC contract allowed for billings. The contract set the maximum amount that MACOG can bill SJRBC to a quarterly basis rather than annually. There was one quarter the maximum amount was not reached and other periods the maximum was exceeded so some expenses were left unbilled. This item was addressed in the contract for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019.

The Statement of Net Assets was presented. Matt noted the Total Fund Balance, Accounts Payable, and Outstanding Deposit amounts and asked for any questions. Stacy McGinnis asked if the Commission could also receive copies of the bank statements and reconciliation reports along with the financial reports. Matt indicated he would discuss this request further with Stacy following the meeting.

Matt then reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows for FY 2018 including all of the cash receipts and disbursements. Stacy indicated the report would meet her request for reconciliation reports and that she would still like to receive the bank statements.

Matt asked if there were any additional questions regarding any of the financial statements. Hearing none, the Chair called for a motion.

DAN LASH MOVED TO APPROVE THE FINANCIAL REPORT FOR PERIOD AND FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2018. DONA HUNTER SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **Approval of Claims**

A list of the quarterly claims and a description of expenses for the second quarter of calendar year 2018 was distributed to the SJRBC members for review. Claims included invoices for April, May, and June MACOG expenses, mileage reimbursement to the River Basin Director, and legal expenses. There being no questions regarding any of the expenses, the Chair called for a motion.

STEVE SCHWEISBERGER MOVED TO APPROVE THE CLAIMS FOR EXPENSES DURING THE SECOND QUARTER OF THE CALENDAR YEAR 2018. TARA LEE SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Matt Meersman briefly reported on his efforts on behalf of the SJRBC over the last quarter that are not addressed in other items on the agenda. Numerous administrative activities were handled due to the changes to the Commission structure and the retirement of Shirley Czerna.

In August, Matt attended the Indiana Farm Bureau Drainage School in Indianapolis. "Understanding Laws that Impact Drainage Decisions," was a one-day seminar focusing on Indiana drainage issues.

Matt had phone call meetings with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and Indiana DNR representatives that were involved in the Silver Jackets Report for West Lakes. He also attended about twelve meetings including county commissioners, drainage boards, soil and water districts, and storm water boards. If anyone on the Commission has upcoming meetings they would like Matt to attend – please let him know. He will attend as many as feasible.

Additionally, Matt indicated he continues to advocate on behalf of the SJRBC interests.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Basin Updates – Commission Members**

Adam Bowden stated that notifications of Mishawaka Combined Sewer Overflows will now be sent out on Twitter. More information can be found at <http://mishawaka.in.gov/cso-notification>.

Martin Franke introduced two representatives of the Shipshewana Community Lake Improvement Association in attendance, Steve Weideman and Troy Sutton. They shared some of their concerns about the lake. Martin invited Matt to tour Shipshewana Lake to see the issues as an example of the challenges that are faced by many of the lakes in northern Indiana.

Daragh Deegan shared that the City of Elkhart is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to remove a dam in downtown with a 33% contribution from the city and pursuing a \$100,000 Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) grant to offset the cost. Daragh clarified that this is a seven-foot low head dam on the Elkhart River upstream of the confluence with the St. Joseph River.

### **GLPF Conservation Incentive Project**

The SJRBC is subcontracted on a three year, grant funded project to work with drainage officials throughout the St. Joseph River watershed, in Indiana and Michigan, in determining drainage benefits. These efforts will be funded with up to \$30,000 for the Commission to help determine the portion of public drain maintenance costs that are billed to individual property owners within that drain's watershed.

Throughout Indiana and Michigan, public drain creation, maintenance and reconstructions costs are mostly divided and billed based on acreage with every acre being treated equally. The project will look at the feasibility of using geographic information technology resources to evaluate how much benefit a land owner actually receives from a drainage ditch. The benefit assessment criteria will include information such as soil type and land cover. The goal is to create incentives for better land management and generate a fair benefit assessment.

The Commission discussed numerous best management practices to better control drainage into rivers and watersheds, water retention in the soil, and reduce lake flooding.

Matt was asked if there is a map that shows the land use across the watershed. He responded there is and it is updated annually using the national crop land data layer from the USDA. The map will be a good visualization tool, especially for new Commission members to understand how it is important for all entities to work together to achieve common goals and overcome challenges.

### **FY 2019 Local Government Appropriation Requests**

The FY 2019 local government appropriation requests were approved at the June SJRBC

meeting. The amounts requested are based on the amount of the operating budget and the amount of land area in the Basin as the enabling statute recommends. The Commission was \$9,000 shy of covering operating costs with local government appropriations. Five of the six participating counties are now fully supportive of the requested appropriation amount. Steuben County is the only participating county unwilling to fully support the Commission's appropriation request.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **City of South Bend Alternative LTCP Support Letter**

In July, the City of South Bend requested a letter of support from SJRBC for its Smarter Alternative for a Greener Environment (SAGE) plan, as an alternative to the existing long-term control plan (LTCP) for the City's sewer system.

Kieran Fahey indicated that about half of the sewer system in the City of South Bend is a combined sewer system; storm water and sanitary combined into one. The overflow for the system goes into the St. Joseph River. The City's 20-year plan to change this process is in its fifth to sixth year of implementation. The first phase of the plan is complete and has eliminated approximately 75% of the overflow going into the river.

The City is about to begin implementing phase 2. After review, Keirnan and the City have come up with an alternative plan which they are calling the SAGE plan. The plan relies more on smart sewer technology and green infrastructure. The cost of phase 2 in the LTCP would have cost the City \$713 million; the cost of the SAGE plan is \$200 million.

By installing approximately 150 sensors, the City of South Bend has been able to use real data by assessing what has happened over the past 10 years, rather than anticipating what might happen by making assumptions using traditional modeling methods. In order to change the plan, the City needs approval from the U.S. Department of Justice (US DOJ), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM).

Kieran indicated that Cathy Stepp, US EPA Region 5 Administrator, is in favor of the innovative SAGE plan and would like to share it with other communities across the Midwest. To make it easier for the US EPA to approve the plan, she wants to ensure there is community support for the plan. Kieran has provided information on the SAGE plan to numerous organizations in the area and requested their support.

Each member of the Commission received a copy of the letter of support for the SAGE plan in their meeting materials. Jon Roberts called for a motion.

**JOHN MCNAMARA MOVED TO ENDORSE THE LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THE CITY OF SOUTH BEND'S SAGE PLAN. SUZIE WEIRICK SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.**

## **Tribal 319 Program Support Letter**

The Basin Director explained that the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi (NHPB), one of two tribes with land in the St. Joseph River Basin, is applying for their 319 Non-Point Source (NPS) program authorization. This will allow the tribe to work to improve water quality in the watershed through the implementation of streamside Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Each member of the Commission received a copy of the letter of support for the NHBP 319 Non-Point Source Program authorization in their meeting materials. Jon Roberts called for a motion.

MARTIN FRANKE MOVED TO ENDORSE THE NHBP 319 NPS PROGRAM  
AUTORIZATION LETTER OF SUPPORT LETTER. CRAIG WILLIAMS  
SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

## **Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy Scholarship**

Matt Meersman explained, over the past three years, the SJRBC has offered a scholarship for a local leader to attend the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy. The Academy is hosted by Purdue University. The 2019 application process is now open. Although the funds for the scholarship are in the budget (\$700), Matt asked for the Commission's approval to provide support for an attendee. Jon Roberts called for a motion.

TARA LEE MOVED TO APPROVE THE SCHOLARSHIP FOR A LOCAL LEADER  
TO ATTEND THE INDIANA WATERSHER LEADERSHIP ACADEMY. DONA  
HUNTER SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED

Jon Roberts asked for volunteers to serve on the scholarship selection committee. Tara Lee, Sarah Longenecker, and Lydia Mertz volunteered. Matt will provide the application to the committee via email. Once the application deadline has passed, he will schedule a meeting for them to review the applications received.

## **2019 Meeting Schedule**

The Commission has been meeting quarterly, on the first Thursday's at 10:00 AM in March, June, September, and December. The Basin Director indicated the Elkhart County Public Services Building is able to accommodate those meeting dates in calendar year (CY) 2019. He then asked for the Commission's approval for the meeting schedule.

JOHN MCNAMARA MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE CY 2019 MEETING  
SCHEDULE. DAN LASH SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

## **2019 SJRBC Symposium Planning**

The annual symposium has traditionally been held at Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve in Niles, Michigan. In the past, there has been discussion about moving the location. Additionally, Matt Meersman indicated the Michigan attendees have had conflicts in the past with the event date being the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday in May, rather than the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday. He asked for the Commissions feedback on topics, the location, and the date.

Matt shared Pokagon State Park and the Edward Lowe Foundation in Cass County, Michigan as potential locations. Dona Hunter highlighted that options other than Fernwood may provide more space with the increased size of the Commission.

Daragh Deegan suggested topics related to flood mitigation and water quality.

Martin Franke expressed interest in wetlands due to questions about wetland management and regulations from property owners.

Kieran Fahey suggested a possible topic related to the City of South Bend's work with the Army Corps of Engineers or USGS on a smart flow gauge at the wastewater treatment plant in South Bend.

Planning for the 2019 SJRBC Symposium will continue at the December meeting.

## **State Budget Request**

Matt Meersman has reached out to the state budget agency to find out how funding for the SJRBC can be increased to be in line with what is being received by the Maumee River Basin Commission (MRBC). In the last biennial budget, the MRBC annual administrative budget was increased from \$54,000 to \$105,000. Additionally, the MRBC was successful in acquiring additional capital funds through a special budget request.

In making a request for special funds, the SJRBC would need to clearly articulate why they are asking, what they are asking for, and what additional resources it will bring to Indiana.

For now, Matt is focusing on getting an increase in administrative funding. He has met with Representative David Abbott and has completed a questionnaire with the State Budget Office to "make a case" for the additional funding need. It is important for the Commission to gain added funds to meet the expanded scope of work recently legislated.

## **ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR**

Diann Scott, President of the West Lakes Association, thanked the Commission for sponsoring the reactivation of the Waldron Lake gauge.

Diann discussed the formation of the Noble County Lakes Council. In August, an informational meeting was held to begin the organizational process. At the meeting, 20 issues were identified that the Council could work to address. The bylaws are being written to form the non-profit organization.

Additionally, Diann indicated she had met with Matt Meersman to discuss updating the 2008 Elkhart River Watershed Management Plan for Elkhart, LaGrange, and Noble County. A 319 grant will be pursued to help fund the update of the plan.

Daragh Deegan asked if the Council looked at narrowing the focus to Noble County where the energy for the planning is coming from. Diann responded that it was discussed and it will be decided at a later time by participating parties. Matt noted gaining support for larger scale plans it often difficult so limiting the focus area should be considered.

Troy Sutton with the Shipshewana Lake Association commented that they would not want their area to be left out of the plan because if the Association does apply for a grant, they need to be included in a watershed management plan.

Martin Franke cautioned that it is important to know what other groups are doing and what plans already exist that may be applicable to an area nearby. Martin also advised that 319 grant applicants are competing against national priorities including hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico and algae concerns in Lake Erie.

Diann Scott stated she will be reaching out to those who were previously involved in the Elkhart River Watershed Management Plan and expressed that anyone else who is interested in participating may contact her.

Diann Scott  
West Lakes Association  
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diannscott@yahoo.com

The Chair, Jon Roberts, indicated a suggestion was made by Suzie Weirick for the Commission to form a Committee to review the Basin Directors compensation. He suggested the Committee be made up of the 2019 SJRBC officers.

Matt Meersman will provide a proposed slate of officers for 2019 at the December SJRBC meeting. Nominations will also be taken from the floor and any member of the Commission is eligible to serve as an officer. The duties and expectations of each of the officer positions were briefly reviewed.

It was noted: A quorum of the newly expanded Commission is eleven (11) of the Thirty-two (32) members, from three (3) separate counties.



The next meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission will be held on Thursday, December 6, 2018.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

MARTIN FRANKE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE SJRBC MEETING. ADAM BOWDEN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

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Jon Roberts, Chair