

**ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
June 6, 2019**

The second quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) in 2019 was held on June 6, 2019, in the Elkhart County Public Services Building, Goshen, Indiana. Martin Franke, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Matt Meersman introduced himself and Leah Thill, with MACOG, and discussed the role 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  
Daragh Deegan, City of Elkhart  
Mark Espich, St. Joseph County  
Kieran Fahey, City of South Bend  
Bill Hartsuff, Elkhart County  
Jim Hess, Elkhart County  
Dona Hunter, LaGrange County  
Dan Lash, Noble County

John Law, St. Joseph County  
Tara Lee, Steuben County  
Sarah Longenecker, St. Joseph County  
Janel Meyer, Steuben County  
Jeff Moore, Town of LaGrange  
Jarod Nisley, LaGrange County  
Kris Thomas, City of Angola  
Alicia van Ee, Steuben County  
Steven Vaughn, LaGrange County

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Jordan Beehler, Branch Co. CD  
Jason Kauffman, City of Goshen MS4  
Mike Machlan, City of Elkhart  
Jamie Miller, Indiana DNR  
Jeff Reece, FotSJR  
Sue Stuckman, Elkhart Conservation Club

Lauren Varga, Commonwealth Engineering  
Steve Weideman, Shipshewana CLIA  
Brandie Ecker, Thorne Grodnik  
Matt Meersman, MACOG  
Leah Thill, MACOG

**MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 7, 2019**

Martin Franke, SJRBC Chair, asked the Commission members to consider the minutes of the March 7, 2019 meeting. There being no additions or corrections, the following action was taken:

JEFF MOORE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH  
2019 REGULAR MEETING. KIERAN FAHEY SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR.  
THE MOTION CARRIED.

**FINANCIALS**

**Financial Report**

Matt Meersman, SJRBC Director, provided the financial report for the third quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 (01/01/19 – 03/31/19). 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 expenses for the SJRBC Director were being forecasted to be \$4,500 less than anticipated. The

Commission was reminded that the Director is an hourly employee and Matt noted 131 hours were charged to the GLPF project, rather than the salary line item.

The Statement of Net Assets (Balance Sheet) was then presented. Matt shared the Total Fund Balance was \$146,904.02 and indicated the Commission was in a strong financial position and can support special projects going forward.

Matt reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows and pointed out the specific funds received during the last quarter. He anticipates that all local governments will support the SJRBC by the end of the year. 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 third quarter financial statements for 2019.

DAN LASH MOVED TO APPROVE THE FINANCIAL REPORT FOR PERIOD ENDING MARCH 31, 2019. DARAGH DEEGAN 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 January, February, and March expenses, an invoice for legal services, and renewal of the Waldron Lake gage.

Martin asked Matt to review the arrangement for the Waldron Lake gage. Matt responded the Commission would be paying a total of \$4,000, which is 50% of the cost for one year. The other 50% will be paid by USGS. This agreement is renewable on an annual basis.

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

DONA HUNTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE CLAIMS AND PAYMENT OF THE EXPENSES AS PRESENTED. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **19<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium**

Martin Franke apologized for not being able to attend the Symposium at Pokagon State Park but noted he heard a lot of positive feedback about the event.

Members of the Commission shared their thoughts regarding the event and indicated it was a good educational experience and the new venue was very much appreciated. Matt commented this year was the highest attended Symposium with 90 registrants and 80 in attendance. The expenses were near the amount budgeted.

Martin posed the question of returning to Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve in Niles, Michigan, for the 2020 Symposium and commented on the possibility of addressing different basin concerns depending on the geographic location of the Symposium. Matt shared the 2020 event would be on the September meeting agenda for further discussion.

### **State Budget Request**

Since the last Commission meeting, State Budget Bill (HB 1001) was passed which includes an increase in funding for the SJRBC. For at least the next two years, the Commission will receive \$104,974 annually, which is an increase from \$52,487.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Contract for Services – MACOG**

The Officers of the SJRBC met with the MACOG Executive Director to revisit and discuss proposed changes to the Commission's contract for services with MACOG. All of the members were provided with a copy of the proposed agreement for review.

Martin Franke shared that during the meeting with MACOG, items discussed included the performance evaluation of the Director, as well as the relationship between SJRBC and MACOG. He explained that the Director works on behalf of the Commission but is an employee of MACOG and contracted to serve the interests of SJRBC. Martin expressed his appreciation for the meeting and the willingness of the two organizations to work cooperatively.

The Commission Officers each expressed satisfaction with the performance of the Director and the significant value Matt Meersman brings to the position and the organization.

Matt reviewed the noteworthy changes to the "Agreement for the Provision of General Services" (Contract for Services). They include:

- The ability to adjust compensation to MACOG for the Basin Director and other staff support with the SJRBC budget rather than the services agreement.
- There is an increase in the amount for rent and IT support.
- The term of the agreement is one year, but it allows for automatic renewal for five additional years, if desired.

The SJRBC Chair asked for any questions, comments or concerns regarding the proposed Agreement for the Provision of General Services between MACOG and SJRBC.

A concern was expressed about what happens if the current Director decides to leave the position. Matt pointed out there is a provision in the Agreement that states: "Should the need arise to replace the MACOG staff member providing services to the SJRBC during the course of this agreement, it will be done with the mutual written consent of both parties of this Agreement." It is MACOG's responsibility to provide the staff for the SJRBC.

Additionally, the Agreement allows for the compensation of the Basin Director to be provided on a full or part-time basis, with or without a benefits package, by amending the budget.

Hearing nothing additional, Martin Franke call for a motion to approve the Agreement for the Provision of General Services.

DARAGH DEEGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGREEMENT AS PRESENTED. JOHN LAW SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **Fiscal Year 2020 Work Plan**

A copy of the proposed FY 2020 Work Plan was provided to the Commission members. Matt explained the Work Plan is very similar to the previous year. The only significant change was noted under Special Projects: “If funding allows, additional staff may be hired to assist with program administration and special project implementation.”

Hearing no questions or concerns regarding the FY 2020 Work Plan, Martin Franke called for a motion of approval.

ALICIA VAN EE MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY 2020 WORK PLAN. KIERAN FAHEY SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Adoption**

Matt Meersman presented the FY 2020 budget and explained the significant changes. On the revenue side, as explained under State Budget Request, State funding for the SJRBC has doubled for at least the next two years. Interest income has increased as well due to a change in banking. There is a projected decrease in revenue from special projects.

Matt explained there is a 6% increase in basic operating expenses. The director salary, office rent, and information technology are all projected to be more in FY 2020. The goal is for the basic operating expenses to be funded by annual local government appropriations.

The FY 2020 budget allows for increased expenses for additional MACOG staff and water monitoring. Matt reported that he met with City of Elkhart representatives last quarter concerning the expansion of their biological monitoring program into Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, and Steuben Counties. The work could be done within the FY 2020 budget amount.

The SJRBC Chair asked if there were any questions or comments about the FY 2020 Budget. Hearing none, he called for a motion to accept the Budget as presented.

KIERAN FAHEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY 2020 BUDGET AS PROPOSED. JEFF MOORE SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Item “D” of the Agreement for the Provision of General Services allows MACOG to provide additional staff to support the SJRBC upon request of the Commission. Matt Meersman pointed out that the description of the Directors position and responsibility includes:

- Makes decisions and approvals on behalf of the SJRBC when authorized.
- Enters into contracts and agreements on behalf of the SJRBC.

Matt opened the floor to discuss the possibility of the Commission allowing him, as the Director, to make requests, decisions, and approvals on behalf of SJRBC within the confines of the budget. Particularly specific to additional staff that may be necessary.

Martin Franke asked Matt to express his vision for what he intends by “additional staff” and noted the recently expanded scope of the Commission due to the change in statute.

Matt responded there is potential for a couple of different scenarios. One being a person without formal training in watershed management but with strong interest who is a recent (or soon to be) college graduate. Although there is not a lot of repetitive type administrative work to be handed off, a person might start as an administrative assistant. There is also the possibility of a part time seasonal person who could manage a volunteer water monitoring effort. Alternatively, there is the possibility of the SJRBC hiring someone to run a full time water monitoring program throughout the basin, if the budget could support it.

Under the constraints of the current budget, Matt would like to find someone who is qualified in watershed management and would like to work part time or a person who is less qualified but can help with administrative functions.

It was clarified that the Director is not sure of the specific duties an additional staff member would perform but that he is requesting the authority to bring on staff support as needed, without the need to wait for approval at a quarterly meeting. After a considerable amount of discussion and evaluation of various alternative solutions;

A MOTION WAS MADE BY BILL HARTSUFF TO AUTHORIZE THE SJRBC DIRECTOR TO MAKE DECISIONS AND REQUESTS REGARDING ADDITIONAL MACOG STAFF SUPPORT AND THE DISBURSEMENT OF OTHER SPECIAL PROJECT FUNDS, UP TO 25% OF THE BUDGETED AMOUNT, TO MEET THE OBJECTIVES OF THE APPROVED WORK PLAN. ALICIA VAN EE SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **Fiscal Year 2020 Local Government Appropriation Requests**

With the approval of the FY 2020 budget, there is a six percent (6%) increase in basic operating expenses. Matt Meersman requested the Commission’s approval to include the additional 6% in the 2020 local government appropriation requests. A spreadsheet was provided with the apportionment formula and resulting request amounts.

DONA HUNTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY 2020 LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATION REQUESTS AS PROPOSED. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

## **Basin Updates**

### Indiana House Bill 1270

John Law and Matt Meersman lead a discussion regarding Indiana House Bill 1270. The bill abolishes the Kankakee River Basin Commission and repeals its statute, and establishes the Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission.

Eight counties; Lake, Porter, LaPorte, St. Joseph, Newton, Jasper, Stark, and Marshall, will be required to pay an annual fee to the newly formed commission, based on how much land in each county drains into the rivers. Counties will be allowed to impose a special assessment on each parcel with the maximum assessments set at \$1 per acre of farmland, \$7 for a residential parcel, \$50 for commercial and \$360 for industrial or utility. Beginning in 2021, assessments are expected to raise \$3 million annually. Each county is ultimately responsible for supporting the commission at the established assessment amounts.

### Elkhart River Dam Removal

The City of Elkhart is working with the Army Corp of Engineers to partially remove a dam on the Elkhart River, in downtown Elkhart. The project will go out for bid over the summer. The top one third of the dam will be removed and a rock riffle structure will be built that is approximately 150' long in order to provide fish and recreational passage while stabilizing the site.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Matt Meersman briefly reported on his efforts on behalf of the SJRBC over the last quarter that were not addressed in other items on the agenda.

### Indiana DNR Grant Proposal

Matt reported the Indiana DNR forestry division is working cooperatively with the Michigan DNR and other partners on a grant proposal for Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds. They have requested a letter of support to do an Urban Tree Canopy Analysis. Three communities will be selected in each state to do the Tree Canopy Analysis and then design a tree planting strategy that has water quality and water quantity as its focus. This project supports the goals of the St. Joseph River Watershed Management Plan.

Martin Franke called for a motion to provide a letter of support to the DNR for their grant proposal for Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds.

JOHN LAW MOVED TO APPROVE PROVIDING A LETTER OF SUPPORT.  
DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### Flood Plain Management Workshop

The SJRBC is one of the partners hosting a Flood Plain Management Workshop being held on June 19 in Shipshewana. The workshop is free and open to the public.

### **ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR**

A feasibility study is being done along Cobus Creek. The results of the study will be presented on June 25, at 6:00 pm, at the Elkhart Conservation Club cabin. This is the second of three public meetings prior to implementation.

Steve Weideman from the Shipshewana Lake Association brought a water sample for the members of the Commission to see. Shipshewana Lake is dealing with a large amount and several types of algae. Steve is looking for ideas on what actions could be taken to help combat the problem.

### **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. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

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Martin Franke, SJRBC Chair