

ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
June 4, 2020

The second quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) in 2020 was held on June 4, 2020, utilizing the Google Meet virtual meeting platform. The meeting was also livestreamed on YouTube and available here: https://youtu.be/fUPG_GhU9_M.

Kieran Fahey, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Matt Meersman, River Basin Director, introduced himself, reviewed instructions for the virtual meeting 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:

Chair: Kieran Fahey, City of South Bend
Vice-Chair: Daragh Deegan, City of Elkhart
Secretary: Kris Thomas, City of Angola
Treasurer: Alicia van Ee
Philip Barker, Elkhart County
Adam Bowden, City of Mishawaka
Diane Cameron, Town of LaGrange
Rod Edgell, Indiana DNR
Anita Hess, Noble County

Jim Hess, Elkhart County
Tara Lee, Steuben County
Sarah Longenecker, St. Joseph County
Lydia Mertz, Elkhart County
Janel Meyer, Steuben County
Jarod Nisley, LaGrange County
Jon Roberts, Kosciusko County
Randy Sexton, Noble County
Jewel Wise, Kosciusko County

OTHERS PRESENT:

Dan Lash, Noble County
Brandie Ecker, Thorne Grodnik

Matt Meersman, MACOG
Leah Thill, MACOG

MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 5, 2020

Kieran Fahey, SJRBC Chair, asked the Commission members to consider the minutes of the March 5, 2020, meeting. There being no additions or corrections, the following action was taken:

ANITA HESS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH
2020 REGULAR MEETING. ALICIA VAN EE 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) 2020 (01/01/20 – 03/31/20). Financial reports and bank statements were provided to the members of the Commission for review in advance of the meeting.

Matt discussed the Statement of Financial Activities. He noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some expense amounts are lower than projected. In addition, Matt indicated some of the costs associated with the North Branch of the Elkhart River project would be delayed until Fiscal Year 2021. Matt explained he did not include audit expenses on the statement and would be requesting a budget amendment related to audit expenses later in the meeting.

The Statement of Net Assets (Balance Sheet) was then presented. Matt shared that the Total Fund Balance was \$254,341.80 and indicated there was an outstanding check not reflected on the balance sheet. A bank reconciliation report was provided to the Commission.

Matt reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows and pointed out that the statement is prepared on a cash basis and reflects all cash receipts and disbursements for the reporting period.

Matt asked if there were any questions or comments regarding any of the financial statements. Hearing none, Kieran called for a motion to approve the financial report for the third quarter of FY 2020 as presented.

ANITA HESS MOVED TO APPROVE THE FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 02/31/2020. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Approval of Claims

A list of the quarterly claims and associated invoices was distributed to the SJRBC members for review prior to the meeting. Matt pointed out there was a large invoice related to the North Branch (NB) Elkhart River Project but noted the Commission received \$26,000 in grant funding from Indiana University for NB Elkhart River Project expenses, and he expects to receive an additional \$13,500 prior to fiscal year end. Matt remarked there was also a claim related to the Symposium for Water Words that Work; the amount does not include the additional on-line trainings. Claims also included invoices from MACOG for January, February, and March expenses, as well as quarterly meeting legal services.

Hearing no questions or comments, Kieran called for a motion to approve the payment of claims as presented.

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

OLD BUSINESS

2020 Annual Symposium

Due to concerns related to the coronavirus, the 20th Annual Symposium moved to a virtual format. Matt reported that close to 100 people were able to enjoy the on-line webinar style presentations.

Matt explained that because of the cost savings associated with hosting the Symposium on-line rather than in person, SJRBC is able to offer three communication trainings through Water Words that Work.

- Breaking Through Barriers – June 11, 18, and 25
- Closing the Deal with Rural Landowners – June 30, July 7 and 14
- Social Skills for Social Media – September 8, 15, and 22

Special Projects Update

Additional Staffing

Matt explained the hiring process for the part-time River Basin Coordinator position is on hold as interviews were cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. The majority of the MACOG staff is currently working from home. Matt indicated the process will be revisited at a later time.

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Urban Tree Project

Matt reported on the GLRI grant-funded project with ReLeaf Michigan, the Michigan DNR, Indiana DNR, and Davey Resource Group. He explained the urban tree canopy assessments are complete for the six communities selected for this project (Angola, Middlebury, and Syracuse in Indiana, as well as Buchanan, Coldwater, and Sturgis in Michigan), but the tree planting has been postponed due to COVID-19 concerns. The project is focused on identifying tree-planting locations with the greatest potential to mitigate stormwater.

Matt shared there was an opportunity for the six communities to get an additional custom assessment, and two SJRBC members, the City of Angola and the Town of Syracuse, have chosen to move forward. Matt stated he would like to provide the member communities with financial support for the additional assessments and indicated there are funds available in the budget for partner support.

Matt asked the Commission to consider providing a minimum of \$2,000 to support the member communities and up to \$5,400 to support all six.

Brandie Ecker commented that she would be hesitant to limit the support to the two member communities; she recommended the offer be made to all six participating communities.

Daragh Deegan indicated \$5,400 was a worthy investment towards the project. Alicia van Ee clarified the support would be capped at \$5,400 and if a community declined the assistance the total support amount would be less. Lydia Mertz commented that she would like to see all of the communities considered.

Keirnan Fahey asked SJRBC legal counsel, Brandie Ecker, if there were any ethical or legal issues offering support to the Michigan communities considering monies originating in Indiana fund the Commission. Counsel responded that given the funds relate to the Commission's activities and the funds are for an SJRBC project, partially managed by the Commission, there is not an issue with providing the Michigan communities with support.

The SJRBC Chair called for a motion to allow the Basin Director to spend up to \$6,000 to support custom assessments for all six communities involved in the GLRI Urban Tree Project.

**DARAGH DEEGAN MOVED TO APPROVE FINANCIAL SUPPORT
(UP TO \$6,000) FOR CUSTOM ASSESSMENTS RELATED TO THE GLRI**

URBAN TREE PROJECT. JEWEL WISE SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR.
THE MOTION CARRIED.

North Branch Elkhart River Project

Matt informed the Commission that an update on the North Branch Elkhart River Project would be provided at the end of the meeting, and there is a separate stakeholder meeting being held at 2:30 pm utilizing GoToMeeting. There will be an update on the completed fieldwork, data analysis, and mapping.

Matt told the Commission the original project budget only covered flood resilience maps for the main stem of the north branch and does not include the middle branch. Not having the resilience maps for the middle branch puts the project at a bit of a loss. Matt stated that given the development occurring around Kendallville and some of the unique issues that have been discovered, he proposed using up to \$4,000 originally budgeted for planning and resource development to purchase additional flood resilience maps that would cover the middle branch.

Dan Lash enquired about including additional Sylvan Lake tributaries. Matt clarified the maps are primarily related to development.

Hearing no additional questions, the SJRBC Chair called for a motion to use up to \$4,000 budgeted for planning and resource development to purchase additional flood resilience maps for the middle branch.

RANDY SEXTON MOVED TO APPROVE FINANCIAL SUPPORT (UP TO \$4,000) FOR ADDITIONAL FLOOD RESILIENCE MAPS. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS

Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 – FY 2019 Audit

Matt reported the SBOA recently completed the FY 2016 – FY 2019 Audit. The official audit report had not been completed, but SBOA indicated there were no findings to report. He thanked the MACOG accounting staff and the SJRBC officers for their help during the process.

Matt indicated the audit expense was not included in the annual budget, so he needed to request a budget amendment. He proposed a \$2,000 increase to the Audit line item, a \$500 increase to Accounting Services, and a decrease of \$2,500 in Office Rent.

Kieran Fahey thanked Matt for his efforts in the successful audit process and then called for a motion to approve amending the budget as requested.

ALICIA VAN EE MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUDGET AMENDMENT TO ACCOMMODATE AUDIT EXPENSES. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Work Plan

Matt noted the only significant change in the FY 2021 Work Plan from the previous year is the completion of the North Branch Elkhart River planning project and then asked if there were any questions.

Daragh Deegan asked for clarification on the difference between the proposed work plan and work plans for other years. Matt responded there was the addition of the North Branch Elkhart River Project, and he changed some of the wording to provide clarification for additional staffing being constrained by the receipt of local government funding.

Hearing no additional questions or concerns, the SJRBC Chair called for a motion to approve the FY 2021 Work Plan.

RANDY SEXTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY 2021 WORK PLAN.
JEWEL WISE SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Budget Approval

The SJRBC Director presented the proposed FY 2021 Budget. Matt informed the Commission that due to the pandemic, the State has increased their contingency percentage from 2% to 15%, reducing the funding amount for the fiscal year from \$104,974 to \$89,227. Additionally, due to the pandemic's effect on the market, the amount of interest income earned is expected to be less. Matt stated revenue for Special Projects would come from the IU Challenge Grant and the GLPF project.

Matt stated Basic Operations Expenses are unchanged from the previous year's budget. He explained that expenses for all Special Projects, with the exception of the GLPF project, reflect a decrease of approximately 15% to address the directives from the State Budget Agency to develop a strategic spending plan.

Hearing no questions, the SJRBC Chair called for a motion to approve the FY 2021 Budget as presented.

RANDY SEXTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY 2021 BUDGET.
ANITA HESS SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Local Government Appropriation Requests

Matt presented the FY 2021 Local Government Appropriation Requests. He explained that funding from local governments covers the cost of basic operations and keeps the Commission strong when there is a negative impact to funding from the State. Funding requests for 2021 are based on the FY 2020 Basic Operations budget amount of \$63,660.

Kieran Fahey asked for any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve the FY 2021 Local Government Appropriation Requests.

DARAGH DEEGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY 2021 LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATION REQUESTS. JEWEL WISE SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Legal Services Contract

Presenting the FY 2021 Legal Services Contract, Matt explained the contract would be retroactive to July of 2019 due to an unintentional lapse in two-year contract approvals. He indicated the only other change from previously approved contracts is an increase in the amount for Other Legal Services from \$120 to \$130 per hour.

The SJRBC Chair asked for any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve the FY 2021 Legal Contract.

ALICIA VAN EE MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY 2021 LEGAL SERVICES CONTRACT. RANDY SEXTON SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Other Business/Updates

There were no announcements or updates from the Commission members.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Matt reported he worked on numerous administrative functions over the past quarter including the St. Joseph River Basin Commission photo membership directory, the State Board of Account financial audit, the strategic spending plan for FY 2021, and other tasks.

For education and outreach, Matt noted he wrote articles about the Symposium and the GLRI Urban Tree Project that are distributed through the MACOGazette and other materials. Matt shared he has been working with some college students on projects that include research on drainage laws, incentives for stabilizing hydrology, and water quality.

Matt spoke about advocacy work he was able to do regarding Senate Enrolled Act 229 related to permitting for State wetlands and drainage work.

A letter of support and in-kind match was provided for a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative project to inventory the main stem of the St. Joseph River for invasive species. Matt reported the St. Joseph County Conservation District in Michigan was awarded the grant in April.

Matt stated he hosted a meeting of the Juday Creek Task Force and has also been exploring a National Science Foundation grant opportunity with Indiana University's Environmental Resilience Institute. During the last quarter, Matt indicated there were several opportunities to provide support to Commission members throughout the Basin.

PRESENTATION

North Branch Elkhart River Flood Risk Management Plan Update.

Robert Barr and Siavash Beik provided a presentation on the interim findings for the North Branch Elkhart River Corridor Flood Risk Management Plan. A recording of the presentation is available 58 minutes into the recording at: https://youtu.be/fUPG_GhU9_M

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

Matt stated members of the public were invited to submit any questions or comments by email prior to the meeting; none were received.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Keiran Fahey called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

RANDY SEXTON MOVED TO ADJOURN THE SJRBC MEETING.
DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION
CARRIED.

Kieran Fahey

Kieran Fahey, SJRBC Chair