

**ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**May 29, 2025**

The second quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) in 2025 was held on May 29<sup>th</sup>, at the Schrock Pavilion in Goshen. The meeting was also livestreamed on YouTube and made available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VMeLk8LEgA>

Jim Hess, 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:* Jim Hess, Elkhart County

*Vice Chair:* Jewel Wise, Kosciusko County

*Treasurer:* Sarah Longenecker, St. Joseph County

Bob Barnes, Elkhart County

Adam Bowden, City of Mishawaka

Martin Franke, LaGrange County

Bill Hartsuff, Elkhart County

Anita Hess, Noble County

Matt Horsley, Indiana DNR

Chad Jonsson, Town of Syracuse

John Law, St. Joseph County

Jim Moyer, Kosciusko County

Randy Sexton, Noble County

Rick Shipe, Steuben County

Jim Slabaugh, Steuben County

Cory Stewart, LaGrange County

Kris Thomas, City of Angola

Alicia Walsh, Steuben County

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Carrie Brunson, Elkhart Co. HD

Todd Clark, Elkhart Co. SWCD

Bella Foster, Indiana DNR

Kristi Johnson, Indiana DNR

Jason Kauffman, City of Goshen

Ryan Miller, City of Goshen

Michael Novotney, Wessler Engineering

Camille Sczervowicz, IASWCD

Kim Webb, Pine Canyon Lake

Brandie Ecker, Thorne Grodnik

Ashley Matthews, MACOG

Matt Meersman, MACOG

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Jim Hess, 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 – February 27, 2025**

Jim asked Commission members if there were any comments or questions about the minutes from February 27<sup>th</sup>. Hearing none, Jim asked Matt to review the next item on the consent agenda.

**Financial Report**

Matt presented the financial report for the third quarter of FY 2025 (01/01/25 – 03/31/25). Financial statements were provided to the members for review in advance of the meeting.

Matt discussed the Statement of Financial Activities. He explained there was no revenue from the water monitoring cost-share program this year. Matt also noted the State Board of Accounts

Compliance Engagement cost was less than expected, and staff costs were lower due to the resignation of Dr. Kate Barrett.

The Statement of Net Assets was then presented. Accounts Payable are for services provided by MACOG for January, February, and March. The total Fund Balance was \$519,250.67.

Matt reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows and reminded everyone that the statement is prepared on a cash basis ending on 03/31/25. Matt noted that requested local government appropriations were received from all members.

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 – May 29, 2025**

A list of the quarterly claims and associated invoices totaling \$52,919.18 was distributed to the SJRBC members for review prior to the meeting. Claims included the accounts payable as well as invoices for Christopher Burke for Noble County Stormwater Ordinance support, 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, Jim called for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

BOB BARNES MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.

RANDY SEXTON SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

##### **Water Monitoring Program**

Matt provided an update on the SJRBC Water Monitoring Program. He presented the 2024 data from Midwest Biodiversity Institute (MBI). Matt said, in general, the sites had good scores and highlighted some of the sites that had exceptional scores. He also noted some sites that scored lower than last year, which could be dependent on the location of the sampler. Matt also noted that the sampler at Nottawa Creek could not be retrieved and was therefore unable to be scored.

Matt then discussed the web map project and its potential to display various water data. He shared concerns about managing the database of over 750 data points. Matt said he will be meeting with the developer to discuss completing the project and maintaining the database.

Matt then discussed the strategic water quality sampling programs in Steuben and LaGrange Counties. He explained that these efforts were impacted by the loss of the AmeriCorps program, which had supported seasonal water monitoring help for both counties. Alicia Walsh reported that the Steuben County Health Department was able to find interns to continue their sampling efforts. Martin Franke stated that their program is continuing with volunteer support.

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. Matt said Tritium moved one of the gauges from Philips Ditch to Baugo Creek due to a lack of variation at the Philips Ditch site. He said the budget allows for the installation of additional



water level monitoring devices, with recommendations expected from Intera/Northwater next week regarding potential installation locations.

### **Watershed Study**

Since the last meeting, a project with Intera/Northwater for developing a Five-Year Technical Strategy and Workplan was initiated. Matt explained the project and how it will define and investigate potential modeling efforts, additional monitoring sites, water demand/availability analysis, and early warning systems. Matt expects a meeting to be held this summer to gather input, with a focus on determining additional water monitoring locations first.

Bob Barnes asked if permit fees for new developments like data centers could fund watershed studies. Matt said not as of right now and explained that the State has committed to study water demand and availability statewide. Bob expressed concern regarding the impact of new developments on residential wells. Matt said there is potential legislative change that might prioritize large water withdrawals over existing residential well users and is working on clarifying the details and potential impacts.

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

Matt stated the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium was held on Friday, May 16<sup>th</sup> at Camp Potawatami. Todd Feenstra discussed water monitoring, including wells and surface water. There were over 25 Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy graduates in attendance who participated in a discussion on successful watershed management efforts. Commission members shared feedback on the event. Survey results included the importance of water supply and green infrastructure, the prioritization of various efforts of the SJRBC, and suggestions for future Symposium topics.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Contract for Services - MACOG**

Matt said the five-year contract with MACOG for staff and support services is expiring. A new contract was shared in advance of the meeting. Matt explained that there were no changes to the contract except the incorporation of the purchasing policy adopted since the last agreement, and a 20% increase in information technology costs.

BOB BARNES MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONTRACT FOR MACOG SERVICES.  
ADAM BOWDEN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

### **2025-27 Legal Contract**

Matt stated the two-year contract for legal services also needs to be renewed. A new contract was shared in advance of the meeting. Fees and terms are the same, with only dates being updated.

MARTIN FRANKE MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2025-27 LEGAL CONTRACT.  
ANITA HESS SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

### **FY26 Work Plan & Budget**

Matt presented the FY26 Work Plan & Budget. There were no changes to the Work Plan from last year. Matt discussed the budget and explained that the basic operation appropriation requests sent to members are apportioned based on land area in the basin and population. Matt said that as the basic operations budget increases, it increases the appropriation requests to members. He noted the Commission's improved financial situation. After the discussion, Matt proposed no

change to the total basic operating budget for the next fiscal year. Matt explained that the entire State budget was cut by 5%, which in turn will reduce the Commission's appropriation.

RANDY SEXTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY26 WORK PLAN AND BUDGET. BOB BARNES SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

#### **Other Business/Updates**

Bob Barnes said there has been discussion regarding the Johnson Street Dam as the license is set to expire in 2030 and I&M must decide whether or not to reapply for that license by the end of 2025. The website, <https://www.elkhartcountygivesadam.com/>, has more information.

Jim Hess introduced Carrie Brunson and Bella Foster, who received support from the Commission to attend the Watershed Leadership Academy. Carrie and Bella shared their positive experience from the Watershed Leadership Academy and emphasized the value of connections, networking, and knowledge gained regarding water management and protection.

#### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Matt reported on several administrative tasks over the last quarter. He worked with ISDA on the Indiana State Nutrient Reduction Strategy. He also had a meeting with IDNR Deputy Director Ryan Mueller about the regional water planning effort and how the executive order signed by the Governor affects the region, and requested a memo on new legislation regarding large water withdrawals from Jack Whitman of Intera. Matt said he has also assisted the LaGrange County Surveyor with Drainage Board concerns and apportionments.

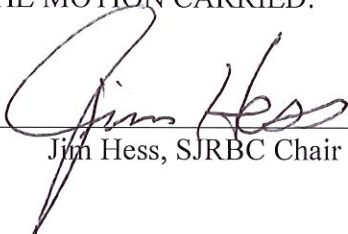
#### **ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR**

Kim Webb raised concerns about an undocumented gravel pit operating near Pine Canyon Lake in Steuben County, citing potential impacts on water pressure in shallow wells as well as being in an environmental control zone. Commissioner Rick Shipe explained that the gravel aquifer and the lake are likely separated by a clay barrier. He said if water pressure is being lost, he would have to look into why. He also noted the site's historical status as an allowable use within the environmental control zone, even though it may not be permitted. After further discussion, Kim thanked Commissioner Shipe and SJRBC for their time and support.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Jim Hess called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

JIM SLABAUGH MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. ADAM BOWDEN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.



Jim Hess, SJRBC Chair

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