

**ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
December 3, 2020**

The fourth quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) in 2020 was held on December 3, 2020, utilizing the Google Meet virtual meeting platform. The meeting was also livestreamed on YouTube and made available here:

<https://youtu.be/UCRz0rgD5vg>

Kieran Fahey, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Matt Meersman, River Basin Director, introduced himself, reviewed instructions for participation in 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 Walsh, Steuben County
Adam Bowden, City of Mishawaka
Rod Edgell, Indiana DNR
Martin Franke, LaGrange County
Bill Hartsuff, Elkhart County
Jim Hess, Elkhart County

John Law, St. Joseph County
Sarah Longenecker, St. Joseph County
Janel Meyer, Steuben County
Roger Nawrot, St. Joseph County
Jon Roberts, Kosciusko County
Mike Ruff, Steuben County
Randy Sexton, Noble County
Robert Weaver, Kosciusko County
Jewel Wise, Kosciusko County

OTHERS PRESENT:

Brandie Ecker, Thorne Grodnik
Conner Flora, MACOG
Matt Meersman, MACOG

Leah Thill, MACOG
Madison Ward, MACOG

MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

Kieran Fahey, SJRBC Chair, asked the Commission members to consider the minutes of the September 3, 2020, meeting. There being no additions or corrections, the following action was taken:

ALICIA WALSH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE
SEPTEMBER 2020 REGULAR MEETING. ADAM BOWDEN SECONDED.
ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

FINANCIALS

Financial Report

Matt Meersman, SJRBC Director, provided the financial report for the first quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 (07/01/20 – 09/30/20). 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 pointed out that the Office Rent and Additional MACOG Staff expense line items would increase significantly in the second quarter; also, that some of the North Branch of the Elkhart River (NBER) planning project close-out costs rolled into this fiscal year.

The Statement of Net Assets (Balance Sheet) was then presented. Matt shared that the Total Fund Balance at the end of the Fiscal Year was \$225,483.21. A bank reconciliation report was provided to the Commission.

Matt reviewed the FY 2021 Statement of Cash Flows and mentioned that the statement is prepared on a cash basis and reflects all cash receipts and disbursements for the reporting period. Matt noted he anticipates the Special Projects Revenue to increase significantly because he is expecting payments from the IU Grand Challenge grant and the Great Lakes Protection Fund project.

Matt asked if there were any questions or comments regarding any of the financial statements. Hearing no additional questions, Kieran called for a motion to approve the financial report for the quarter ending September 30, 2020, as presented.

MARTIN FRANKE MOVED TO APPROVE THE FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF FY 2021. JEWEL WISE 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. Claims included invoices from MACOG for June, July, and August expenses, quarterly legal services, Christopher Burke Engineering and the Conservation Law Center for the NBER planning project, Water Words that Work for on-line trainings, and INAFSM for conference registration.

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

JANEL MEYER MOVED TO APPROVE THE CLAIMS AND PAYMENT OF THE EXPENSES AS PRESENTED. MARTIN FRANKE SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

OLD BUSINESS

Special Projects:

Additional Staffing

Matt explained that Madison Ward and Conner Flora were hired as part-time interns to assist him with the SJRBC. He indicated they would both be making presentations later in the meeting.

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Urban Tree Project

Matt reported that each of the six (6) communities selected for the St. Joseph River Basin urban tree canopy assessment project is working on selecting planting locations that will best assist in the mitigation of storm water. Each community will receive 50 trees to plant in 2021.

Communication Training

Matt described the last on-line training offered by Water Words that Work on “Social Skills for Social Media”. This and the other trainings have been added to the SJRBC channel on YouTube.

Drainage Project

Matt discussed the drainage assessment project in LaGrange County and the efforts to equitably distribute drainage costs among the property owners based on acreage as well as land cover and soil type. He demonstrated how SJRBC was able to assist with new benefit determinations in the J.W. Knight Drain area and shared images of the mapping tools.

Additionally, as this projects draws to an end in the coming months, Matt indicated he would begin reaching out to interview or survey drainage officials to follow up and understand the scope of the drainage projects that are happening across the basin.

North Branch Elkhart River (NBER) Corridor Flood Risk Management Plan

Matt reported the final stakeholder meeting was held on September 23; the final report was delivered in October and is available on the SJRBC website.

Water Monitoring – Crowd Sourced Streamgages

One of the items that came out of the NBER project was a recommendation for increased water monitoring in the basin. Matt shared that thanks to Conner Flora (SJRBC Intern), some volunteer streamgages have been installed to help maintain the project’s momentum, follow up on recommendations made in the plan, and engage local partners.

Biennium Change Request

Matt reminded the Commission that the funds received from the State of Indiana for FY 2021 were reduced by 15% due to the negative impact on the State’s revenues caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Going forward to the next State budget period, FY 2022 – FY 2023, the State Budget Agency informed the SJRBC that the FY 2021 decrease of 15% (\$16,000) would continue through the next biennium budget period, and although unlikely, there is the potential for an additional 15% decrease; essentially resulting in a \$32,000 loss to the Commission’s operating budget.

Matt indicated he submitted a Change Package Request to make the case for the SJRBC to maintain the funding level at \$105,000. Matt stated he was fortunate to be able to build a case appealing to items from Governor Holcomb’s 2020 Next Level Agenda such as infrastructure and water quality. The State budget is anticipated to be available by the end of December.

Future Meeting Planning

2021 Meeting Schedule

Matt offered a proposed meeting schedule for Calendar Year 2021, meeting quarterly on the first Thursday of the month:

- March 4
- June 3
- September 2
- December 2

The Chair asked the Commission to consider the meeting dates and asked if there were any concerns. Hearing no comments, he called for a motion to approve the Calendar Year 2021 meeting schedule as presented.

RANDY SEXTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE CY 2021 MEETING SCHEDULE AS PRESENTED. ALICIA WALSH SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Meeting Location

Looking forward to future Commission meetings, Matt proposed moving the official meeting location to the Schrock Pavilion, located at 411 West Plymouth Avenue, Goshen, IN 46526. The City of Goshen has installed acoustic panels in the Pavilion to improve sound quality, and they are willing to host the Commission meetings at no charge. Matt noted the larger space can better accommodate the number of Commission members when hybrid (in-person and virtual options) and in-person meetings resume.

Kieran asked for any comments or questions regarding the location for future meetings. Adam Bowden and Martin Franke commented in favor of the new location.

ADAM BOWDEN MOVED TO APPROVE THE NEW MEETING LOCATION AT THE SCHROCK PAVILION IN GOSHEN. MARTIN FRANKE SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of 2021 Officers

Matt Meersman explained the traditional process for creating a Slate of Officers for the Commission is for the Chair to step off the executive committee and each of the other officers to move up one position: Vice Chair to Chair, Secretary to Vice Chair, and Treasurer to Secretary, leaving the Treasurer position to be filled. He stated that Jim Hess of the Elkhart County SWCD, and Adam Bowden of the City of Mishawaka, both indicated a willingness to serve as Treasurer.

Kieran opened the floor for nominations to fill the Treasurer's position. Jim Hess nominated Adam Bowden for Treasurer. The nomination was seconded by Martin Franke and accepted by Adam Bowden. Hearing no additional nominations, Kieran called for a motion to close the nominations and adopt the slate of officers as presented including Adam.

MARTIN FRANKE MOVED TO CLOSE THE NOMINATIONS AND ACCEPT THE CY 2021 SLATE OF OFFICERS PRESENTED. JIM HESS SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

The SJRBC proposed Slate of Officers for calendar year 2021 is as follows:

Chair:	Daragh Deegan, City of Elkhart
Vice Chair:	Kris Thomas, City of Angola
Secretary:	Alicia Walsh, Steuben County
Treasurer:	Adam Bowden, City of Mishawaka

Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy

Matt explained that for several years, the Commission has helped support the participation of its members and partners in the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy. The 2021 Academy will be held virtually and two individuals from the basin applied to participate. One applicant had to withdraw due to a scheduling conflict and the other individual who applied is Martin Franke, a member of the SJRBC from LaGrange County. Matt proposed the Commission provide financial support for Martin to attend the Watershed Leadership Academy and noted the funding has already been allocated in the budget.

Kieran called for a motion supporting Matt's proposal.

JON ROBERTS MOVED TO APPROVE PROVIDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR MARTIN FRANKE TO ATTEND THE 2021 INDIANA WATERSHED LEADERSHIP ACADEMY. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Daragh Deegan initiated a discussion about the possibility of providing support for a second member of the Commission to participate in the Academy. After some discussion, the following action was taken;

DARAGH DEEGAN MOVED TO APPROVE PROVIDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR UP TO TWO ADDITIONAL COMMISSION MEMBERS IF THEY APPLY WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS. ALICIA WALSH SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

21st Annual Symposium

Matt noted the Annual St. Joseph River Basin Commission Symposium is traditionally held on the second Friday in May; with the Commission's approval, the date of the Symposium will be May 14, 2021. Matt encouraged the members to share ideas for topics, content, or speakers as he moves forward with planning a virtual event.

Kieran called for a motion to approve hosting a Symposium on May 14, 2021.

JIM HESS MOVED TO APPROVE HOSTING THE SYMPOSIUM ON THE PROPOSED DATE, MAY 14, 2021. JEWEL WISE SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Other Business/Updates

There were no announcements or updates from the Commission members.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Matt Meersman highlighted some of the items he worked on since the last meeting.

- Madison and Conner were brought on as interns.

- Matt participated in a round table discussion with Michigan partners on how they can fund watershed activities through a volunteer donation on their taxes.
- Matt was able to make quite a few presentations this quarter both on the river and virtually. He also noted there were quite a few inquiries he was able to assist with.
- Matt stated he is on the board of the Indiana Water Monitoring Council and they are planning a symposium at the end of the month.
- Matt is having conversations with Rep. Dave Abbott about the North Branch of the Elkhart River, Sylvan Lake, and clarifying water rights (property rights under the water).
- Matt has been helping with a transition in Steuben County due to the loss of their long time County Surveyor.

Daragh Deegan suggested “clarifying water rights” might be a good topic for the Symposium.

PRESENTATION

Communications

Madison Ward provided a presentation on communications and the Commission. A recording of her presentation is available one hour and seven minutes (1:07:45) into the recording at:

<https://youtu.be/UCRz0rgD5vg>

Water Monitoring Data and New Streamgages

Conner Flora provided a presentation on the potential uses and display of monitoring data and new streamgages. A recording of his presentation is available one hour and 20 minutes (1:20:45) into the recording at: <https://youtu.be/UCRz0rgD5vg>

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

There were no comments.

ADJOURNMENT

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

DARAGH DEEGAN MOVED TO ADJOURN THE SJRBC MEETING.

RANDY SEXTON SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.



Daragh Deegan, SJRBC Chair

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