

ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
February 27, 2025

The first quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) in 2025 was held on February 27th, at the Schrock Pavilion in Goshen. The meeting was also livestreamed on YouTube and made available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvP2P8vBD_Y

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

Secretary: Ray Hoover, Town of LaGrange

Treasurer: Sarah Longenecker, St. Joseph County

Phil Barker, Elkhart County

Carl Baxmeyer, St. Joseph County

Adam Bowden, City of Mishawaka

Mark Espich, St. Joseph County

Martin Franke, LaGrange County

Bill Hartsuff, Elkhart County

Matt Horsley, Indiana DNR

John Law, St. Joseph County

Janel Meyer, Steuben County

Jarod Nisely, LaGrange County

Jon Roberts, 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

Robert Weaver, Kosciusko County

OTHERS PRESENT:

Donny Aleo, Elkhart Co. Parks

Vince Gresham, Elkhart Co. Parks

Chrissy Henderson, Steuben Co. Surveyor's

Michael Novotney, Wessler Engineering

Angie Plank, Indiana DNR

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 – December 5, 2024

Jim asked Commission members if there were any comments or questions about the minutes from December 5th. Hearing none, Jim asked Matt to review the next item on the consent agenda.

Financial Report

Matt presented the financial report for the second quarter of FY 2025 (10/01/24 – 12/31/24). Financial statements were provided to the members for review in advance of the meeting.

Matt discussed the Statement of Financial Activities. He noted invoices for all local government appropriations were sent out last week. He also said the State Board of Accounts Compliance Engagement cost was less than expected.

The Statement of Net Assets was then presented. Accounts Payable are for services provided by MACOG for October, November, and December, as well as the Compliance Engagement from the State Board of Accounts. The total Fund Balance for FY25 Q2 was \$441,332.52.

Matt reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows and reminded everyone that the statement is prepared on a cash basis ending on 12/31/24. Matt noted that the local government appropriation from Steuben County was for the second half of CY 24. Invoices for 2025 local government appropriations were sent on February 21. Matt said appropriations from Kosciusko and LaGrange counties have been received since the end of Q2.

Alicia Walsh asked if the Compliance Engagement would be every four years. Matt replied that although it has varied at times in the past, the Commission should expect it every four years.

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 – February 27, 2025

A list of the quarterly claims and associated invoices totaling \$22,835.08 was distributed to the SJRBC members for review prior to the meeting. Claims included the accounts payable as well as invoices for a Michiana Irrigation Association workshop, webmap development, the State Board of Accounts Compliance Engagement 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.

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA
ADAM BOWDEN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

OLD BUSINESS

Water Monitoring Program

Matt provided an update on the SJRBC Water Monitoring Program. He announced that Dr. Kate Barrett has resigned to focus on her teaching career at Holy Cross College. There may be an opportunity for future collaboration with Dr. Barrett on a volunteer basis. Matt said his first priority is to maintain the macroinvertebrate monitoring program, which is the most cost-effective way to gauge water quality across the basin. In the past, the samples collected during the macroinvertebrate monitoring program were sent to the Midwest Biodiversity Institute (MBI) to be analyzed. Matt said that MBI can also perform the field work in addition to analyzing the data. He was provided a quote of \$21,303.71 that includes field work, sample processing, and data management and reporting. He asked the Commission to consider a budget amendment to move \$8,000.00 from additional staffing to water monitoring to cover the change.

Alicia Walsh asked if results would be available sooner if MBI was used for both field work and analysis. She also asked how many years Matt would be willing to pay MBI to perform the field work in addition to the data analysis. Matt replied that the data analysis would still be on the

same schedule with results available the following spring. He also explained the decision to have MBI perform the field work would most likely be made annually based on the personnel available. The Commission discussed future possibilities and budget concerns of working with MBI to maintain the water monitoring program as well as hiring someone to replace Dr. Barrett.

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO AMEND THE BUDGET TO TRANSFER \$8,000
FROM ADDITIONAL STAFFING TO WATER MONITORING.
RANDY SEXTON SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

Matt then discussed the strategic water quality sampling programs in Steuben and LaGrange Counties. Kate submitted the End of Year Grant Report to the Steuben County Community Foundation. She plans to help with graphs and summarizing data after her spring semester ends. Matt said that AmeriCorps service member Shae Medlen still plans to assist LaGrange County with their water quality sampling program through August. She has been working on recruiting volunteers for 2025. Matt said he will meet with Steuben and LaGrange County representatives on Monday to discuss how to proceed with their programs after Dr. Barrett's departure.

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. He is looking to deploy four to five new units this year. 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. Todd Feenstra of Tritium has also worked with Matt to provide local technical support to help keep the Tolthawk devices online. Matt said there is opportunity to place more water level monitoring devices in other locations and would like input from partners who are participating in the cost-share program.

Watershed Study

Matt reviewed his interest in studying factors such as land cover, management practices, and soil conditions in order to develop a model for predicting the impact of changes. Prioritizing land for conservation and apportioning water management fees are two potential uses. Matt mentioned a proposal he received from Intera/Northwater for developing a Five-Year Technical Strategy and Workplan at the last meeting. He said the proposal does not include the actual development of a model, but it further defines and investigates what such an effort would entail. It also considers additional monitoring, water demand/availability analysis, and early warning systems in the strategy/workplan development. Matt said it could be a good first step before investing in a full-scale technical study or planning/management tool. He corresponded with SWCA Environmental Consultants and Wessler Engineering to compare prices for similar services. Both said they could help with implementation projects or certain components of the proposal, but are unable to provide a proposal with a similar scope. Matt will move forward with the Intera/Northwater proposal after legal counsel's review the Master Service Agreement.

25th Annual Symposium

Matt announced the 25th Annual Symposium will be held on Friday, May 16. He said the current venue options are the Schrock Pavilion or Camp Potawatami and asked for input from the Commission. He is still looking for topic and speaker suggestions. Martin Franke suggested Todd Feenstra. Jim Hess suggested Dr. Jen Tank. Matt plans to partner with the Friends of the St. Joe River again and will meet with them later today to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS

Capital Asset Policy

Matt addressed the need for a Capital Asset Policy to be in place before the next audit. A draft policy was included in the meeting packet for today's meeting. The policy specifies the threshold for an asset to be considered capital at \$5,000 per individual item. Matt explained any significant assets costing less than \$5,000 would be inventoried and considered an operating expense rather than a fixed asset. The policy would require SJRBC to perform an inventory every two years.

ADAM BOWDEN MOVED TO APPROVE THE CAPITAL ASSET POLICY.
JIM SLABAUGH SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

Noble County Support

Matt explained that the Noble County Commissioners created a committee to discuss and propose an updated stormwater ordinance. Matt was appointed to the committee along with the Director of the Maumee River Basin and Randy Sexton serving as the Chair. Randy circulated a draft ordinance that was largely based on the LTAP model and included technical standards. Matt hired Christopher Burke Engineering to review the ordinance and provide comments using SJRBC funds budgeted for member support. Feedback was also provided by the Director of the Maumee River Basin Commission. After reviewing those and other comments, Matt requested a proposal for additional support from Christopher Burke Engineering.

The additional support proposal includes a summary of recommended thresholds for various requirements referenced in the ordinance and standards, a review of the comments received from others and an attempt to resolve differences in various proposed approaches, and a presentation to the advisory committee or Noble County Commissioners to highlight the importance of various provisions in the ordinance. The cost of this work would not to exceed \$7,500.

Matt explained that proceeding with the additional support proposal would require a budget amendment. Randy Sexton thanked the SJRBC and Matt for their support. He said the ordinance is a result of pushback against regulation. He explained his concerns with this and House Bill 1037, which would void any local law, rule, ordinance or regulation on storm water management that is more stringent than the requirements of the Department of Environmental Management's (IDEM) construction stormwater general permit. Matt said the burden should be on the new development creating the need for upgrades to, or increased maintenance of, infrastructure. After further discussion, Matt stated the Commission would need to amend the budget to engage Christopher Burke Engineering for additional support because it would exceed the current amount budget for member and partner support.

ALICIA WALSH MOVED TO AMEND THE BUDGET TO INCREASE
MEMBER/PARTNER SUPPORT FROM \$2925 TO \$10,500.
MARTIN FRANKE SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

Other Business/Updates

Alicia Walsh mentioned Senate Bill 14 for anyone who may be interested. The Bill would allow a unit to adopt ordinances and regulations regarding the keeping of livestock on property.

Jim Hess discussed the Pay Dirt Conference being held March 4-5 at the Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds. The conference will host several speakers, including Matt, and will also be livestreamed.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Matt reported on several administrative tasks over the last quarter. He worked with ISDA, IASWCD and MRBC on the Watershed Development Commission legislation. He also attended the Drainage Handbook Advisory Board meeting on December 17 and met with the new Kosciusko County Surveyor regarding concerns over the Drainage Handbook. Matt said he provided a keynote presentation at the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District's annual meeting and met with USGS on catchment delineation for the web map.

Matt explained that over the last quarter he has tried to increase his presence and provide support by attending meetings of the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District, Elkhart County Commissioners, LaGrange County Drainage Board, Steuben County Commissioners, and St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

There were no items from the floor.

ADJOURNMENT

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

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Jim Hess, SJRBC Chair

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