

**MEETING MINUTES OF
PRAIRIE TRAILS CLUB INC.**

**BLPOA Community Center
6996 South S.R. 10
Knox (Bass Lake), Indiana**

January 16, 2020

MEMBERS

Paul Byer
Linda Byer
Joan Hardesty
Carolla Heilstedt
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Brian McMillin
Rhonda Milner
Deb Mix
Andrew Prokop
Sharon Smead
Rick Vlaming
Larry Wickert

GUESTS

Bob Albert, HVRM Liaison
Max Rehlander
Candy Schilz

Call to Order by President and Introductions Around the Table

Carolla Heilstedt, President, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club Inc. (“PTC”) at 6:06 pm, CST (7:06 pm, EST) on January 16, 2020 in the Bass Lake Property Owners Association Community Center, Knox, Indiana. Introductions were made around the table.

Approval of November 21, 2019 Minutes

Paul Byer moved to approve the Amended Draft November 21, 2019 minutes, which were forwarded to the members on January 9, 2020, as the final minutes of the November 21, 2019 meeting. Linda Byer seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Election of Officers

Carolla reminded those in attendance that during the first meeting of a new year officers are elected. Currently, she serves as President; Rhonda Milner as Vice President; Steve Lucas as Secretary; Kathy Lucas as Treasurer; and Linda as Liaison to the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum. She said all these officers have expressed an interest in continuing service and asked if anyone wished to nominate another person to any position or wished

to announce their interest in running. There was no response. Deb Mix moved to re-elect the current officers to the positions they now hold and that the nominations be closed. Sharon Smead seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Review and Approval of Treasurer's Report

Kathy circulated copies of the Treasurer's Report for the period ending January 16, 2020. The report provided in substantive parts:

I) First Farmers Bank & Trust (FFBT)

Balance forward from 11/21/19 \$ 37,066.25

INCOME

11/22/19 Deposit	
<i>Dues and Donation, Andrew Propkop</i>	50.00
11/25/19 Deposit	
<i>Peggy Stalbrink Christmas craft booth for PTC</i>	276.00
12/16/19 Electronic Deposit	
<i>Next Level Trails Grant, 1st Installment</i>	68,750.00

Total Income \$69,076.00

EXPENSES

10/21/19 Check #1051 to Susan Byer	(162.50)
<i>Payment for brochure design (1/2 donation)</i>	
11/12/19 Bank Fee	(3.00)
12/09/19 Bank Fee	(3.00)

Total Expenses (\$168.50)

Ending FFBT balance as of 01/16/20 \$105,973.75

II) Northern Indiana Community Foundation (NICF)

NICF balance as of 9/30/19 3,935.17

Total of both accounts: \$109,908.92

Linda asked about the status of a 2018 grant from Kankakee Valley REMC's Operation Roundup Program. The grant was a joint project among the Purdue Extension, the Starke County Initiative for Lifelong Learning (SCILL) and the PTC for bike racks to encourage Starke County residents to exercise by bicycling both on the Erie Trail and around the community. Operation Roundup approved the grant with funding in the amount of \$2,500 that included \$1,000 for materials. In December 2018, PTC members presented Operation Roundup's \$1,000 check to SCILL for materials. SCILL's share was for an in-kind construction of iron racks by its welding students. Relying on the bike rack grant agreement, the PTC included in its Next Level Trails application the placement of three bike racks along the two-mile extension now in development. This commitment includes rack placement and is now part of our obligation under the NLT grant.

Deb responded to Linda that last year's severe winter delayed construction of the bike racks by SCILL's welding students, but progress has been made. A large bike rack slated for placement at the North Judson trailhead awaits powder coating. As soon as is practicable this rack needs to be completed and a ribbon cutting ceremony scheduled. She has been in contact with an Operation Roundup representative and is confident the final \$1,500 of the grant will become available to provide the three racks along the Erie Trail extension, three racks in Knox, another rack in downtown North Judson, and a rack in Hamlet if there is local interest. Larry said he would communicate with SCILL to move the project forward. Carolla said she would assist Larry.

Monthly Report of Erie Trail Southeast Extension Workgroup, including First Quarterly Report to DNR

As required by the terms of the NLT-1-07 Next Level Trails grant, the Southeast Extension Workgroup made our First Quarterly Report to Lisa Herber, DNR Grant Coordinator, on December 30. Copies of the report were circulated during our meeting. The circulated report provided:

“Following is the First Quarterly Report from the Prairie Trails Club Inc. (the "PTC") to the Department of Natural Resources (the "DNR") for NLT-1-07 to cover the period beginning October 1 and ending tomorrow December 31, 2019. I am writing on behalf of the PTC and a workgroup established by the PTC to satisfy our responsibilities under NLT-1-107 with respect to a two-mile southeasterly extension of the Erie Trail in Starke County. Please let me know if you have questions or comments.

“On October 29, the PTC and the Troyer Group, Inc. entered an “Agreement between Owner and Engineer for Professional Services” to assist with the execution of NLT-1-07. The survey and data collection phase will be performed through Bob Alois of Territorial Engineering, LLC in Walkerton, and subsequent phases will be performed through Jonathon Geels of Troyer Group in Mishawaka.

“On November 8 through you, the DNR sent an email to congratulate PTC on the delivery of a fully executed contract that will expire on May 1, 2022. You informed the workgroup on November 18 that \$68,750 was approved for Phase 1 of the PTC grant and contract with the State of Indiana. As PTC Treasurer, Kathy Lucas made a written request for this amount the following day.

“Carolla Heilstedt, PTC President, reported during the PTC's November 21 meeting that Territorial Engineering was given the go-ahead to begin the survey phase. At the request of the Troyer Group, PTC member Paul Byer cleared brush from atop ballast placed for the former Erie Railroad to help facilitate the requisite survey. During the meeting, members of the PTC and the general public were cautioned that the two-mile rail segment east of US 35 is now a worksite, and entry should not be made without prior consultation with the Troyer Group.

“You advised the PTC workgroup that the disbursement for Phase 1 should have been made to the PTC on December 16. The PTC Treasurer subsequently confirmed receipt of that disbursement by the First Farmers Bank and Trust Company branch in North Judson.”

By email Lisa Herber thanked the PTC for the First Quarterly Report and noted that our quarterly “reports must provide an accounting of grant funds spent on the project up to the date of the report submission. If any funds (match or disbursed) have been expended please provide a short description and dollar estimate.” Jonathon Geels responded to us and the DNR that “Because field work for the survey hasn't been completed yet, we have not submitted any invoices for that work. By the next report, we will have a more in-depth report on that effort, including any invoices.” Carolla informed the membership that on January 8, 2020 Bob Aloï reported Territorial Engineering had “finished the field work on the data collection.”

Organization of Exploratory Group to Evaluate the Feasibility of a Grant Application for the Northwest Extension of the Erie Trail

What is expected to be the third and final round of grant applications under Governor Holcomb’s Next Level Trails Program is anticipated for later this year. Preliminary contacts have been made that are directed primarily toward the possibility of seeking to extend a trail, from the current trailhead on the east edge of North Judson, northwest through town and toward the Kankakee River. But the possibility of seeking a grant for another southeast extension has not been ruled out. Larry urged that if the PTC, alone or in some supporting role with local government, is to have a realistic chance of success, we need to make significant steps quickly toward a grant development strategy. Carolla invited members to offer assistance with the exploratory group. If a grant workgroup is later formed, its membership may differ from the workgroup for the active two-mile southeast extension.

Results of 2019 Step-It-Up Challenge by Moving Starke County Forward

Deb outlined results of the 2019 Step-It-Up Challenge and said an award presentation would be made during the January 21 meeting in Knox of Moving Starke County Forward. [Update by Secretary: As anticipated, Moving Starke County Forward held an awards ceremony during its regular meeting on January 21. The PTC team was honored for having “by a wide margin” the most miles logged. Shown on the next page are four individuals honored during the awards ceremony. From left to right are Kathy Lucas, Jeff Mencl, Arlene Noble and Michael McGregor.]



During the PTC meeting, Deb asked for input to improve participation. Kathy responded that she was unable to determine whether mileage she was posting online was being recorded. “This aspect was confusing and a little frustrating.” Members agreed a modification from prior years’ competitions that made walking uncompetitive with bicycling was appropriate, but requiring ten miles of biking to one mile of walking was excessive. Deb asked what would be a more reasoned proportion. Larry suggested three miles of bicycling to one mile of walking. Max Rehlander agreed. Several members suggested that a category or categories be created for participation by children.

Report by Brochure Workgroup

Linda reported delivery of the final version of the four-fold accordion style brochure to the printer. The membership previously agreed to the printing of 3,000 copies. Brian McMillin said the brochure looked good and expressed enthusiasm for having a current map in public distribution before the spring. Kathy praised the efforts of Susan Byer and Yancy Lucas for putting the brochure together and of Russ Blais and Bruce Fingerhut for getting local sponsors. Carolla said she would communicate with Bruce and then have the publisher proceed.

Preliminary Report by Workgroup to Develop Redesigned Website and to Update Future Vision Statement

Carolla is chairing a workgroup to develop a redesigned website with the inclusion of an updated future vision statement. She previously appointed Bruce, Rhonda, Kathy,

Sharon, Steve and herself to the workgroup. In cooperation with Precept Partners, Carolla has begun development of a website connection to facilitate the receipt and distribution of public information and inquiries. The PTC will have a Google email address. Linda asked what would be the address. Carolla responded that was a good question and she would work on having an answer by the next meeting. She said the next step is to schedule a meeting with Steve Antisdell of Precept Partners. Carolla encouraged persons in addition to those already appointed to the workgroup to join in the initiative.

Discussion of Possible New Grant Applications

Luminous Fund

Kathy reported that Kathy Carrier has invited her to identify grant possibilities of interest to PTC membership that might be approved by the Luminous Fund for 2020. The Luminous Fund is implementing a new technology for grant applications through the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne and has asked that the PTC participate in a pilot project by which an application will probably need to be submitted in “a week or two”. Member suggestions for possible grant requests were solicited from members during the January meeting.

Steve reflected the PTC has a lot of funding needs for the existing Erie Trail and for trail extension and connectivity. A grant request should match a grantor’s funding priorities to the extent possible. He said he hoped in offering a wish list of needs the members will keep in mind that what can be accomplished must be a good fit for the Luminous Fund as well as the PTC and accord latitude for the resulting grant application.

Ideas for grant needs were offered by the PTC membership which included the following:

- (1) Development of a repair station or stations along the existing trail or perhaps with one near the northwestern end of the trail and another in the new extended trail.
- (2) Maintenance to consist of asphalt pavement resurfacing and crack repairs on the existing trail or the removal of large trees (most commonly cottonwoods) near the trail that are causing buckling pavement.
- (3) Matching funds for the extension of the trail northwesterly through North Judson and on toward English Lake (or perhaps southeasterly to the Pulaski County line).
- (4) Land acquisition along the trail, ideally at a site east of Starke County Road 100 West, to support trailers and the equestrian trail.
- (5) Development of a parking area at the new junction of the Erie Trail and Starke County Road 700 East that would be sufficient for parking a horse trailer or trailers.

Several members underlined the need for maintenance funds. Steve responded this need is a nearly universal concern today with aggressive off-road trail development. Funding for maintenance is a need expressed by trail managers all over the country. State legislation has been suggested in Indiana to help. Carolla agreed and said when long-distance trails, such as the Erie Trail serving the American Discovery Trail and the Great American Rail-Trail, start to be viewed as valuable infrastructure and not merely of local interest, maintenance needs will likely achieve a higher state and federal priority.

Kathy agreed and said we may soon wish our members to contact elected officials in support of legislation for maintenance funding.

Arrow Head Country RC&D Area, Inc.

Steve addressed the possibility of seeking a grant from Arrow Head Country. Starke County is one of ten northern Indiana counties eligible to seek funding from this not-for-profit for “projects that pertain to dealing with our natural resources and conservation awareness and education”. Applications are due by the end of January so that quick action is needed, but the application form for Arrow Head Country is not complex. The PTC made a commitment to Linda and Paul, of up to \$400, for the purchase of chemicals to treat invasive species along the trail. They have not yet expended the \$400 so we could use that amount for match for a grant pertaining to invasive species control. The application could be for additional chemicals, perhaps accompanying equipment, and native replacement species. He suggested near the Bogus Run bridge as a place where Siberian elms are dominant. The elms could be cut and treated and replaced with native trees or other plants. The project could be accompanied by signage to help with public awareness and education concerning the need for invasive species control. The Bogus Run bridge is in an area that receives a relatively high level of public traffic and where people stop to rest or view the stream. Steve said he shared this concept with Erica Luchik who believed the project worthy and one CISMA should be involved in. She wrote “The point is to increase invasives work and create awareness.... So including signage on the restoration would be a neat idea as well.”

Linda doubted the need to plant replacement species along the trail. She thought a stretch along the trail, east of County Road 125 East, was preferable for a project and would not require species replacement. Paul said many of the trees near the Bogus Run bridge were large and could slide downhill to a neighboring property. He was concerned a project near the bridge might have a negative effect on creating an equestrian trail there. Linda said a project of this type needed more advance study before applying for a grant.

No consensus was achieved on moving forward with a grant application to Arrow Head Country.

Board of Directors Meeting Scheduled for March 19

A meeting of the PTC Board of Directors was scheduled for March 19, 2020 at 6:00 p.m., CDT in the Bass Lake Pub and Ristorante, 2869 South County Road 210, Knox, IN 46534. The current board members are Diane Blais, Bruce Fingerhut, Carolla Heilstedt, Steve Lucas, Brian McMillin, Sharon Smead and Peggy Stalbrink. In her capacity as the PTC Treasurer, Kathy Lucas also participates. Any PTC member is also welcome to attend.

Membership Meeting Scheduled for March 26

The next meeting of the PTC membership was scheduled for March 26, 2020 at 6:00 p.m., CDT in the BLPOA Community Center, 6996 South SR 10, Knox.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm, CST (8:38 pm, EST).