

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

**North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library
208 Keller Avenue
North Judson, IN**

August 10, 2016

MEMBER ATTENDEES

Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Katherine Carrier
Bruce Fingerhut
Kathleen Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Brian McMillin
Rhonda Milner
Sharon Smead
Greg Wittig
Karen Wittig

Call to Order

Bruce Fingerhut, President, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club (the "PTC") at 6:34 p.m., CDT on August 10, 2016 at the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library.

Approval of Minutes

Bruce presented the draft minutes of the July 11, 2016 for additions or corrections. The minutes were approved by acclamation without modification.

Consideration of Scheduling Future Meeting Dates

Bruce asked if the members were interested in scheduling future meeting dates for 2016 and 2017. He said his presence was not essential, but because of of a biweekly work schedule, setting a regular date (such as the second Tuesday of the month) would require him to miss half the meetings. The members expressed support for a scheduling system that allowed the President to attend regularly.

Karen Wittig said she believed Wednesday evenings were generally a good target for meeting dates. Sharon Smead agreed. There was also consensus that 6:30 pm, CT, in the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library, typically worked well. Meetings might be held at other Starke County locations, particularly when the subject matter was of particular interest to persons outside Wayne Township.

After further discussion the members agreed meetings should be set for the second or third Wednesday of each month, except in December and January when meetings would not be held in the absence of a special need identified by an officer. For 2016 a meeting would not be held in November because of the proximity to Thanksgiving.

The President then announced meetings for September 28 and October 26, 2016 at 6:30 p.m., CDT, in the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library. He said he would offer 2017 dates by the September 28 meeting.

Schedule Trail Work Date

Following discussion the members agreed to schedule a trail work date for October 1, 2016 beginning at 9:00 a.m., CDT, at the rest park trailhead (junction of Indiana State Route 10 and Starke County Road 250 West).

Update on Trail Spur Proposals to Bailey's Discount Store and to Bass Lake

Kathleen Lucas reviewed with members a Starke County Economic Development Foundation initiative to support quality of place ("QOP"). A subcommittee of the QOP initiative is directed to the Bass Lake community, including desires expressed for better recognition and connectivity for Bass Lake residents to the NJ-Erie trail. Three elements given tentative support by the subcommittee were (1) a possible spur using Range Road to connect to Bailey's Discount Center with signage at the trail and Bailey's; (2) pursuit of funding to extend the trail southeasterly from US 35 to CR 600 East; and (3) exploring share-the-road signed access on CR 800 South eastward from its trail intersection and then northward on CR 450 East to CR 210 on the south end of Bass Lake. Kathleen said Bruce agreed to talk with Mark Bailey to determine if Bailey might support element (1). Katherine Carrier, Yancy Lucas, Steve Lucas and others have successfully biked to and from Bass Lake using the roads referenced in element (3).

Bruce reported he contacted Mark Bailey by telephone to discuss element (1). In concept Mark Bailey responded he was "all for it." Bruce added that approval would be needed from the Starke County Commissioners for both element (1) and element (3). Signage would need to be developed and approved, as would any shelter at Bailey's Discount Center.

Linda Byer asked how the membership might now move forward with element (1) and element (3). Was another meeting of the QOP scheduled? Kathleen responded that Diane Thalmann, a member of the Foundation Board, said when the PTC had need for Foundation action, the Bass Lake subcommittee should ask for a meeting.

Steve noted that Nathan Origer, Executive Director of Pulaski County CDC/Economic Development, recently shared a plan to provide a connection to Pulaski County and the

Panhandle Pathway from the NJ Erie Trail south on Starke County Road 200 East. SCR 200 East becomes Pulaski County Road 300 West at the county line. He asked whether Origer's plan should be included in discussions with the Foundation and the Starke County Commissioners. Inclusion might support efficiency and help demonstrate growing interest in the trail. The members agreed the SCR 200 East proposal should be included in discussions with the Foundation and Commissioners. The membership asked Kathy to request another QOP meeting to consider these proposals and to make favorable recommendations to the Commissioners.

Membership of Active Members and Possible Membership Drive

Bruce asked whether there was a list of current PTC members. Kathleen responded that earlier in the day she deposited membership dues and a donation in the PTC account at the Monterey State Bank. She did not have a complete membership list but would check PayPal and the Northern Indiana Community Foundation for additional dues payments and donations before the next meeting. Bruce said he had friends and family who would likely pay membership dues. "I just need to ask." This item will be placed on the September meeting agenda for follow-up.

Consideration of Lifetime Memberships

Susan DeSantis proposed previously a lifetime individual membership in addition to the current yearly \$25 individual membership. Susie contacted Kathy by email earlier in the day to say she would be unable to attend the meeting. Susie asked the members to consider the proposal in her absence.

Bruce said he was not opposed to a lifetime membership but was unsure of a reasonable amount. Linda suggested \$250. Another suggestion was \$500.

Steve said sometimes lifetime memberships have age limitations. For example, a member might have to be at least 60 years old to qualify. Greg Wittig agreed but said for a volunteer not-for-profit organization such as the PTC, he believed any lifetime membership should be without age limitation.

After further discussion the membership agreed to approve, effective immediately, a lifetime individual membership at a fee of \$250.

Response to Chamber of Commerce Inquiry Regarding USBR 35

Steve said Deb Mix of the Starke County Chamber of Commerce emailed several of us on August 1 to ask whether the PTC would be willing to assist with the US Bicycle Route 35 Pilot Project. In cooperation with the Hoosier Rails to Trails Council and the Indiana Office of Tourism Development, the pilot project would seek to advance knowledge and use of USBR 35 by the 15 Indiana counties through which USBR 35 passes. Among the pilot project's tasks at the county levels would be (1) To create awareness. (2) To find a local leader. (3) To seek support from Bicycle Indiana and similar groups. (4) To create an Indiana bicycle hospitality program. (5) To complete a hospitality assessment. What within reason might improve local hospitality? (6) To create asset maps. Steve said he thought this stage was key to the undertaking, and the pilot project anticipated a mile-by-mile identification of assets. Longer segments might be applied to rural areas. (7) To

study the local asset map and fill gaps. (8) To help with training for public safety and inspire opportunities (such as local bike hostels). (9) To develop a website with information and links regarding services associated with USBR 35. (10) To announce availability of materials in the spring of 2017. (11) To afterwards hold quarterly meetings. Steve said the core question for membership was whether it wished to assist the Chamber as requested by Deb Mix.

Bryan McMillin asked what would be considered assets. Steve responded examples might be local services such as restaurants, overnight accommodations, groceries, and restrooms. Linda added that other examples would be natural areas such as the prairie habitats along the trail and other wild areas. Paul Byer referenced specifically the Kankakee Fish and Wildlife Area near the trail. Bruce reflected that USBR 35 was caused to zigzag through North Judson because multiple services are available there. North Judson is the only municipality on USBR 35 between LaPorte and Rochester.

Sharon Smead suggested participation in the pilot project could have both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand the profile of trails in Starke County would be raised, and the goals of the pilot project are laudable. But attention to USBR 35 might be at the expense of pressing needs of the existing NJ Erie Trail.

Linda said “we need more people using the trails” because we need workers and financial help and because we need a higher profile among public officials. If USBR 35 becomes a significant factor, the NJ Erie Trail will have more users and increased local interest. She recommended offering assistance to the Starke County Chamber of Commerce.

Katherine noted Deb Mix is also a member of the Starke County Parks Department. A healthy trails system and a healthy park system would be mutually supportive.

Bruce said he volunteered to serve as the “local leader” anticipated by USBR 35 pilot project. He recommended agreeing to provide assistance to the Chamber of Commerce. By consensus the members asked Kathleen to inform Deb Mix our members would assist as requested.

Adjournment

Vice President Rhonda Miller moved to adjourn. Anita Mcmillin seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m., CDT.