

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

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

October 30, 2018

MEMBERS

**Diane Blais
Russell Blais
Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Susan DeSantis
Carolla Heilstedt
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Brian McMillin
Rhonda Milner
Arlene Noble
Sharon Smead
Peggy Stalbrink
Rich Stalbrink
Rick Vlaming
Larry Wickert**

GUESTS

**Bob Albert, HVRM Liaison
Bob Aloï, Territorial Engineering LLC**

Call to Order by Vice President

Rhonda Milner, Vice President, called to order a membership meeting of the Prairie Trails Club Inc. ("PTC") at 6:02 pm, CDT (7:02 pm, EDT) on October 30, 2018 in the Bass Lake Property Owners Association Community Center, Bass Lake, Indiana.

Approval of September 27, 2018 Minutes

Paul Byer moved to approve the minutes as written for the September 27, 2018 meeting. Diane Blais seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Kathy Lucas circulated among the members a written copy of the Treasurer's Report. The following summarizes the report:

1) First Farmers Bank & Trust (FFBT)

Balance forward from 9/27/18	\$ 16,988.17
9/28/18 Deposit	
Memberships: C. Heilstedt & Ray Mix	50.00
9/28/18 Deposit	
Membership: Roger Sutton	25.00
9/28/18 Deposit	
Membership: Thomas Foster of Carmel	25.00
10/15/18 Mobile Deposit	
KVREMC for bike racks	1,000.00
10/17/18 Deposit	
Ron & Terry Lee cash donation	50.00
10/22/18 Check #1018	
Plaques bought for Karen Wittig bench	(21.00)
	1,204.00
Ending FFBT balance as of 10/30/18	\$18,192.17
2) Northern Indiana Community Foundation (NICF)	3,929.34
Total of 2 accounts:	\$22,121.51

Kathy also provided an update effective October 30, 2018 on PTC Restricted Funds and Unrestricted Funds. FFBT holds all Restricted Funds as follows:

Luminous Fund Grant 1	Signage on S13, a Bass Lake Connector	681.56
Luminous Fund Grant 2	Signage on S13 incl. "You are Here"	5,000.00
Hardesty Memorial Grant	Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage	9,627.56

Wine Timers Donation	K. Wittig Memorial Bench	329.00 (\$21 plaques pd. SpecialtyShoppe)
K&S Lucas Donation	K. Wittig Memorial Bench/Landscaping	100.00
Jain Trucking	"Funds go towards picnic tables"	100.00
KVREMC [new]	Bike racks	1,000.00

RESTRICTED TOTAL 16,838.12

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS	SUBTOTAL	RESTRICTED	UNRESTRICTED
FFBT	18,192.17	16,838.12	1,354.05
NICF	3,929.34		3,929.34
TOTAL	22,121.51	16,838.12	5,283.39

Peggy Stalbrink moved to approve Treasurer's Report including update of restricted and unrestricted funds. Sharon Smead seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Update on Kankakee Valley REMC Bike Racks Grant

Peggy Bohak was correspondent for the October 23, 2018 *Leader* newspaper report on the Kankakee Valley REMC grant to the PTC for Starke County bike racks. Participating in the grant application were PTC members Sharon, Carolla Heilstedt, Kathy, Deb Mix, and Yancy Lucas.

Jerry Gurrado of SCILL agreed to have welding students make bike racks as an in-kind match for the grant. Rachel Moore of SCILL will direct the project and will encourage students to be creative with welding techniques. The *Leader* reported that suggestions for placing bike racks within Starke County can be forwarded to Kathy. Peggy shared the following image showing from left to right: Sharon, Jerry, Rachel, Kathy and Deb:



Grant Applications this Autumn

Kathy reported that on October 16 she completed an America Walks Community Change Grant application. The grant seeks to fund a “science walk” along the Erie Trail, and, if approved, would implement a concept PTC members developed in September.

Kathy said she also anticipated making a grant application to the Luminous Foundation to provide a local match for Governor Holcomb’s Next Level Connections program. This program will, at a five-to-one ratio, provide up to \$5 million for individual initiatives to expand and connect Indiana trail systems. She said she would develop a contingency for how funding might be directed if a Next Level Connections award is not received. She asked members for assistance in developing the grant application.

Kathy said she planned to develop a third grant application for submission to the Indiana Greenways Foundation. The Greenways Foundation featured the Erie Trail as its October 2018 “trail of the month”. She said the PTC could seek a maximum of \$5,000 from the Greenways Foundation and suggested a supportable purpose could be for three bicycle repair stations similar to those considered favorably during our September meeting. The stations would have tools to fix flat tires and to tighten or loosen fixtures. These and a manual air pump would be tethered to the station.

Susan DeSantis questioned the need for an air pump. She said she carried an air pump on her bike and thought most serious cyclists did the same. Russell Blais and Brian McMillin said they liked the concept of the bicycle repair stations, including access to a quality air pump. Other possibilities for the Greenways Foundation grant application were offered, including the acquisition and placement of a small storage facility. A full consensus was not immediately achieved.

Steve Lucas suggested seeking a perspective on the kinds of goods or services the Greenways Foundation might envision as suitable subjects for a grant. The Next Level Connections program offers exciting activities, particularly with the Governor’s statewide commitment of \$90 million. But developing the requisite local match is a huge task for supporters of a predominantly rural trail like ours. An application similar to the one planned for the Luminous Foundation might make sense if the Greenways Foundation would consider this kind of grant.

The members did not provide a specific directive to Kathy for the development of a Greenways Foundation grant application, leaving it instead to her discretion. She said she welcomed any thoughts or assistance from the members going forward but noted the grant application must be submitted by November 15.

Update on Wine Club Memorial for Karen Wittig

Kathy told the members that she showed Dr. Greg Wittig the plaques developed for the Karen Wittig bench east of US 35. She said he was moved and seemed pleased with the plaques and the memorial.

Those of us who knew Karen will remember her as a friend and as a committed PTC member. She was one of the original members of the PTC Board of Directors. She is shown below assisting on one of our scheduled workdays:



Brian McMillin led the initiative on behalf of the Wine Club to fund and place a bench along the trail in Karen's memory. He said he would work with the Wine Club and Greg to develop for next spring a suitable dedication activity.

Kathy reported that earlier in the day Bruce Fingerhut attached onsite the plaques to Karen's bench. The plaques read "In Loving Memory of Karen Anne Dempsey-Wittig. You were our sunshine." Bruce then emailed to Kathy the image shown on the following page:



Discussion and Direction for Future of Lids-to-Benches Initiative

When the PTC first considered participation in the “ABC Promise Partnership” at Green Tree Plastics in Evansville, questions were posed as to our ability to collect enough caps to be effective. *PTC Minutes* (July 25, 2015). Ten months later a sufficient number of lids had been collected to estimate we had half of what was needed for a single bench. *PTC Minutes* (May 15, 2016). After sixteen more months we collected enough lids for delivery and receipt in Evansville of two benches. *PTC Minutes* (September 27, 2017). Both of these benches have been placed along the Erie Trail.

Kathy reported that only a little more than a year later, we have enough additional lids for five more benches. In part the increased number can be attributed to a more liberal Green Tree Plastics approach to the weight required by the “ABC Promise Partnership” for each bench. But a larger factor is the enthusiasm and public support developed at collection points in North Judson and Bass Lake. Russ Blais joked the collection effort had almost become a “runaway train”. Kathy said when she proposed removal of the

collection basket from the Farmers Bank & Trust in North Judson, employees expressed great disappointment. The membership agreed to continue collecting lids until next spring with an understanding continuation of the initiative would then be reevaluated based on need.

Sharon said the Marshall County Horse Association recently voted to sponsor the placement of one of the new benches on an equestrian segment of the Erie Trail. Arlene Noble added she would like to sponsor a bench at the northwest quadrant of C.R. 300 East and the Erie Trail in an area that is already being readied. Kathy said she and Steve wish to sponsor a third bench in association with interpretive signage being developed for Lena Park.

Report on Progress at Bogus Run and Fell Ditch Bridges

On October 1, Bruce, Paul, Steve and Russell suppressed invasive species in the vicinity of the bridges for Bogus Run and Fell Ditch. Both bridges were power-washed and will be sealed when weather permits.



Four new signs and posts were erected for the bridges. A generous Hardesty Memorial Endowment Grant, achieved through the Northern Indiana Community Foundation in Starke County, made this signage possible. Below is the new sign for the approach to the Fell Ditch Bridge that serves users traveling northwest on the Erie Trail, including those that are northbound on US Bike Route 35 or westbound on the American Discovery Trail:



Report on You-Are-Here Signage with Website Coordination

Yancy and webmaster, Stephen Antisdel, collaborated on the development of onsite “You-Are-Here” signage and its coordination with the PTC website. The collaboration included a new QR Code for inclusion on signage that will link directly to a new “Maps” category online. The “Maps” category is now at <https://www.prairietrailsclub.org/maps>

Yancy prepared two levels of maps. One focuses on the main stem of the Erie Trail and the second gives a broader perspective for trekkers on the American Discovery Trail or US Bike Route 35. Both maps can now be printed from the website in pdf and can also provide templates to be used for updated trail pamphlets. OTES in North Judson will print the new onsite signage. BIC Committee members suggested buying black 4”x4” recycled posts from Green Tree Plastics to support the signs.

Report on October 16 Workday at Signal Bungalow

Paul, Sharon, Bruce, Russ and Steve gathered as scheduled at the intersection of the Erie Trail and County Road 300 East for the October 16 workday. The group focused its efforts in the vicinity of the signal bungalow a few yards east of C.R. 200 East. During our August 21, 2018 meeting, the membership made the bungalow a contingent fourth priority for the development of new informational signage. A few days in advance of the October 16 workday, Bruce day-lighted the site, and his efforts were augmented. Paul brought heavy equipment to remove invasive species from the trail, here most notably honeysuckle. The historic signal bungalow as viewed from the trail after the workday is shown below:



Bob Albert, HVRM Liaison, said he thought interpretive signage for the site was a good idea. He also suggested the site would be a suitable location for other improvements such as the addition of a bicycle repair station. Bob said documentation at the HVRM was not as substantial for the Erie Lackawanna Railroad as for some other railroads that went through North Judson, but he “would ask around about signal bungalows on the Erie.”

Steve thanked Bob for sharing with Yancy a postcard depicting a C&O Railroad stop for promotion of Lena Park in the early 20th Century. The Erie Lackawanna Railroad also passed through Lena Park, and images of the postcard will be used at an interpretive site along the trail. Bob responded by saying, “You’re very welcome. What good is a picture if nobody sees it?”

Report from Trail Extension Workgroup

During last month’s meeting, the PTC created a workgroup to help explore extension of the Erie Trail either northwest of North Judson or southeast of Bass Station. Carolla brokered a meeting of the workgroup on October 27 at the 10-56 Brewing Company south of Knox. Representatives of trail organizations both northwest and southeast of the Erie Trail were invited to join workgroup members Larry Wickert, Bruce, Carolla, Steve and Yancy. In attendance were representatives of the Panhandle Pathway (the “PP”) that included John Bawcum and Nathan Origer. Also participating was Sarah Origer of the Northern Indiana Community Foundation.

Following a discussion of Governor Holcomb’s Next Level Connections program, Nathan suggested the PP pursue a grant for trail extension from Winamac north to Bass Station and that the PTC pursue a grant from Bass Station to the small Erie Trail segment in Monterey. John urged that correspondence supporting these concepts be sent to DNR’s Division of Outdoor Recreation by November 1. Those present agreed to undertake this ambitious approach. Larry and Bruce both agreed they would contact Bob Aloï to seek professional assistance in evaluating and preparing an informal letter of intent. Bob is a partner with Territorial Engineering LLC and led the effort for the existing Erie Trail.

At the PTC’s request, Bob Aloï caused his firm to very quickly prepare cost estimates and other documentation to outline a plan that would include crossings over US 35 and over the Tippecanoe River. Bob appeared at the general membership meeting, explained possibilities, shared the Territorial Engineering estimates and mapping, and answered questions. He said one time-consuming stage would be to obtain a full review from the DNR’s Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology for the Tippecanoe River Bridge Crossing. In response to a question from Carolla, he estimated the cost of the Sec. 401 review to be \$10,000.

Steve said that unless the membership had serious reservations, the workgroup would finalize an informal letter of intent, using the Territorial Engineering documentation, and forward the letter by November 1. No one expressed opposition to this approach.

First Report of Starke County Signage Placement

Steve said the Starke County Highway Department has begun repairing and replacing trail signs at intersections with county roads. He expressed appreciation to Rhonda and Rachel Oesterreich for their help. The placement of Share-the-Road signs on connector roads is expected to begin in November. He said he would offer a more thorough report during the next meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for the BLPOA Community Center, 6996 South SR 10, Knox (Bass Lake), Indiana on December 6, 2018 at 6:00 pm, CST.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 pm, CDT (8:38 pm, EDT).