

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

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

September 12, 2019

**MEMBERS**

Linda Byer  
Paul Byer  
Bruce Fingerhut  
Kathy Lucas  
Steve Lucas  
Anita McMillin  
Brian McMillin  
Sharon Smead

**GUESTS**

Bob Albert, Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum Liaison  
John Bawcum, Friends of the Panhandle Pathway

**Call to Order by Secretary**

Steve Lucas, Secretary, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club Inc. ("PTC") at 6:10 pm, CDT (7:10 pm, EDT) on September 12, 2019 in the Bass Lake Property Owners Association Community Center, Bass Lake, Indiana. Introductions were made around the table.

**Approval of August 15, 2019 Minutes (and Confirmation of July 18, 2019 Minutes)**

Bruce Fingerhut moved to approve the draft minutes as final minutes of the August 15, 2019 meeting. Sharon Smead seconded the motion. The motion carried.

From a group discussion during the August meeting, it appeared that some members may not have received the draft July 18, minutes. The members approved the July minutes during the August meeting but with the condition they would be subject to modification at the September meeting if requested by any member. Steve said when he distributed the draft August minutes he noted this conditional approval and provided a link to the July minutes on the PTC website. Members were asked to let him know if they received the communication, and many members and other recipients responded they had. No one made a request to him or during the September meeting to modify the July minutes. Their approval during the August meeting is confirmed.

**Review and Approval of Treasurer's Report**

Kathy Lucas circulated copies of the Treasurer's Report for the period that followed the August meeting. The report provided in substantive parts:

<b>I)</b>	<b><u>First Farmers Bank &amp; Trust (FFBT)</u></b>	
	<b>Balance forward from 08/15/19</b>	<b>\$ 31,869.54</b>
	<b><u>INCOME</u></b>	
	08/19/19 Deposit <i>Sharon Smead dues &amp; donation</i>	50.00
	08/19/19 Deposit <i>Rich &amp; Peg Stalbrink dues &amp; donation</i>	100.00
	08/19/19 Deposit <i>Rhonda Milner Dues</i>	25.00
	08/05/19 Deposit <i>Gurrado/Winters donation for Lucas lakehouse stay</i>	700.00
	09/05/19 Mobile Deposit <i>Buckeye Pipeline match for B. Fingerhut payment</i>	250.00
	09/09/19 Transfer from PayPal <i>Joe Milausnic, Linda &amp; Paul Byer, &amp; Rick Vlaming dues</i>	120.47
	09/09/19 Deposit <i>Arlene Noble Dues</i>	<u>25.00</u>
	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$1,270.47</b>
	<b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>	
	08/27/19 Check #1043 to B. Fingerhut <i>Reimbursement for wood sealant</i>	(146.00)
	08/08/19 Check #1044 to B. Fingerhut <i>Reimbursement for gate repair materials</i>	(168.97)
	08/27/19 Check #1046 to Lucas Corral Design <i>Design of Vin Fiz Sign (approved by Luminous Fund)</i>	<u>(650.00)</u>
	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$964.97</b>
	<b>Total Transactions</b>	<b>5,207.99</b>
	<b>Ending FFBT balance as of 09/12/19</b>	<b>\$ 37,175.04</b>
<b>II)</b>	<b><u>Northern Indiana Community Foundation (NICF)</u></b>	
	<b>NICF balance as of 9/12/19</b>	<b><u>3,933.75</u></b>
	<b>Total of both accounts:</b>	<b>\$41,108.79</b>

Kathy thanked the Gurrado and Winters families for this wonderful donations after use of the Lucas lakehouse at Bass Lake. She said “no amount was suggested by Steve and me and the amount of their donation they chose was extraordinary.” She said development of the *Vin Fiz* signage used the remaining funds in the original Luminous Fund grant made in 2017, and she again thanked the Carrier family for its terrific PTC support. Kathy then provided a breakdown of restricted and unrestricted funding as set forth below:

**RESTRICTED GRANTS/DONATIONS**

Luminous Fund 1 (2017)	Signage for Bass Lake Spur	0	( <i>Vin Fiz</i> sign design 61.19)
Luminous Fund 2 (2018)	Signage for Bass Lake General	4,411.19	( <i>Vin Fiz</i> same 588.81)
Luminous Fund 3 (2019)	Match NLT Grant	5,000.00	
Hardesty Memorial Grant	Wayfinding/Interpretive Signs	8,057.50	
Hardesty Memorial Grant (2019)	Match NLT Grant	5,000.00	
PTC Commitment	Match NLT Grant	5,000.00	
Indiana Greenways Foundation	Match NLT Grant	5,000.00	
Marshall County Horse Association	Bench (on Trail Extension)	350.00	
Lucas lakehouse guests’ donation	Future Vision/website	700.00	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$33,518.69</b>	

<b>SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>RESTRICTED</b>	<b>UNRESTRICTED</b>
First Farmers Bank & Trust	\$37,175.04	\$30,158.69	\$6,656.35
Northern Indiana Community Foundation	3,933.75	3,000.00	933.75
<b>BREAKDOWN</b>	<b>\$41,108.79</b>	<b>\$33,518.69</b>	<b>\$7,590.10</b>

Paul Byer moved to approve the Treasurer’s Report including the update of Restricted and Unrestricted funds. Anita McMillin seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Monthly Report of Erie Trail Extension Workgroup**

Steve reported the Trail Extension Workgroup reviewed the draft Master Agreement from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (Contract 0000000000000000000036278) for the PTC’s southeast extension of the Erie Trail. The Workgroup requested that DNR make technical modifications. One modification was made and the draft returned to PTC President Carolla Heilstedt for electronic signature. On September 8, she signed the Master Agreement with notice to the DNR.

Bruce, Kathy and Steve attended the DNR’s August 20 Next Level Trails Workshop held at Indiana Dunes State Park in Chesterton. There they also met with Jonathon Geels of the Troyer Group and discussed briefly the development of planning for the trail extension project. Jonathon acknowledged the unique character of the NLT grant and said he would follow up with us in a couple of weeks. As reflected in August, the Troyer Group was the engineering consultant chosen as our first choice to negotiate a contract.

Bruce told the membership that the Workgroup would seek to finalize both the contract with the DNR and the contract with the Troyer Group by the October 15 PTC meeting. The Workgroup understands the membership is anxious to move forward with our Erie Trail extension project.

Following the Next Level Trails Workshop, Bruce, Kathy and Steve had dinner with John Bawcum and Fred Kasten of the Friends of the Panhandle Pathway. John and Fred said the Panhandle Pathway Friends intended to seek a trail extension grant in the second NLT stage.

## **Friends of the Panhandle Pathway Intention to Seek Next Level Trails Grant**

Steve welcomed John Bawcum, President of the Friends of the Panhandle Pathway. John announced his organization plans to seek an NLT grant in its current second stage to extend the Panhandle Pathway on both the northern and southern ends. “With this grant we hope to extend the Panhandle Pathway north 1.8 miles from SR 14 to US 35. In addition, we hope to extend the southern terminus from our Kenneth turnaround south, over the active railroad tracks to France Park in Cass County. This southern extension will be approximately one mile from our present end point.” These extensions would provide a non-motorized paved route that is 22 miles long. The plan is to later take the Panhandle Pathway to the entrance for the Tippecanoe River State Park.

Steve said the Friends of the Panhandle Pathway provided a letter of support for the PTC’s current two-mile extension project. The PTC will provide the Panhandle Pathway a similar letter of support. Like the Erie Trail the Panhandle Pathway is a “Visionary Trail” as designated by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. The goal is ultimately to connect our two trails as part of a statewide trail system.

## **Report by Brochure Workgroup**

The Brochure Workgroup met on September 3 and again on September 12 immediately prior to this PTC Membership meeting. The Workgroup agreed to an initial printing of a new four-fold design (replacing the current three-fold design) on nine-by-thirteen inch paper. Susan Byer has structured a new set-up that will accommodate advertisements with updated language to recognize added participation in the Great American Rail Trail. The current brochure facing will be retained but with a new map by Yancy Lucas that identifies official Connectors and our TransAmerican elements. Russ and Bruce will spearhead the effort to market advertisements. An initial printing of 3,000 maps has been suggested. The workgroup hopes to present a draft brochure to the members during the October meeting.

## **Update on Sign Placement**

In early September Rick Vlaming put the finishing touches on You are Here signage at five locations along the Erie Trail. Rick was the architect for framing and erection of the signs. Printing of the signs was financed by the Hardesty Memorial Endowment Fund and by the Luminous Foundation. The PTC is most appreciative of Rick’s work and for the financial support of these outstanding organizations.



Above: Rick taking measurements in July for the You are Here sign at Lena Park. On the ground are Interpretative signs that were later erected a few feet away.

Below: You-are-Here sign in final finished form. This sign is at Starke County Road 250 West.



Images by Kathy Lucas

**On August 21, Paul, Linda, and Steve erected the last of the American Discovery Trail—US Bike Route 35 signs at the Erie Trail intersections with Starke CR 250 West and CR 700 South. This signage project was also made possible by a Hardesty Memorial Grant. In the future, signage of this type would also likely include an additional reference to the Great American Rail Trail.**

## Update on Constellation of Starke Initiative

Stellar Communities is led by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs and seeks to boost community and economic development and promote local and regional partnerships. The Constellation of Starke is one of this year's four finalists for the Stellar Community top award.

During the August meeting, the PTC adopted a resolution in support of one element of the Constellation of Starke's program "Our Solar System in Scale". The resolution will be submitted to DLZ Program Coordinator Jodi Coblentz following today's approval of the August minutes. DLZ is the program consultant for the Constellation of Starke.

Bob Albert, Liaison from the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum ("HVRM"), said the HVRM has discussed the proposal for "Our Solar System in Scale". He believes its membership also supports the proposal.

On August 20, Starke County Highway Superintendent S. Rik Ritzler presented parts of the Constellation of Starke program to the Bass Lake Property Owners Association ("BLPOA"). The presentation included an early design for Our Solar System in Scale. The presentation also included a proposal to enhance and extend the Connectors to the Erie Trail that are part of the PTC's informal mission. The BLPOA Board of Directors made a \$40,000 match commitment to the Constellation of Starke, contingent on receipt of the Stellar Community's top award.

## Report of 2019 Starke County Comprehensive Plan

Advancing with, but distinct from, the Constellation of Starke Initiative is the 2019 Starke County Comprehensive Plan. On August 21, the first draft of the plan was written. The first draft was presented during a September 4th Knox meeting attended by Kathy and Steve. The draft recognized the Erie Trail and made reference to the Connectors. Steve will make written comments on behalf of the PTC to HWC Engineering, the consultant for the Comprehensive Plan, to help support accuracy and currency of trail issues in Starke County.

## Consideration of Ending or Suspending Participation in the ABC Promise Partnership for Lids-to-Benches

During the April 24, 2019 meeting, the members had an extended conversation as to whether to continue participation in the Green Tree Plastics ABC Promise Partnership for Lids-to-Benches. The Partnership was a success with the purchase of seven benches, but participation requires considerable energy for collection, sorting, delivery of lids and return of benches from Evansville, and placement of benches along the Erie Trail. A line of thought was that the need might be reaching a saturation point, although donations of lids from the public were continuing at a steady pace. Ultimately, Rhonda Milner moved to table until after August 2019 whether the PTC should end or suspend participation in the Partnership. Russ Blais seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Since the April meeting enough lids have been collected for at least four more benches. The ABC Promise Partnership requires that young people be educated in the benefits of recycling, assist with sorting qualified lids, and assist in their weighing. Youth groups assisting or that will assist since the April meeting include the Bass Lake Beach Brigade, Bielava Youth Camp, and the Starke County Youth Club. Bruce and Brian McMillin have volunteered to deliver lids and return with four benches from Green Tree Plastics in early October.

There was a consensus that a future need might arise, but currently the Erie Trail and its two-mile extension do not require more than the existing benches and those that will be acquired in October. If the PTC has qualified lids that exceed our needs, those would be shared with appropriate governmental or not-for-profit organizations.

Linda Byer moved to suspend PTC participation in the ABC Promise Partnership for Lids-to-Benches. Paul supplemented the motion by stating the suspension should become effective October 1, 2019. Anita seconded the motion as supplemented, and the motion carried.

### **Final Joint Workday Preparations with Marshall County Horse Association**

Sharon organized what has now become a productive annual joint workday between the Marshall County Horse Association and the PTC. This year's workday is set for Saturday, September 14, with the announced rendezvous at 9:00 am, CDT, at the intersection of the Erie Trail and County Road 250 West.

Bruce suggested the participants continue with recent group vegetation control efforts between CR 300 East and CR 200 East. Paul and Linda will bring their tractor to assist with pulling large bush honeysuckle plants. The emphasis would be upon the equestrian path and the removal of overhanging branches and other plants likely to pose problems for horses or their riders.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for the BLPOA Community Center, 6996 South SR 10, Knox (Bass Lake), Indiana for Tuesday, October 15, 2019 at 6:00 pm, CDT (7:00 pm, EDT).

### **Adjournment**

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