

MEETING MINUTES OF PRAIRIE TRAILS CLUB INC.

**BLPOA Community Center
6996 South SR 10
Bass Lake (Knox), Indiana**

February 9, 2023

MEMBERS

**Diane Blais
Russ Blais
Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Joan Hardesty
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Brian McMillin
Sharon Smead
Rich Vallicelli
Larry Wickert**

GUESTS

**Bob Albert, Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum Liaison
Eileen Miller**

Call to Order by Secretary

On February 9, 2023, Steve Lucas, Secretary, called to order a membership meeting of the Prairie Trails Club Inc. (“PTC”) at the BLPOA Community Center, 6996 South SR 10, Knox at 5:30 pm, CDT (6:30 pm, EDT). Introductions were made around the table.

Review and Approval of Membership Minutes of December 1, 2023

Without amendment, Brian McMillin moved to approve the membership meeting minutes of December 1, 2022 as distributed by email on February 4. Sharon Smead seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Election of Officers

Brian moved and Sharon seconded the nomination of Rhonda Milner as President of the membership. Kathy Lucas reflected that Rhonda is one of the founding members of the PTC and performed most of the duties of President in 2022. She added that Rhonda is a dedicated and trusted member of our organization. By consensus the nominations were closed, and Rhonda was elected President.

Steve moved and Kathy seconded the nomination of Russell Blais as Vice President. Steve said Russ has been a dependable member who has often carried the PTC forward

with challenging projects, including fund raising. By consensus the nominations were closed, and Russ was elected Vice President.

Steve, Kathy, and Linda Byer indicated they were agreeable to continuing in the positions of Secretary, Treasurer, and Liaison to the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum, respectively. Rich Vallicelli moved and Anita McMillin seconded their re-election to the these positions. By consensus these nominations were closed. Steve was reelected Secretary; Kathy was reelected Treasurer; and Linda was reelected Liaison to the HVRM.

Review and Approval of Treasurer’s Report and Report of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds

Kathy Lucas distributed written copies of the Treasurer’s Report as follows:



Treasurer’s Report
February 9, 2022

FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST (FFBT)

Balance forward from 12/01/22		\$67,567.51
 <u>INCOME</u>		
12/05/22	Proceeds from Bass Lake Christmas Market <i>Peg Stalbrink, Chair</i>	\$415.00
12/05/22	Donation/Dues from Barbara Patterson	150.00
01/06/23	Additional Proceeds from P. Stalbrink	125.00
02/06/23	Additional Proceeds from P. Stalbrink	10.00
02//06/23	Donation from Diane and Russ Blais	100.00
02/06/23	Donation & Dues from Charlotte and Corey Liss	<u>1,000.00</u>
Total Income		\$1,800.00
		\$69,367.51

EXPENSES

10/05/22	Check #1127 to Susan Byer (New brochures design)	\$150.00
01/25/23	Check #1128 to Precept Partners (Annual web updates/security advice)	270.00
02/08/23	Check #1129 to Kathleen Lucas, Treasurer (Reimbursement for Ind. Sec. of State Nonprofit fee)	22.00
02/08/23	Check #1130 to Kathleen Lucas, Treasurer (Reimbursement for PTC Dell Laptop w Software)	<u>949.82</u>
Total Expenses		\$1,391.82

ENDING FFBT BALANCE AS OF 02/09/23 **\$67,975.69**

RESTRICTED/UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

Benches

Blais-Vlaming Bench	For 210/450 site or other	\$350.00
McMillin Bench	For Bass Lake area	350.00

Signage/Web

Luminous Fund Grant #2 (2018)	Signs Bass Lake (incl UR Here)	1,418.54	
Hardesty Memorial Grant	Wayfinding or historic signage	4,055.10	(Reduced \$150 brochure design)
Lucas Lakehouse Guest Donations	Future Vision/Website	662.50	

Northwest (or Other Extension)

Luminous Fund Grant #4 (2020)	NW Extension or operations	5,000.00
Luminous Fund Grant #5 (2021)	NW Extension or operations	5,000.00
Luminous Fund Grant #6 (2022)	NW Extension or operations	10,000.00
Mitchel-Kane Charitable Fund	NW Extension or operations	6,000.00
VFW Grant	For "trail improvements"	5,000.00

Maintenance

Mower Sale Funding	General maintenance	3,368.42
Hardesty Memorial Fund (Joan)	Trail maintenance	2,518.42
HVRM (and Buckeye Pipeline)	Trail maintenance	2,368.42

Miscellaneous

Stalbrink donation	Scholarship or "most needed"	<u>100.00</u>
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TOTAL RESTRICTED 45,191.40*

FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST	TOTAL IN BANK	\$67,975.69
	— RESTRICTED FUNDS	<u>\$45,191.40</u>
	= UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	\$22,784.29

*Secretary's note: A calculation error on the report distributed at the meeting, not affecting the amount of Unrestricted Funds, is corrected here.

Kathy expressed appreciation for Peg's tireless efforts with the development of goods and their marketing during the Holidays. She was also assisted in these efforts by Joan, Diane, and Anita. The donation by Barbara Patterson followed conversations at the

Chesapeake Run Bazaar, and part of the reason for participation in events of this nature is to raise awareness about our organization. She thanked the Blais and Liss families for their generous financial contributions.

Brian noted that unfortunately the Amazon Smile program is being terminated.

Kathy noted that in addition to updating our nonprofit filing with the Indiana Secretary of State, she also completed the annual Federal filing to renew our Not-for-Profit 501(c)(3) status.

Paul Byer moved to approve the Treasurer’s Report and the Report of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds. Brian seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Northwest Trail Extension Workgroup Report

Larry outlined the extensive efforts that have been put into developing an Indiana Trail Program grant to the DNR for an extension of the Erie Trail through North Judson and toward English Lake. Included was an hour-long Zoom discussion with the Division of State Parks regarding an application’s required elements. As part of the agenda item, a handout entitled “Northwest Trail Extension Workgroup Summary (December 1, 2022—February 8, 2023)” was circulated. The handout referenced these events:

December 5	NJ Town Council presentation
December 8	Max Rehlander, engineer & PTC member, extension referrals
December 11	Onsite NJ Route Walk w HVRM, Northern Ind. RR & Town
December 13	Attended HVRM Board Meeting to review route proposal
December 14	Rails-to-Trails Conservancy virtual discussion of grant challenges
December 16	DNR Division of State Parks Zoom overview of grant application
December 19	NJ Town Council presentation
December 20	NJ Town Extension Walk with Bob Aloï, Territorial Engineering
December 27	Starke County Commissioners issue Jurisdictional Approval
January 4	Starke Co. Eco. Development Foundation support letter received
January 12	Aloï authorized to provide project drawing and cost estimate
January 13	Linda Byer to help with “Connection with Nature” grant element
January 16	NJ Town Council issues Jurisdictional Approval
January 16	Center of Workforce Innovations (Valpo) support letter received
January 19	Land evaluation engagement letter sent to Eenshuistra Appraisals
January 21	HVRM signs MOU
January 22	Early Environmental Coordination Request (EECR) emailed to DNR
January 26	DNR Division of F&W acknowledges receipt of EECR [ER-25287]
February 6	Participate in Great American R-T Indiana Stakeholders Meeting
February 6	NJ Town Council presentation to set grant-required Public Meeting
February 8	Starke County Health Department support letter received

Larry added that he contacted Bob Aloï of Territorial Engineering in regard to performing a project drawing and cost estimate. Larry thanked Bob for providing these services as a courtesy to the PTC and for prioritizing completion of these services “in time for tonight’s meeting.” Territorial Engineering’s project narrative was circulated among our

Maintenance Workgroup Report

Most maintenance activities have been paused during the winter. Larry said he has been in contact with representatives of Doral Renewables, LLC, the company behind the Mammoth Solar project in Starke and Pulaski Counties, seeking a grant to assist with the Fell Ditch Bridge repairs. He said he has also spoken to Doral regarding the possibility it might assist financially with vegetation control, but assistance in this regard seems less likely. Paul asked if Doral might assist with the bridge project by sharing its engineering expertise. Larry responded could explore this possibility. He added that Doral wants to view the Fell Ditch Bridge, and a site view will be arranged for on or about March 6 that would include PTC members.

Update on PTC Laptop Usage

Kathy brought the Dell Inspiron 16 2-in-1 laptop to the meeting. She said she has begun to put PTC records on it. She said she would be asking for guidance from Joan Hardesty and Linda in use of the laptop since Kathy's recent experience has been with Macs. Joan will also be using the Dell for data collection from our trail counters.

Brochure Distribution Discussion

Russ is coordinating distribution of our new trail brochures. He will deliver copies to each of our sponsors. Linda placed copies at the HVRM's depot, and Diane will provide copies to the former depot in Knox that houses Starke County Chamber of Commerce. Linda and Steve have and will continue to place copies in our trailside boxes. Members were encouraged to distribute copies to libraries, nearby bike shops, and at local events that might attract bicyclists and walkers interested in trail usage. Members or others who wish to obtain more brochures may contact Russ or Linda.

Bass Lake Festival Run/Walk Discussion

Members were reminded the PTC will host the Bass Lake Festival Run/Walk on July 29. The event was recently made the featured item on the PTC website Homepage. Brian and Anita will serve as our points of contact for the event with assistance from Diane, Russ, Rich and other PTC members and friends.

Informal Review of HVRM Activities

Bob Albert reported that "2022 was the best year ever" for the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum in terms of events and income. He said HVRM members were working on projects that can be accomplished during the Winter and "looking forward to Spring."

Facebook Update

Charlotte Liss has been added as an additional administrator for management of the “Prairie Trails Club” Facebook site. This site has current information, and Charlotte has already been very active in freshening and expanding its reach to users.

Another site, identified as “Prairie Trails Club Inc.,” was established about a decade ago by Corinne Becknell-Lucas. Charlotte, Linda, Kathy, and Corinne want to reconcile the two sites but are experiencing technical challenges which may only be fully resolved with the cooperation of Facebook/Meta.

Wayfinding (You-Are-Here) Signage Update

In response to a discussion during the December meeting regarding updated wayfinding signage, Steve and Kathy met with Yancy Lucas on January 11. Subject to PTC approval, Yancy will design amended signs for the North Judson trailhead, the rest park crossing at Highway 10, Lena Park, and Aldine. He will design new signs for crossings of US 35, Starke County 600 East, and Starke County 700 East.

Depending on actions of the Starke County Parks Board, Yancy may design a new sign for a site in or near Bass Lake Beach, but this sign would come later. A sign designed for the triangle at County Road 450 East and CR 210, on the southwest end of Bass Lake, will not be pursued at this time because the Park Board has removed from its plans most amenities previously anticipated.

Steve said he exchanged emails with Yancy “earlier today”. Yancy has designed a model for one of the sites and is ready to move forward with designing signs for the other six sites upon membership approval this evening. If approved and following the completion of signage designs, Steve would seek fabrication costs from OTES, hopefully for review and possible action at our March meeting.

Russ asked if this meant the remaining white background “North Judson-Erie Trail” wayfinding signage would be replaced by black background “Erie Trail” signage. Steve said Russ’s question was a good one. The signage under consideration is a form of wayfinding signage but more particularly you-are-here signage. It might also be a good idea to address replacement of remaining white background signs with newer black background signs in the near future.

Diane moved to approve the advancement of you-are-here signs with the completion of designs by Yancy and then a determination of fabrication costs by OTES for review by the membership at the earliest opportunity. Linda seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Annual Board Meeting Summary

The PTC’s Board of Directors met briefly in the BLPOA Community Center shortly before the PTC Membership meeting. Steve was reelected Chair, Peg was reelected Vice Chair, and Diane was elected Secretary. The Board then approved the “Memorandum of Understanding, Letter of Intent, and Trail Easement Route in Wayne Township, Starke County, Indiana” and authorized the Board Chair to sign it on behalf of the PTC. The HVRM Board had previously approved the MOU. Approvals by the Town of North Judson and the Northern Indiana Railroad LLC are awaited.

Moonlight Over the Tippy on June 2

Steve reported the Panhandle Pathway is sponsoring a 20-mile evening ride, called *Moonlight Over the Tippy*, on Friday, June 2. The event will begin at the Train Depot on the Corner of Logan & Main Streets in Winamac. Registration made by May 26 is \$20. Later registration is \$25. Persons under age 15 or over age 80 ride free. The ride begins at 7:00 p.m., EDT (6:00 p.m., CDT) and ends at the Train Depot. Participants can ride up to 20 miles (round trip). A sag stop (turnaround point) is located at Thornhope. A pulled pork sandwich meal from the Winamac Corner Deli will be provided upon return. Ride support ends at 9:30 p.m, EDT (8:30 p.m., CDT). Riders under 15 must be accompanied by an adult. There is no rain date, and no refunds will be issued.

National Trails Day on June 3

Kathy reflected National Trails Day is scheduled for Saturday, June 3. She suggested the PTC should recognize the date in some manner. Our members sometimes recognize the occasion with a workday, but a celebration of some sort could also be appropriate.

New Share-the-Road Route between the Erie Trail and Panhandle Pathway

Steve said he had preliminary communications with Nathan Origer, Executive Director of the Pulaski County Community Development Commission, and John Bawcum, President of Friends of the Panhandle Pathway, about development of a Share-the-Road Connector between our trailhead on CR 700 East and the location where the northern trailhead for the Panhandle will be when its current grant is completed. Mapping and Share-the-Road signage would be key elements. With our own effort to develop a grant application through North Judson, this Connector is on the back burner, but there will be additional information and perhaps a request for action this spring.

Larry asked what roads would be used for the Connector. Steve they would be paved back roads. He, John Bawcum, and Fred Kasten bicycled the ten-mile long route in the Fall. The Connector would terminate at its southern point just south of McDonalds Restaurant on US Highway 35 on the north side of Winamac.

Larry reflected that he thought having a designated route between the Panhandle and Erie Trails made sense. He observed that it would be helpful both to trekkers and locals who wanted a challenging ride. Larry noted most of the Connector would be in Pulaski County. Steve responded that he anticipated developing mapping for our website, and that of the Panhandle Pathway, if the route is approved by local officials.

Next Membership Meeting

The next membership meeting was set for Thursday, March 16, 2023 at 5:30 p.m., CDT (6:30 p.m., EDT) in the BLPOA Community Center, Bass Lake (Knox).

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:21 p.m., CST (7:21 p.m., EST).