

MEETING MINUTES OF PRAIRIE TRAILS CLUB INC.

Videoconference

March 11, 2021

MEMBERS

Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Bruce Fingerhut
Joan Hardesty
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Deborah Mix
Max Rehlander
Kirt Verhagen
Larry Wickert

GUESTS

Bob Albert, Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum (“HVRM”) Liaison

Call to Order by Secretary

Steve Lucas, Secretary, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club Inc. (“PTC”) at 5:45 pm, CST (6:45 pm, EST) by videoconference on March 11, 2021.

Review and Approval of February 11, 2021 Minutes

Kirt Verhagen moved to approve the draft February 11, 2021 meeting minutes with the inclusion of a modification circulated to the members on February 10. Deb Mix seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Report of Southeast Trail Extension Workgroup

Bruce Fingerhut explained that the workgroup explored the possibility of reducing the thickness of the asphalt on proposed extension from 3”, but the Department of Natural Resources was insistent. As a result, the awarded grant amount from Next Level Trails gives no room for unanticipated needs in the construction process, but our consultant, the Troyer Group, believes the grant amount is adequate. He said that earlier today there were discussions with DNR regarding details in the construction contract, but “I hope we’re down to the very minimal.” He said the next stage would be to sign a contract with the lowest bidder, Thomas Excavating & Welding, of Culver. We can then sit down with Thomas Excavating to review the project, and groundbreaking should begin soon.

Kathy Lucas said she was recently informed one of the details to obtain funding for the construction stage of the NLT grant was a reconciliation of payments made in the design stage. All payments were to the Troyer Group and were referenced in monthly Treasurer Reports. She has prepared a reconciliation and forwarded it to Carolla Heilstedt.

Jerry Gurrado, Executive Director of SCILL, recently informed the PTC that students have completed a second bike rack. Carolla will deliver the rack for powder coating and placement on the trail extension. Kathy reminded members the rack is one of two promised as part of our NLT match.

Deb suggested a possible funding source for trail development is an AARP Community Challenge grant, and she forwarded the grant information to Kathy during the meeting.

Report of Northwest Trail Extension Workgroup

Steve said North Judson attorney Justin Schramm emailed him regarding efforts to write a notice of intent to advance PTC efforts to extend the trail through and northwest of town. Schramm indicated he is also communicating with the Midwest and Bluegrass Railroad that is purchasing the active line from the town. Schramm said he hopes to find a way forward that is satisfactory to both the PTC and the M&B Railroad.

Steve expressed appreciation to the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy staff and volunteers for sharing expertise and offering possible models for trail easements in association with an active rail line. He added that Bruce is exploring what might be alternative routes for a northwest trail extension. He noted that Max Rehlander previously offered a possible pathway a northwest extension could follow through North Judson. Steve said, "Going northwest, the geography is pretty complex." Bruce suggested another possibility was to seek an additional southeast trail extension to the Pulaski County line. The NLT grant process gives priority to projects that extend visionary trails in both directions.

Report of Nonprofit and Not-for-Profit Filings

Kathy said Marty Lucas has made the semi-annual filing with the Indiana Secretary of State that is required to maintain our nonprofit status. She thanked Marty for his effort and for donating the filing fee on behalf of the PTC.


Kathy said she also prepared and completed an IRS online form for our annual filing of not-for-profit status at the Federal level. But as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IRS is significantly behind in its review of filings.

Update on Bass Lake Festival 5K Run-Walk

With Carolla's absence, this item was deferred until the April membership meeting.

Review and Approval of Treasurer's Report including Report of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds

Kathy provided the Treasurer's Report with Report of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds as follows:



Treasurer's Report
March 11, 2021

<u>FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST (FFBT)</u>			
Balance forward from 2/11/21			\$54,864.10
<u>INCOME</u>			
2/22/21 Amazon Smile donation		8.95	
2/22/21 M & K Brown Donation honoring Dale Grube		50.00	
3/05/21 Dorothy Grubs: Donations " " "		95.00	
	Total Income	153.95	55,018.05
<u>EXPENSES</u>			
			-0-
	Total Expenses		(-0-)
Ending FFBT balance as of 3/11/21			\$55,018.05

/s/Kathleen Lucas, Treasurer

She expressed notes of appreciation for the donations by Dorothy Grube and by others made in memory of Dale Grube. She also referenced modest continuing contributions

from Amazon Smile. All of these amounts were included as Unrestricted Funds. Kathy said no expenses were paid since the February meeting.

RESTRICTED GRANTS/DONATIONS

Luminous Fund Grant 2 (2018)	Signage BLS (incl. "You are Here")	4,124.94
Luminous Fund Grant 3 (2019)	Matching NLT Grant	1,740.44
Luminous Fund Grant 4 (2020)	Northwest extension	5,000.00
Hardesty Memorial Grant	Wayfinding/Hist. ET Signage	6,911.50
Hardesty Memorial Grant	Matching NLT Grant	1,740.44
PTC account commitment	Matching NLT Grant	1,738.43
Marshall County Horse Ass'n	Bench (NLT Grant-Location TBD)	350.00
Indiana Greenways Foundation	Matching NLT Grant	1,379.44
Lucas lakehouse guests	Future Vision/website update	700.00
Next Level Trails Grant (NLT-1-07)	1st Installment for trail extension.	16,592.00
Mitchel-Kane	Northwest extension	4,000.00
Stalbrink donation	Scholarship (or "most needed use")	100.00
Blais/Vlaming	Bench for trailhead @ 450/210	350.00
McMillin	Bench for trailhead @ 450/210	350.00
KVREMC	Bike Racks	1,500.00
	Total Restricted	46,937.19

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS

TOTAL	RESTRICTED	UNRESTRICTED
\$55,018.05	\$46,937.19	\$8,080.86

As of March 11, 2021

/s/ Kathleen Lucas, Treasurer

Bruce moved to approve without amendment the Treasurer’s Report with the PTC Report of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds. Deb seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Update on In-Scale Model of Our Solar System Initiative (“OSSIS Project”)

Steve said the In-Scale Model of Our Solar System workgroup, which is being chaired by Jessica Martinović of the Starke County Community Foundation, met on February 25 to continue advancing this initiative. Jessica is stepping down from the Foundation and will be seriously missed.

The initiative will likely be branded the “OSSIS Project”. The workgroup determined to work with OTES to develop ten signs identifying models of the heavenly bodies to be placed along the Erie Trail. It was agreed that Marty Lucas would design a proof for the model Mars sign. The Mars proof was attached to the email sent to PTC members and friends.

The OSSIS Project workgroup is hopeful that the PTC will host the project on our website with QR connectivity. Our webmaster, Steve Antisdell at Precept Partners, indicated “a long page (with an overview of the entire trail representation) would be easy to navigate on a smartphone. The QR code that starts at the trail head should point to that overview.” Yancy Lucas, who with Susan Byer did design work on our current trail brochure, said that for a small volunteer non-for-profit like ours, a single QR code for all ten signs could suffice. It would be easier to keep straight, require less frequent amendments than

would ten separate QR codes, and be less expensive. After the southeast trail extension is finalized and the ten OSSIS models set, Yancy said he could help update our online map and the brochure.

Steve said he thought the design for the Mars model looked wonderful—is well executed, informative, and artistic. This sign and the predominant signs would be equilateral trapezoids. “That’s distinctive and should be easily distinguishable from other signs along the trail. One aspect that gives me pause is the points formed by the four corners of the trapezoid—and particularly those on the top which would be acute. We’ve used rounded corners on our signage to make them more durable and less inclined to cause injury to trail users.” Perhaps the OSSIS Workgroup might consider rounded corners. He opened the floor for comments and recommendations. Several members expressed concurrence with the thought that sign corners be rounded.

Kirt moved the PTC to:

- (1) endorse placement of the OSSIS project along the Erie Trail at locations acceptable to the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum; and
- (2) approve hosting of the OSSIS Project on the PTC website, including a QR code to serve the ten anticipated trapezoid signs.

In addition, he recommended that the OSSIS Workgroup consider causing the corners on the signs to be rounded. Deb seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Following approval of the motion, Bob Albert spoke as HVRM Liaison. He said the HVRM Board has already reviewed this initiative and is agreeable to placement of the models along the Erie Trail as the OSSIS Workgroup and the PTC select. The Sun model is a unique situation, and the HVRM and Starke County Community Foundation are working on the details for its placement near the Museum. He said the pending sale by North Judson to the M&B Railroad is an important factor.

Elections of PTC Liaison to HVRM and Board Member

Steve said that Larry Wickert has agreed to serve as the PTC Liaison to the HVRM and Kirt Verhagen has agreed to fill Brian McMillin’s remaining term on the PTC’s Board of Directors. Linda Byer was previously our Liaison to the HVRM. Steve thanked Brian and Linda for their service, and he expressed appreciation to Larry and Kirt for accepting new responsibilities within the PTC. Steve asked if anyone else wished to seek either of the two positions or if there were nominations for either position. Hearing no response, he moved to approve Larry as PTC Liaison to the HVRM and to approve Kirt as a Board member with a term that expires at the end of 2021. Kathy seconded the motion, and it was approved.

Informal Review of HVRM Activities

Bob Albert reviewed anticipated HVRM activities. He said that due to the pandemic, the Museum is not running Easter trains but hopes to run a regular summer schedule with limited seating to provide social distancing.

Consideration of Signage Proposals to Recognize Pioneer Trail Proponents and for a Small Joint HVRM-PTC Billboard near the US 35 Crossing

Bruce reported that Corinne Becknell Lucas assisted Brian and him with development of language to honor and acknowledge persons who were advocates for the Erie Trail and the antecedents to the PTC. He shared the language with Kathy, who expressed support. Bruce asked that the language be distributed to members before the April meeting. He said he hoped the signage could be placed west of US 35 and at the trailhead on Main Street, North Judson. Steve said he was also supportive and suggested that the signs include small logos for the Erie Trail, American Discovery Trail, US Bicycle Route 35, and the Great American Rail-Trail. Without these pioneering efforts, the routes would not be within our community.

Bob Albert added that there is interest at the HVRM is developing a small billboard at US 35 to advertise our two organizations and to help identify the location of the Erie Trail. He noted that currently the trail is not obvious from the highway.

The membership discussed both of these signage proposals. There was consensus that both had merit, and members encouraged the creation of signage proofs.

Report of Website Upgrades and Protection

Steve said Precept Partners reconfigured our online minutes to make those from 2020 and 2021 the most prominent. Steve Antisdell said he “updated the website with a 2021 copyright date to keep it current.” Precept Partners also “upgraded the security on the website’s Contact Form with reCAPTCHA technology that requires the user to click a check box to confirm they are Not a Robot.” Doing so helps “protect the website and email system from ‘bot’ type attacks and should reduce the incidence of spam (and associated phishing risks) as well.”

Maintenance Committee Update

Following strong southerly winds during the second week of March, Paul and Linda Byer renewed their unparalleled efforts for the maintenance of the Erie Trail. The images on the next page show equipment and labor they provided to remove fallen trees west of US 35. During the meeting, PTC members thanked Paul and Linda for the hard work and shared expertise.



Paul reported that the pandemic has increased significantly the cost of glyphosate. The PTC uses targeted amounts of glyphosate to help control vegetation, notably invasive species, which encroach on the asphalt and equestrian portions of the trail. Paul said he and Linda would await economical pricing before purchasing glyphosate for application this spring and summer.

Next Group Workday

The next group workday was scheduled for Saturday, April 10, 2021 at 9:00 a.m., CDT (10:00 a.m., EDT) at the Erie Trail crossing of CR 125 East in Aldine. The effort is a follow up on last September's workday directed primarily to suppressing the invasive species Siberian elm, bush honeysuckle, and tree of heaven.

Next Membership Meeting

The next membership meeting was scheduled for Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., CDT (6:30 p.m., EDT) at the BLPOA Community Center, 6996 South SR 10, Knox (Bass Lake), Indiana. The meeting will include social distancing and wearing masks consistent with Indiana state protocols.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:43 p.m., CST (7:43 p.m., EST).