

MEETING MINUTES OF PRAIRIE TRAILS CLUB INC.

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

August 24, 2022

MEMBERS

**Diane Blais
Russ Blais
Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Bruce Fingerhut
Joan Hardesty
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Brian McMillin
Rhonda Milner
Rich Vallicelli**

**Bob Albert, Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum Liaison
Jacque Ryan, Starke County Community Foundation**

Call to Order by Secretary and Introductions

On August 24, 2022, 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 5:34 pm, CDT (6:34 pm, EDT). He said Rhonda Milner, Vice President, was en route from central Indiana and would preside over the meeting upon arrival. Introductions were made around the table.

Review and Approval of Membership Minutes of July 20, 2022

Diane Blais moved to approve, without modification, draft minutes of the July 20, 2022 membership meeting. Anita McMillin seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Presentation by Starke County Community Foundation

Jacque Ryan, Starke County Community Foundation Director of Development, made a photo presentation of Our Solar System in Scale (the “OSSIS Project”) and a public art mural at the signal bungalow on the Erie Trail east of Starke County Road 200 East. With respect to the OSSIS Project she said that a storm last summer damaged most of the signage originally erected for the planets. Sturdier structures were made to support the signs, and they were reset by OTES along the Erie Trail earlier this month. The OSSIS Project depicts the planets of the Earth’s solar system in a scale of 1:355 million. With respect to the new public art mural, she said 2021 Knox High School graduate Jordan Lozzi and Knox High School junior Emma Whitcraft executed a painting on the south side of the former signal bungalow which faces the trail.



An example of an OSSIS reverse side image is provided by a proof for the planet Uranus.



Jordon Lozzi and Emma Whitcraft with their mural at the signal bungalow during October 12, 2022 opening.

Jacque said an informal opening of the mural took place onsite on August 12, 2022. Present were the artists, family members, representatives of the HVRM and the PTC, and herself. She thanked the HVRM for offering the site for the public art mural and the PTC for helping prepare the area and the surface for painting. She noted particularly the trail bench sponsored by Rich and Peg Stalbrink, across the trail near the signal bungalow, made a comfortable location for bicyclists to take a break and view the mural.

Kathy Lucas said she spoke with Lisa Whitcraft, mother of Emma, during the opening. Lisa indicated an interest in donating a picnic table onsite if the PTC develops a walking path to the mural on the north side of the trail. Lisa also noted that the bicycle art in the rest park at the trail and SR 10 was built by Emma's grandfather.

Steve reflected the Bass Lake Festival 5K Run/3K Walk has been the featured item on the PTC's homepage. With completion of the Festival, our webmaster Stephen Antisdal was requested to and has changed the featured item to the signal bungalow mural.

Jacque said other public art projects are being contemplated in Knox and elsewhere in Starke County. Bruce Fingerhut asked if consideration was being given for a project at the old creamery building in North Judson, adding he "worked really hard to save that building." She said she would include the old creamery building as a consideration.

Jacque added that yet to be completed for the OSSIS Project are signage for the Sun near Main Street and for Pluto west of Starke County Road 700 East. Signage for the dwarf planet Cerus in the asteroid belt was also being considered.

Shirley Heinze Next Level Conservation Trust Application

Steve reported that the Starke County Community Foundation and the Town of North Judson joined Rhonda and the PTC with letters of support for the Shirley Heinze Next

Level Conservation Trust Application for a 400 acre nature preserve adjacent to the Erie Trail. A copy of Rhonda's letter was circulated during the meeting. This application was submitted to the DNR on July 29, and, if granted, would include a walkway between the proposed nature preserve and the Erie Trail.

Following consideration of this item, Rhonda Milner chaired the meeting.

Report of DNR Approval of Final NLT-01-07 Fiscal Reconciliation

Kathy reported that Lisa Herber, DNR Grants Coordinator for the PTC's NLT-10-07 grant gave written approval of our fiscal reconciliation on either the last day or the second-to-the last day of Lisa's employment with State government. Kathy thanked members for making special efforts and working quickly to allow Lisa to complete the review before leaving. Having the project spill over to her successor might have caused confusion or delays—a problem that could have become exacerbated because Lisa's superior, Bob Bronson, retired later in the month.

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

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



Treasurer's Report
August 24, 2022

FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST (FFBT)

Balance forward from 07/26/22		\$52,064.92
<u>INCOME</u>		
07/21/22	Scoops & Smiles <i>Brochure Ad</i>	\$100.00
07/26/22	Fingerhut Bakery <i>Brochure Ad</i>	100.00
07/29/22	Luminous Fund Grant 2022 <i>Unrestricted Support (NW Ext)</i>	10,000.00
07/29/22	HVRM Donation for maintenance <i>From Buckeye Pipeline donation</i>	3,000.00

08/01/22	Deposit of funds returned to acc't after Bass Lake 5K <i>Payback from merchandise cash box</i>	100.00
08/01/22	Deposit of funds returned to acc't after Bass Lake 5K <i>Payback from registration cash box</i>	200.00
08/01/22	Merchandise sales from Bass Lake 5K	110.00
08/01/22	Membership transfer from PayPal <i>Scott Matthews +1</i>	<u>47.76</u>

Total Income **\$13,657.76**

\$65,722.68

EXPENSES

07/29/22	Withdrawal from acc't for cash boxes <i>Bass Lake 5K</i>	\$300.00
08/01/22	Check #1121 to Brian McMillin <i>Asphalt rubber sealant</i>	344.08
08/02/22	Go Daddy website registration <i>Effectuated by Bruce Fingerhut online</i>	33.48
08/10/22	Check #1120 to Sharon Smear <i>Materials for Equestrian hitching rack</i>	<u>287.81</u>

Total Expenses **\$965.37**

ENDING FFBT BALANCE AS OF 08/24/22 **\$64,757.31**

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	4,205.10
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
VPW Grant	For "trail improvements"	5,000.00

Maintenance

Mower Sale Funding	General maintenance	3,368.42	-631.58 asphalt rubber, mach. gas
Hardesty Memorial Fund (Joan)	Trail maintenance	2,868.42	-631.58 asphalt rubber, mach, gas

HVRM (and Buckeye Pipeline)	Trail maintenance	2,368.42	-631.58 asphalt rubber, mach, gas
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Miscellaneous

Stalbrink donation	Scholarship or "most needed"	100.00
Brochure Fund	2022 Erie Trail Brochure	<u>600.00</u>

TOTAL RESTRICTED 47,291.40

FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST	TOTAL IN BANK	\$64,757.31
	— RESTRICTED FUNDS	<u>\$47,291.40</u>
	= UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	\$17,465.91

Kathy expressed appreciation to the Luminous Fund and to Kathy and Dave Carrier for their extraordinary continuing financial support to the PTC and efforts to extend the trail. She thanked the HVRM for sharing the great proportion of Buckeye Pipeline funding that was offered to mitigate disruption to trail activities during this summer’s major projects. She said Bob Albert was instrumental in causing the funding to be transferred from the HVRM to the PTC and thanked him for his efforts. She expressed admiration for Russ’s persistence and determination in obtaining six \$100 donations in support of the updated Erie Trails brochure. She made special note of the annual dues payment by Scott Matthews which also included a second unnamed member. She said Scott has been a consistent supporter.

Kathy said that with receipt of DNR Approval of Final NLT-01-07 Fiscal Reconciliation, an opportunity was provided to better sort PTC descriptions of Restricted Funds. Until we had that approval, there was uncertainty where the PTC might need to take funds in order to satisfy our obligations to the DNR. “We didn’t want to appear to be moving dollars around if we had to go beyond our grant amount to satisfy the State of Indiana.” In the end the project came in under budget, and it became unnecessary to allocate significant funding from any other source. When DNR allowed us to expend the overage in our grant for other trail improvements, and the expenditures were just a few dollars beyond the grant amount, the results were the closure of several restricted funds and to simplify our listing of Restricted Funds.

Kathy added that in prior listings of Restricted Funds, ordering is mostly chronological. With the reordered listing, the Restricted Funds are divided into five categories: Benches; Signage/Web; Northwest or Other Extension; Maintenance; and Miscellaneous. For this report, funding for asphalt, rubber fill, purchase of the new asphalt crack filling machine (also sometimes called a “rubber applicator”), and gasoline reimbursement were divided equally among three maintenance funds. The PTC would not have to make the division in that manner, and there will be occasions when the membership may wish to apply unrestricted funds even if a restricted fund could be used. Next month member reimbursement for purchase of the used asphalt roller will also need to be allocated. She offered to answer questions.

Rhonda asked if there were questions or if a member wished to move approval.

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

Report of Bass Lake Festival 5K Run/3K Walk

Bryan and Anita co-chaired the PTC's sponsorship of the Bass Lake Festival 5K Run/3K Walk. Russ and Diane expressed appreciation to them for acting in their stead as co-chairs. The event was always going to be challenging and was made more so by not having a sufficient number of properly sized T-shirts. Diane urged that if the PTC were again to sponsor the event our members should have possession of needed shirts well in advance.

Brian said despite the challenges, "I think it was a success." In contrast with last year, the new timer was excellent. He thanked Rich Vallicelli for serving as an entertaining and knowledgeable master-of-ceremonies who started the race and presided over the post race awards presentations.

Members who assisted with managing the event praised Brian and Anita for their efforts and concurred with Brian's assessment that the event was a success. Kathy said she received numerous positive comments regarding Rich's contributions. She spoke with several race participants following the event, and they were uniformly enthusiastic about its operation. Rich said credit for successful management of the event must properly go to Brian and Anita.

Diane said she has not yet received an analysis from Mary Topelian, Treasurer of the Bass Lake Festival, concerning the PTC's share of proceeds from the event. She and Kathy will meet with Mary to seek consensus for a final accounting and distribution.

Maintenance Workgroup Report

Paul reported that he and Brian used the PTC's new rubber applicator to fill asphalt cracks on the Erie Trail from US Highway 35 northwest to just beyond Fell Ditch. This mile-and-a-half effort was a hugely challenging but productive for asphalt maintenance. Brian said the most credit was due Paul who often worked on his own. Brian added that "it's very difficult for just one person to operate the rubber applicator."



Image of a major asphalt crack filled by Paul Byer using the new rubber applicator. Fell Ditch Bridge is visible in the background.

Image taken August 21, 2022 by Kathy Lucsd

Paul said that, where needed, Linda mowed eastward from the Bogus Run Bridge. Linda reflected that as a result of aggressive brush removal on behalf of Buckeye Pipeline, there were major segments of the equestrian trail that no longer require mowing. Kathy said she and Steve had met with Buckeye Pipeline representatives in advance of this summer's initiatives and encouraged the company to remove invasive species along the trail when compatible with company goals. She added that Steve removed vegetation to capitalize on Buckeye's efforts and did hand-mowing at Starke County Roads 700 E, 600 E, US 35, and 100 W to improve vehicle visibility and access to parking, benches, and bike racks.

Bruce Fingerhut replaced both horizontals and their liftable arm mountings for the west gate at Starke County Road 100 West. This gate was the eastern-most structure for the original three miles of the Erie Trail and had suffered from severe decay, probably as a result of insect infestations. Bruce's efforts make the current gate more robust than was the original structure. He performed a similar replacement on the east gate in 2020.



Northern structure of west gate with decayed remnants of horizontal arm (shown in the lifted position). Image by Kathy taken August 8.



Gate following work by Bruce in 2022 on both arms (shown in the down position). Image by Kathy taken August 20.

Paul concluded by informing members he and Sharon Smead intend to confer next week on placement of the hitching rail near Starke County Road 700 East.

Update on New Brochure

Linda reported that Susan Byer has conferred with Yancy Lucas, and she now has the base map for inclusion in the brochure. Susan has also made other modifications to the brochure but still needs to be fully updated on who will be the sponsors. For the current brochures, business cards were used if available. The membership agreed that where a

sponsor does not have a business card, basic information such as phone and address could be included. Russ said he is in the final stages of seeking sponsors.

Informal Review of HVRM Activities

Bob Albert, Liaison from the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum, gave an overview of HVRM upcoming activities. He said the little steam train excursions would begin on September 3 and would be open to the public on September 10 and 17. Pumpkin Trains will start run on October 8. Bob said Maci Techtrick, Miss Hoosier Valley, is scheduled to appear at the museum on August 27.

Follow-Up on Indiana E-Bike Laws

During the June meeting, the PTC discussed Indiana's new e-bike laws. E-bikes are now "regulated the same as bicycles...." They are assigned to one of three classes based on their maximum speed and components. All classes of e-bikes must follow the same rules and be given the same responsibilities as any other bicycle. Generally, only Class 1 and Class 2 e-bikes are authorized for multi-use, hard surface trails, such as the Erie Trail, unless a broader or stricter policy is specified by the local authority.

Our members recognized the HVRM would be a key participant if there was interest in pursuit of a broader or stricter policy. Bob Albert and Steve had spoken after the July meeting. Bob said he discussed the new e-bike laws with the HVRM's Board of Directors. There was agreement within the HVRM Board that the new legislation was clear and workable, and neither a broader nor a stricter policy should be pursued at this time.

Steve suggested the matter be referred to the BIC Committee for consideration as to whether the new brochure or new signage should acknowledge that the Erie Trail is now governed by laws governing e-bikes. He recommended other action not be taken at this time concerning the use of e-bikes. The members expressed their concurrence.

PTC Featured in Outdoor Indiana

The Prairie Trails Club Inc. is featured in a full-page spread on page 15 of the Hoosier Club section of the September/October 2022 issue of OUTDOOR INDIANA. During the meeting, Kathy circulated a copy of the magazine.

Next Membership Meeting and Weed Wrangle Workday

The membership scheduled the next meeting for September 21, 2022 at 5:30 p.m., CDT (6:30 p.m., EDT) in the BLPOA Community Center, Bass Lake (Knox). A weed wrangle workday was set for October 1, 2022 at a time and location on the Erie Trail which is to be set later.

15 Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m., CDT (7:51 p.m., EDT).

Michael McGregor has bicycled 5,345 miles this year on the Erie Trail as of August 27, 2022.

Image by Kathy Lucas

