

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

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

April 24, 2019

MEMBERS

Diane Blais
Russell Blais
Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Carolla Heilstedt
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Brian McMillin
Rhonda Milner
Arlene Noble
Sharon Smead
Larry Wickert

GUESTS

Sharon Foust
Susan Goble
Fred Kasten, Panhandle Pathway

Call to Order by President

Carolla Heilstedt, President, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club Inc. ("PTC") at 6:07 pm, CDT (7:07 pm, EDT) on April 24, 2019 in the Bass Lake Property Owners Association Community Center, Bass Lake, Indiana. Introductions were made around the table.

Review and Approval of March 14, 2019 Minutes

Diane Blais moved to approve the draft minutes as written as the final minutes of the March 14, 2019 meeting. Anita McMillin seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Review and Approval of Treasurer's Report

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

I) First Farmers Bank & Trust (FFBT)

Balance forward from 3/14/19	\$ 29,598.72
<u>INCOME</u>	
04/22/19 Deposit <i>K. Lucas: supplemental payment for donated tree</i>	82.50
04/22/19 Deposit <i>Virgil Noble: bench purchase</i>	350.00
04/23/19 Deposit <i>Marshall County Horse Association: bench purchase.</i>	350.00
Total Income	782.50
<u>EXPENSES</u>	
04/09/19 Check #1033 <i>P. Byer: reimbursement—cement, etc. for benches</i>	-149.75
04/11/19 Check #1034 <i>B. Fingerhut: reimbursement—bolts, etc. for benches</i>	58.82
04/22/19 Check #1032 <i>OTES: Norwayne Field sign (Erie Trail, USBR35 and ADT)</i>	55.00
04/22/19 Check #1035 <i>K. Lucas: reimbursement for bench plaque</i>	32.95
04/22/19 Check #1036 <i>K. Lucas: reimbursement for multiple bench plaques</i>	141.70
04/24/19 Check #1037 <i>Woody Warehouse: 2 flowering dogwoods & 1 chinquapin oak</i>	182.50
Total Expenses	-620.72
Total Transactions	161.78
Ending FFBT balance as of 04/24/19	\$ 29,760.50

II) Northern Indiana Community Foundation (NICF)

NICF balance as of 12/31/18	<u>3,930.82</u>
Total of 2 accounts:	\$33,361.32

Kathy then distributed a written breakdown of restricted and unrestricted funding. The substance of the distribution is set forth below:

RESTRICTED GRANTS/DONATIONS

Luminous Fund 1 (2017)	Signage for Bass Lake Spur	\$386.56
Luminous Fund 2 (2018)	Signage for Bass Lake General	5,000.00
Luminous Fund 3 (2019)	Match NLT Grant	5,000.00
Hardesty Memorial Grant	Wayfinding/Interpretive Signs	8,502.28
Hardesty Memorial Grant (2019)	Match NLT Grant	5,000.00
PTC Commitment	Match NLT Grant	5,000.00
K&S Lucas Donation	K. Witting Mem. Landscaping (planted)	
Jain Trucking	Picnic Tables (released)	
Arlene Noble	Bench at 300 East	350.00
Peggy & Rich Stalbrink	Bench (Location TBD)	350.00
Steve & Kathy Lucas	Bench at Lena Park	350.00
Virgil Noble	Bench (Location TBD)	350.00
Marshall County Horse Association	Bench (Location TBD)	350.00
	TOTAL	\$30,638.84

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS	TOTAL	RESTRICTED	UNRESTRICTED
First Farmers Bank & Trust	\$29,760.50	\$27,638.84	\$2,121.66
Northern Indiana Community Foundation	3,930.82	3,000.00	930.82
BREAKDOWN	\$33,691.32	\$30,638.84	\$3,052.48

Brian McMillin moved to approve the Treasurer's Report including the update of Restricted and Unrestricted funds. Rhonda Milner seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Native Plants for Trailside Landscaping

Review of restricted grants and donations resulted in a discussion of native plants and landscaping, notably but not exclusively at bench sites. Kathy and Steve had augmented the Wine Timers Club donation for the Karen Wittig bench with a landscaping donation. Mums in planters were provided on a temporary basis last fall with a perennial to be added this spring. Kathy and Steve visited Cardno-J.F. New in Walkerton where they received two recommendations of reputable sources for native trees, including Woody Warehouse Nurseries, Inc. in Lizton west of Indianapolis. They also sought Linda Byer's professional opinion, and she also recommended Woody Warehouse for either a redbud or flowering dogwood.

Kathy emailed Tracy Elliott who has been facilitating completion of Karen's bench site. She asked how Greg Wittig and Tracy would feel about planting a dogwood. Tracy wrote

back on April 16, “Greg and I most definitely think the flowering dogwood would be a wonderful choice.”

Steve communicated by email with Dawn Stelts of Woody Warehouse. On its website, Woody Warehouse states it is primarily a wholesale supplier but does offer retail sales on a few selected dates. Following several exchanges, Dawn Stelts wrote that since the PTC is a non-profit corporation servicing a public trail, the PTC will be treated as a wholesaler for both rates and the more frequent dates when purchases and pickups can be made. Also, she said Woody Warehouse would collaborate with the PTC if our organization wished to develop a native species sales event as a fundraiser.

Steve and Kathy decided to obtain the flowering dogwood for Karen’s bench. They also donated a second dogwood and a chinquapin oak for the Lena Park site. Steve drove to Lizton on Earth Day, April 22, to pick up these three trees. On his return that day, Kathy helped him plant the trees. Steve said he would begin an inventory of native species planted along the trail with the hope of encouraging their preservation and growth.

Russ said he and Diane might be interested in sponsoring a native tree or other plant along the trail. Bruce expressed a similar perspective by email. At a future meeting, the subject will be revisited.

Update on Signage

Steve Lucas said Rick Vlaming called earlier in the day with an update on preparation of frames for the you-are-here signs. The design Rick developed is intended to maximize visibility and minimize the likelihood of damage. He will purchase posts for the frames and signs with the hope our members can begin placing them in May.

As anticipated during our last meeting, the Town of North Judson on March 15 selected onsite at Norwayne Field the size and location for a new sign to direct visitors to US-BR35, the American Discovery Trail and the Erie Trail. OTES completed manufacture of the sign on April 2, and it was delivered on the same day to Andrew Rowe, North Judson Clerk-Treasurer.

Amanda Brewer of OTES and Yancy Lucas collaborated to resolve technical issues posed by the complex digital designs of two informational signs for Lena Park and two for Bass Lake. The four signs were manufactured by OTES and displayed during the meeting. Kathy delivered a \$220 check for their purchase on April 23, but it had yet to be submitted to First Farmers Bank and so would be referenced in next month’s Treasurer’s Report. Yancy donated substantial time and expertise to design the signs. The Hardesty Memorial Fund has contributed \$110 for manufacture of the Lena Park signs and the Luminous Foundation \$110 for manufacture of the Bass Lake signs. Also, these two wonderful benefactors will later provide funding for frames and posts.

Report of April 11 Greenways Foundation Luncheon

Brian reported the Indiana Greenways Foundation held its annual fundraiser in Carmel on April 11. He, Anita, Diane, Russell Blais, Carolla and Rhonda nominated Steve and

Kathy jointly for the Foundation's 2018 award as "Outstanding Trail Advocate" for work on the Erie Trail and related trails in Starke County. The nomination was also supported by a letter from Bass Lake Property Owners Association President, Rick Anderson. The Foundation determined to grant the award to Steve and Kathy, with outgoing President, Tom Bruns, making the presentation. Kathy said, "Steve and I were shocked by the award and humbled that Brian and crew made the nomination." Steve added, "We very much appreciate the honor, but the award belongs to all PTC members and to all of our supporters. You're such a great group of volunteers. Without you we could do nothing."

Brian said the Greenways Foundation is an excellent source to gauge the progress of trail development in Indiana, particularly during the last ten years. During the meeting the Foundation provided updates on grant requests and recognized particular trail groups and individuals for special achievements. This year the most aggressive efforts were described from the northern counties. Regarding Starke County, the Foundation reported this year giving the PTC \$5,000 as part of the match required under the First Round of Gov. Holcomb's Next Level Trails grant program. The Foundation also reflected on a 2017 grant to the PTC that supported our successful effort to obtain Federal not-for-profit status. Last October the Foundation named the Erie Trail its Indiana "Trail of the Month".

Cameron Clark, Director of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, was keynote speaker. He said \$25 million will be awarded during the First Round of the Governor's program before mid-May. Qualified grant applications totaled \$144 million, about twice the amount anticipated by the DNR. A total of \$90 million was approved for trail projects, and unsuccessful applicants for the First Round can reapply. He said the DNR is also seeking corporate sponsorship beyond the approved \$90 million "so fingers crossed".

Announcement of Constellation of Starke Finalist Status

Starke County Economic Director, Larry Wickert, announced that the Constellation of Starke is one of four finalists in the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) Regional Stellar Communities Designation Program. Constellation of Starke is a collaboration of Starke County, Knox, North Judson and Hamlet. As a member of the final four, Constellation of Starke qualifies for \$20,000 in planning grants, with 50% in mid-July and the remainder available when the regional development plan is submitted in September. Each of the members of the final four may make use of the Ball State Indiana Communities Institute to gauge community perspectives as they compete for the top designation. This designation is scheduled to be announced on December 5.

Larry said the Director of Development for the Starke County Community Foundation, Jessica Martinović, helped prepare the successful OCRA application. An interested citizen may contact her for further information about the status locally of the process.

Larry added that an emphasis of the application was upon recreational opportunities in Starke County, with specific references to the Erie Trail and the PTC. He recommended that members be involved and share their ideas with the Ball State Institute. He said the first public meeting was scheduled for May 23 at 1:00 pm in the Nancy J. Dembowski Community Center, 55 East Lake Street in Knox.

An idea floated by Starke County Attorney Marty Lucas that would involve the Erie Trail is a scale model of the solar system starting with the sun at the Main Street trailhead. With the current nine miles of trail, the model would end at US 35 with the planet Neptune.

Update on and Direction for Future of Lids-to-Benches Initiative

Kathy reflected the first bench was placed several years along the Erie Trail at Aldine with a donation by Susan DeSantis and the labor and carpentry skills of Bruce Fingerhut. Since July 2015 the PTC has collected and sorted plastic lids, with participation by youth groups, for exchanges of lids-for-benches in the Green Tree Plastics “ABC Promise Partnership”. Seven new benches were acquired through the program. One was placed with sponsorship by the Bortell family at CR 400 East and a second with sponsorship by the Wine Timers Club in honor of Karen Wittig just west of Highway US 35.

Kathy said five benches are ready for placement with all of them underwritten by local sponsors. On the morning of April 6, Bruce, Paul and Steve set a pad for the Lena Park bench they underwrote as shown below.



Later on April 6, they set a pad for the site at County Road 300 East underwritten by Al and Arlene Noble. Rich and Peggy Stalbrink underwrote a bench tentatively proposed for an interpretation of the signal bungalow near CR 200 East. As part of the required match for the grant sought to extend the trail southeasterly to CR 700 East, the PTC committed to providing two benches on the extension. Virgil Noble and the Marshall County Horse Association have underwritten two benches which they consented to being placed on the extension, if accomplished.

During the PTC's October 2018 meeting, the membership reviewed whether participation in the ABC Promise Partnership initiative should be ended or suspended. The meeting minutes reflect that two years later we had collected enough lids to obtain two benches. Just over a year after that we had enough lids for five more benches, in part because Green Tree Plastics reduced weight requirements for lids and in part because collections had accelerated. In October the members decided to continue collecting lids until this "spring with an understanding continuation of the initiative would...be evaluated based on need." Steve said he had received several requests to place the item on the agenda for "this April meeting as the first spring meeting of the PTC".

Numerous people who either live in Starke County or who have connections to Starke County, such as summer visitors from Chicago and suburbs, have collected lids which they contributed to the lids-to-benches initiative. The benefits of recycling have been underlined, in particular to children and teenagers. The initiative has fostered a better understanding among the general public of our trail systems and promoted good will. A need expressed by many for more benches has been met. But the initiative has costs that are not always obvious. Many of our members have contributed labor to prepare forms, attach plaques and set the benches, including most notably Bruce and Paul. Others have made the long trip to Evansville to deliver lids and return with benches, including Rick and Russ. Kathy, Rhonda, Anita, Brian and Diane have spent time with young people sorting the lids and discussing the advantages of recycling. If these efforts are not included in the costs, and perhaps if they are, there would probably be a PTC financial profit but only a modest one.

Several members reported on the hopes of many who have contributed lids, that the project will continue. Bruce indicated outside the meeting he would continue to work on preparing and setting benches if the members were still supportive of the initiative. There were questions raised as to how many benches were enough for the trail, but with the new benches yet to be set there would still be only eight benches in nine miles. No one present expressed the opinion this density was excessive. Two benches must be placed on the two-mile extension to CR 700 East, if the extension is accomplished, which would further lessen the density.

Following an extended group discussion, Rhonda moved to table until after August 2019 whether the PTC should end or suspend participation in the ABC Promise Partnership initiative for lids-to-benches. Russ seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Consideration of a Strategy to Develop the Signal Bungalow Site

During the August 2018 meeting, the PTC membership made the signal bungalow site near CR 200 East our fourth priority for the development of informational signage. With completion of signage for Lena Park and Bass Lake, the signal bungalow moves up our priority list. Bruce had performed preliminary daylighting for the site in early August, and additional work was performed there on our August 16 workday. At the beginning of April 2019, Rich and Peggy Stalbrink agreed to having the bench they are underwriting placed at the signal bungalow site.

Paul, Bruce and Steve visited the site during the April 6, 2019 workday to consider the options and challenges. Bruce had recently constructed a form for the placement of a pad, but there were thoughts and questions. Steve outlined his understanding of the thoughts and questions:

- (1) Because of the subject matter (a railroad installation with an existing structure), Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum (HVRM) concurrence should be obtained prior to making any physical modification to the appearance or structure of the bungalow.
- (2) The base of the signal bungalow is several feet lower than the trail. Perhaps a ramp with a gentle slope should be placed down from the trail to allow visitors to more easily and safely approach the signal bungalow. Perhaps the bench should be placed roughly midway along the ramp.
- (3) The signal bungalow should probably have modest repairs, at least to its south (trail-side) face. That could facilitate surface painting and the application of an Erie or Erie Lackawanna logo.
- (4) The site might make sense for the location of a repair station.

Paul said he and Linda had spoken with our HVRM liaison, Bob Albert, regarding the possibility of making repairs to the south face of the signal bungalow. Their belief was that Bob was in agreement. Brian called upon his own experience as a railroad employee to suggest possibilities for how the signal bungalow was likely to have functioned.

After considerable discussion, the members agreed to go forward with development of the signal bungalow project based on a consensus developed between HVRM and PTC membership. Carolla then appointed a workgroup to be led by Brian with participation by Bruce, Paul, and Linda and in consultation with Bob. If an interpretive sign is to be developed, they would also consult with Yancy. She said other PTC members were welcome to assist.

Consideration of Summer Mower Loan Agreement between the PTC and the HVRM

Carolla said she has spoken by telephone with Bruce concerning possible use of the PTC mower this spring and summer to help control vegetation growing along the Erie Trail, particularly west of CR 100 West. The mower is now being stored by Bruce, but Peggy Bohac has volunteered to keep the mower at her home. Carolla reflected the mower is the PTC's most valuable property. She believes mowing vegetation between

Main Street and CR 100 West served both the interests of the HVRM and the PTC. Both the HVRM and the PTC need to keep the shared corridor safe and attractive. The mower was financed by membership fees and donations by PTC friends with the understanding we would use it in our capacity as a non-profit corporation supporting our trails system and particularly the Erie Trail. The HVRM is also a non-profit corporation using the same shared corridor.

Carolla said if the mower is to be made available for usage by the HVRM there should be a short, simple memorandum with the PTC stating that the HVRM will use the mower for maintenance of the railway and trail corridor, will keep the mower in good working order, and will supervise usage with reasonable caution consistent with HVRM's insurance coverage.

Paul said he and Linda have spoken with Bob Albert, and Bob does not believe the HVRM is aware of any plan to use the PTC mower for corridor maintenance. Carolla said there needs to be further discussions between the HVRM and PTC, perhaps including the respective boards of directors. If an agreement in principle can be achieved, a draft MOU can be exchanged to authorized HVRM use of the mower. If not, the PTC may need to have an internal discussion about how the mower should be stored and whether the PTC should undertake corridor mowing. Carolla tabled this item until further discussions by the HVRM and PTC.

Consideration of Spring and Summer Group Bike Rides

During the March meeting, members took preliminary steps to develop bike rides for the spring and summer.

- (1) Bruce agreed to chair a committee for a bike ride in association with the North Judson Mint Festival parade on Sunday, June 16.
- (2) A joint bike ride with members of the PTC and the Bass Lake Property Owners Association was set for July 20 at 9:00 am, CDT to begin at the BLPOA Community Center. Russ and Steve agreed to help coordinate the event. Our hope is to clarify details during the BLPOA meeting on May 4.
- (3) Hold monthly joint bike rides with PTC and BLPOA members in addition to the July 20 event as proposed by Dr. Thomas I. Jones. Diane said she raised the possibility in a BLPOA meeting but it received little response. She said her intent was to suggest the idea again when more of the summer visitors attend.

Report on Moving Starke County Forward Walk/Cycle Challenge

Kathy reported on Moving Starke County Forward for Deb Mix, who had a conflict and was unable to attend the PTC meeting, regarding the "Step it Up" challenge from May 26 to September 2, 2019. Medals will be awarded in three categories: (A) walking 100 miles in 100 days; (B) walking teams of any size for 1,000 miles in 100 days; and (C) bicycling 1,000 miles in 100 days. To log miles online, a person may:

email movingscforward@gmail.com
or visit www.surveymonkey.com/r/MSCFSteps

More information may be obtained from Deb Mix.

Consider Color Fun Walk at Monterey Days Festival

Kathy reported the annual Monterey Days Festival is scheduled this year for the Labor Day weekend of August 31 and September 1. After membership discussion, Carolla said she believed she had contacts in the Monterey area that were familiar with the festival operations. Steve said a color fun walk directed primarily to children could help with local understanding of the Erie Trail and our medium and long-term goals. Rhonda said in the early development of the trail there was active participation by Monterey members. There was discussion about whether we might need to order more T-shirts for younger children. Depending on local interest, and particularly among festival organizers, Kathy said she could contact the supplier in Knox to obtain an assessment of cost and availability. This subject will be revisited in the May meeting.

Steve said Deb Mix asked him to pass along that the Lucky Clovers 4H Club and the Starke County 4H Leaders, together with the Purdue Extension Service, are holding the Color Me Green Fun Run/Walk. The event is set at the Starke County Fairgrounds, Hamlet, for May 19 with registration at 1:30 pm and the event starting at 2:00 pm.

Review Bike Repair Station Proposal

During the September 2018 meeting, Brian said he and Anita were on the Root River Trail in Minnesota. They observed a bicycle repair station with tools to fix flat tires and to tighten or loosen fixtures. These and a manual air pump were tethered to the station. PTC members expressed interest in obtaining a bike repair station for the Erie Trail.

The subject was revisited during the October 2018 meeting. One possibility suggested for funding a bike repair station was through a grant application. Prices for stations ranged from \$800 to \$1,800. Stations with bike pumps were in the higher range of prices, and a consensus was not achieved on a grant application or whether a bike pump was essential. Since October whether to pursue a bike repair station has arisen incidentally to other agenda items with the promise the subject would be returned for more serious discussion.

Carolla reflected that after reviewing bicycle repair stations online, she believes a quality system would cost at least \$1,200. Russ and Kathy agreed that if the PTC is to purchase a bike station, a bike pump is an essential element. Kathy said, "If you have a serious bike problem going for any significant distance, the probability is it's going to involve a flat tire." There was apparent membership consensus on the need to include a bike pump.

Brian said his perspective is that two bike stations would be ideal for the nine-mile length of the Erie Trail. If the trail is extended to a length of eleven miles, need for two stations would be even greater.

Members expressed the view the PTC does not have adequate funding for the project at this time. When more funding becomes available, the PTC should reconsider moving ahead.

Update on NIPSCO Action Grant Application

Russ said he and Deb Mix made a timely application to NIPSCO for the education part of our application to KVREMC that was not approved last year. This part was sometimes called the “science grant”. He reported competition for the grant was intense and the effort was unsuccessful. “But we’re on NIPSCO’s radar now and may want to try again in the future.” Members agreed and thanked Russ and Deb for their considerable efforts in preparation of the grant application.

Report of April 23 Work Day and CISMA

Russ said Bruce, Paul, Linda, Sharon, Anita, Steve, Kathy, Diane and he appeared as scheduled at the crossing of S.R. 10 and the Erie Trail for the April 23 Work Day. The weather prediction had been encouraging but the group was met with light rain. The decision was to direct efforts to trash collection from S.R. 10 east to C.R. 800 South. That effort was completed, and the group also did some tree trimming.

We were joined by Erica Luchik, the point person for the Indiana Invasives Initiative in Starke County. On April 8 Erica had chaired a Knox meeting intended to help advance Starke County’s first CISMA (“Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area). The meeting was sponsored by Starke County’s Soil and Water Conservation District and the Purdue Extension Service. Kathy Carrier and Kathy and Steve Lucas attended. On the work day event, Erica and the Lucases walked two miles of the trail and illustrated invasive species challenges as well as native species opportunities.

Erica later announced Starke County's CISMA Call-Out meeting was scheduled for the BLPOA Community Center on Tuesday, May 14, 2019 at 6:00 pm, CDT. The meeting is open to the public and anyone interested in learning about invasive species is welcome to attend. She wrote “invasive species are a growing issue that we would like to address in Starke County, as well as promoting native species.” There may in the future be opportunities for the PTC to partner with CISMA.

Schedule Work Day

The next work day was scheduled for May 15, 2019 at noon, CDT (1:00 pm, EDT). If weather permits, participants would seal bridges at Bogus Run and Fell Ditch. Another possibility is the placement of benches at CR 300 East and Lena Park.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for the BLPOA Community Center, 6996 South SR 10, Knox (Bass Lake), Indiana on Thursday, May 23, 2019 at 6:00 pm, CDT (7:00 pm, EDT).

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm, CDT (9:05 pm, EDT).