

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

**North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library  
208 Keller Avenue  
North Judson, Indiana**

February 28, 2018

**MEMBERS**

Russ Blais  
Peggy Bohac  
Linda Byer  
Paul Byer  
Kathy Lucas  
Steve Lucas  
Deb Mix  
Donna Osborne  
Sharon Smead

**GUESTS**

Bob Albert

**Call to Order**

Steve Lucas, Secretary, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club (“PTC”) at 6:00 p.m., CST (7:00 p.m., EST) on February 28, 2018 in the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library, North Judson, Indiana. He asked the members and the guest to introduce themselves. Introductions were made around the table.

**Approval of November 29, 2017 Minutes**

Paul Byer moved to approve as written minutes of the meeting held on November 29, 2017. Peggy Bohac seconded the motion. On a voice vote the motion carried.

**Consideration of Memorial for Board Member Karen Wittig**

There was a moment of silence for Karen Wittig. Steve reflected she was our friend, an active and loyal member of the PTC, and she served as one of the original members of the Board of Directors. “She will be much missed by all who knew her.” He said members have expressed interest in developing a memorial for Karen at a location along the Erie Trail or a connector.

Donna Osborne said developing a memorial “would be a very good idea.” Peggy agreed and additionally expressed support for a memory walk.

Kathy Lucas added the PTC has a bench which was previously slated for use at a signage site in Lena Park. The bench could be redirected for incorporation at a trailhead with a memorial to Karen. Kathy said she and Steve provided \$100 in November toward a site dedication at Lena Park, with the full amount of the bench dedication to be determined by the PTC with guidance from the Branding, Identity and Continuity (BIC) Committee. But instead Kathy said she and Steve now offered their November contribution toward a group effort at a memorial.

Russ Blais said he was a member of a local wine club that has members who knew and cared for Karen and wished to provide financial support for a memorial. A bench should have a dedication modeled after the bench dedicated at CR 400 East. In respect for Greg Wittig's great loss, the club had not yet spoken to him about the concept. "But we need to talk to Greg before putting something together," Russ concluded.

Sharon Smead suggested planting a flower or tree with any memorial. Kathy said that has been discussed but the PTC needs to be sensitive to our Memorandum of Understanding with the HVRM. Linda urged any planting be of a native species. Deb Mix suggested a tulip tree might be a good choice. Bob Albert said a shrub that could be easily removed would be a good idea. Something like a tulip tree should be planted near the outer edge of the railroad corridor.

Sharon volunteered her truck to help bring a bench or other furniture back from the lids-to-benches source in Evansville. Kathy thanked Sharon for the generous offer and added that the drive to and from Evansville was lengthy. But other non-profits have driven from even longer distances to exercise the opportunity.

The members agreed to a memorial and perhaps a memory walk for Karen, contingent upon concurrence by Greg and family. The BIC Committee was then urged to suggest the general amount that should apply for a donor to acquire and place a dedicated bench or similar trail amenity. The PTC will revisit the subject in the near future.

### Election of Officers

Steve said because this meeting is our first in 2018, the membership needs to elect its officers. The current officers and their positions are the following: Bruce Fingerhut, President; Rhonda Milner, Vice President; Steve Lucas, Secretary; Kathy Lucas, Treasurer; and Linda Byer, Liaison to the HVRM. He said his understanding is each of these persons is willing to serve another term.

Steve said any member who wishes may nominate another member for any of the offices or may volunteer to run for an office. No member nominated another or volunteered to serve as an officer. Deb moved to close nominations and to reelect the current officers. Peggy seconded the motion. The motion carried. All officers from 2017 were reelected for 2018.

### Treasurer's Report

Kathy circulated a written copy of the Treasurer's Report. The report provided:

**1) First Farmers Bank & Trust (account moved from First National Bank of Monterey pursuant to PTC vote at November 2017 meeting)**

Balance Forward from 11/29/17 <i>(Reflects \$150 paid for gasoline and concrete on 11/30/17)</i>	\$ 5,729.94
Cash deposit to open FFBT account <i>(S and K Lucas contribution to bench for memorial)</i>	100.00
Deposit 2/6/18 <i>(Payor donation received in lieu of payment for S Lucas mediator services)</i>	1,000.00
Ending balance as of 2/22/18	<b>6,829.94</b>

**2) Pay Pal** **48.25**

**3) Northern Indiana Community Foundation (NICF) 9,988.56**  
*(Balance provided by Sarah Origer on 2/22/18. Includes \$5,000 grant from The Luminous Fund, plus interest and dividends, less 2017 administrative fee of \$100 and payment of \$216 to webmaster, Precept Partners, Inc.)*

**Total: \$16,866.75**

Kathy said relocating the account to First Farmers Bank allows the PTC to make deposits electronically, an opportunity that was used to make the January 6 deposit since she and Steve were then in Arizona. The professionals at First Farmers Bank and at First National Bank of Monterey were gracious and efficient in accommodating the funds exchange. She is hopeful there may be an opportunity for a lids collection site at First Farmers Bank.

Kathy recapped by saying the balance on November 29, 2017 was \$11,023.54. With the new balance, the PTC has since enjoyed a gain of \$5,794.96.

Sharon moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Deb seconded the motion. On a voice vote the motion carried.

**Signage and Mapping Report**

Kathy said she was elated when learning in January the Luminous Fund contributed \$5,000 to the PTC for signage associated with the connection between Bass Lake and the Erie Trail. She reminded the members that the Luminous Fund also donated \$1,000 last year.

Kathy then reported that PTC member Kathy Carrier, an officer of the Luminous Fund, has also made two personal financial donations to assist with awareness of the Erie Trail and its use, particularly for persons living at or visiting Bass Lake. Kathy Carrier bought a two-page ad in the Directory of the Bass Lake Property Owners Association on which will be placed a map depicting the Erie Trail and its connectors. Similarly, Kathy Carrier rented a billboard for six months beginning in May to depict the Erie Trail and its connectors at the intersection of Starke County Road 450 East and County Road 210 on the south end of

Bass Lake. “Kathy Carrier has been a wonderful contributor to the Bass Lake Community and to the northern Indiana trails community.”

Kathy Lucas then said we received word, just prior to our February meeting, that the Hardesty Memorial Endowment Fund has donated \$12,000 through the Starke County Community Foundation to the PTC for signage. More information regarding this breath-taking donation will be provided in the March minutes.

### Report of February 22 Presentation to The Hive hosted by the NICF

Kathy reported the PTC was invited to participate in the inaugural event for The Hive held in Knox on February 22, 2018. The Hive is a women's giving circle created by the Starke County Community Foundation. The group's name reflects how individual bees in a hive work together for the benefit of the entire colony. Members of The Hive pay \$10 a month, and the money is pooled for worthy charitable organizations. Once a year, Hive members will receive presentations from four charitable organizations and vote as to how donations should be distributed. The highest award this year was \$2,000, second place was \$1,500, and third and fourth places received \$750 each.

Kathy prepared a PowerPoint and developed the table display shown below:



Kathy said her primary purposes for speaking to The Hive were to raise awareness of the Erie Trail and to convey that continued success depends on support through memberships and donations. She was pleased that the Starke County Community Foundation awarded the PTC \$750. At least as importantly, our mission was conveyed to women leaders of all ages, and the PTC received many positive comments and expressions of support. The presentation was a wonderful opportunity for public outreach, and the PTC was honored to participate.



Above: Jordan Morris, left, and Kathy, right, talk about the Erie Trail at the inaugural meeting of The Hive.

### Initiation of 5K Color Walk/Run Committee (June 2 National Trails Day Celebration)

During our July 2017 meeting, the membership “agreed another color event should be scheduled for National Trails Day on June 2, 2018. If possible another element or ‘different twist’ should be added.”

Donna said she spoke recently with her daughter, Madison Osborne, who chaired our 2017 5K Color Walk/Run Committee. Madison urged that if another event was not held in 2018, momentum would be lost, and it might be difficult to revive the event in 2019. Donna agreed and said she and Madison were willing to lead the 5K Color Walk/Run this year.

Donna said the first step should be “to get advertisements out there” to let the public know the 5K Color Walk/Run is happening. Last year communications were placed in *The Market*, on WKVI radio and its website, and on the PTC website. The information should be disseminated soon. Preferably event notices would also appear in other media.

Donna said we have a lot of helpful experience from last year’s event. “We learned what works well and what doesn’t.” She said there was color powder remaining. Her hope was that the second banner made for last year’s event could be reused. Donna has safety vests and T-shirts and may have bottles that can be reused. She said we need to assure there is sufficient support staff to hold the event and for clean-up afterwards.

Peggy, Deb, and Kathy volunteered to participate in the committee. The hope is others who served on last year’s committee, including Kenny Bailey, will participate again and

that additional PTC members and volunteers from the community will help prepare and stage the event. Donna observed June 2 is not that far off. Progress and future needs should be discussed during our next regular meeting.

### Consideration of June 23 Joint Workday with Marshall County Horse Association

Sharon reported the Marshall County Horse Association scheduled for June 23 an official MCHA event to help control vegetation and improve the viability of the equestrian trail within the Erie Trail corridor. Her hope is that, similar to a joint event held last year, the members of the Prairie Trails Club would also participate. The event would begin at 9:00 am, CDT (10:00 am, EDT) and focus on the removal of honeysuckle, autumn olive, and similar invasive species from the equestrian trail.

Sharon said the MCHA has several active members with connections in Starke County and is becoming increasingly enthused about making the Erie Trail a better destination for horseback riding. She said she was researching where along the trail work should occur. Sharon reported a friend agreed to assist with mowing along the more easterly portion of the Erie Trail. She would accompany her friend. Sharon concluded by inviting the PTC members to a carry-in cookout at Billy Bope's on the evening of June 23.

Paul reflected last year's second PTC workday, held on October 13, focused on removing honeysuckle along the Erie Trail east of CR 300 East. Large honeysuckle plants were pulled out from the roots when practicable, and other honeysuckle and autumn olive were cut and chemically treated. While the October 13 workgroup addressed both sides of the trail, the greater emphasis was on and along the equestrian trail. He suggested the October effort be continued to the east.

Sharon reported the MCHA Board of Directors has approved up to \$50 for the purchase of weed and brush killer to be used on the proposed joint workday. Paul and Linda said they recommended a generic version of Round Up Pro containing at least a 41% glycoposphate solution. Sharon responded she would seek to make a purchase that is consistent with their recommendation.

Linda moved to have the PTC accompany the Marshall County Horse Association in a joint workday on June 23 beginning at 9:00 a.m., CDT. Paul seconded the motion. The motion carried on a voice vote.

### Consideration of Erie Trail Flyers Update

During the July 2017 meeting, Bruce reported that copies of the PTC's three-fold Erie Trail flyer were nearly exhausted. He said he hoped a new version could be available this spring and that the new printing would have more information. Included should be the four share-the-road connector routes approved by the Starke County Commissioners. Included should be information for the American Discovery Trail and USBR35 in Starke County. Also during the July meeting, Jessica Craig of the Starke County Chamber of Commerce circulated a bike route flyer from Cass County that can be folded and fitted in a wallet or pocket.

Steve said at the February 28 meeting he hoped the PTC would move forward in the near future with the initiative. Deb recommended contacting Tony Savini, Director of the Cass County Visitors Bureau, to help learn more about its flyer. Donna suggested a map could

be bigger than the one now in use for the Erie Trail, and include the connectors and other information, but still fold down to pocket size. The PTC members referred this matter to the BIC Committee to make recommendations on a new flyer.

### Consideration of PTC Website Update

Steve circulated a printed copy of existing language and proposed revised language for the PTC's website homepage. The revisions would update the homepage to include the changing scope of our mission. Reference would be made to the four share-the-road routes. USBR35 would be identified. The BIC Committee recommendation to use the term "Erie Trail" would be implemented—a recommendation approved by the PTC during its August 22, 2017 meeting. Language simplification was included in the proposal, in part to keep the homepage language concise. With membership approval, the revised language would become the cornerstone for changes to other website pages.

Steve said the proposed language was circulated by email to the BIC Committee members in early February for comment. In an email response, Russ suggested the end points of the American Discovery Trail and USBR35 be identified. He also suggested retaining the full name "American Discovery Trail" rather than the initials "ADT" in the final sentence to avoid reader confusion. Deb said during the meeting that "(ADT)" could be inserted after "American Discovery Trail" at the beginning of the first sentence, final paragraph, to avoid confusion and also to introduce to the public this commonly-used abbreviation. The following modified language was approved for the PTC website:

#### **The Erie Trail**

The Erie Trail is a free access, public multi-use path and greenway in southern Starke County, Indiana. More than nine miles of paved trail extend eastward from North Judson to US 35 near Bass Lake. A shorter paved trail is in Monterey to the east in Pulaski County. Motor vehicles are prohibited. The route is intended for hiking and bicycling. A separate, unpaved, equestrian trail for horseback riding shares the corridor from Starke County 100 W to US 35.

Centered on the rail banked right-of-way of the former Erie Lackawanna Railroad, the Erie Trail offers great views of the unspoiled countryside of the Kankakee sand country. You will see rich farmland for which Indiana is famous. But the landscapes are often natural and varied with groves of oaks, wildflowers, prairies, and marshlands. The level rail bed makes for easy hiking and cycling.

The Erie Trail is part of the American Discovery Trail (ADT) that extends from Delaware's Henlopen State Park on the Atlantic Coast to California's Pt. Reyes on the Pacific Coast. The Erie Trail is also part of USBR 35 that extends from Sault St. Marie, Ontario to near New Orleans. The Starke County Commissioners approved four routes for share-the-road status and better connectivity to the Erie Trail, the ADT, and USBR 35.

### Rescheduling March Meeting

Steve said when the February and March meetings were set, we did not yet have Bruce Fingerhut's 2018 work schedule. We learned later his work schedule meant Bruce would not be available for either meeting. Steve asked if the members wished to reschedule the March meeting for a date when Bruce's work schedule did not conflict.

The members agreed to reschedule the next meeting to one week earlier for *Wednesday, March 21, 2018 at 6:00 p.m, CDT*. An earlier date was chosen rather than a later one to help support timely discussions of the planned 5K Color Walk/Run.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m., CST.