

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

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

March 21, 2018

MEMBERS

**Peggy Bohac
Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Susan DeSantis
Bruce Fingerhut
Carolla Heilstedt
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Brian McMillin
Donna Osborne
Sharon Snead
Peggy Stalbrink
Rich Stalbrink**

GUESTS

Bob Albert

Call to Order

Bruce Fingerhut, President, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club (“PTC”) at 6:01 p.m., CDT (7:01 p.m., EDT) on March 21, 2018 in the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library, North Judson, Indiana.

Approval of February 28, 2018 Minutes

Carolla Heilstedt moved to amend the draft February 28, 2018 minutes as follows:

First, with respect to the *Report of February 22 Presentation to The Hive hosted by the NICF*, add a second image that includes Jordan Morris and Kathy Lucas with additional text to describe the image.

Second, with respect to *Consideration of June 23 Joint Workday with Marshall County Horse Association*, add the following language:

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 Byer said they recommended a generic version of Round Up Pro containing at least a 41% glyphosphate solution. Sharon responded that she would seek to make a purchase consistent with their recommendation.

Third, Sharon Smead noted during the meeting the carry-in dinner following the joint workday was scheduled for the same date as the workday. She asked that amendments be made consistently with this notation.

Peggy Bohak seconded Carolla's motion to amend the minutes as described. The motion carried.

Paul Byer moved to approve the minutes as amended. Rich Stalbrink seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Consideration of Bulk Chemical Purchase to Control Invasive Species and Weeds

Bruce thanked Sharon for the contribution by the Marshall County Horse Association of a glyphosphate solution. He reflected that the cost of chemicals to control invasive species and weeds along the Erie Trail is a major financial concern. Bruce said he spent about \$900 for chemicals last year, and the Byers undertook considerable expenditures on their own. Paul and Linda said the timing of chemical applications is critical. They added that costs for chemicals could be minimized by a bulk purchase. Sharon said she wanted the MCHA financial contribution to be as productive as possible.

Paul indicated he had dye to colorize a bulk purchase and would contribute the dye. Dye is used to help identify the stump of an invasive species that has been treated.

Linda described good sources for bulk purchases. A challenge with respect to purchase is that no supplier is located in Starke County. But she and Paul were willing to travel to another county to purchase appropriate chemicals. A chemical option other than or in addition to glyphosphate was discussed but a consensus not reached. After further discussion, the membership agreed to authorize Paul and Linda to make a bulk purchase of a generic glyphosphate solution, with the funding from the Marshall County Horse Association included. The purchased chemical would be available for use during the joint workday on June 23 and in other initiatives on the Erie Trail. Sharon said she would provide a \$50 check to Kathy from the MCHA. PTC membership then authorized Kathy to reimburse Paul and Linda for the cost of their planned glyphosphate purchase.

Treasurer's Report

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

Treasurer's Report for March 21, 2018 PTC Meeting

- 1) First Farmers Bank & Trust**

Balance forward from 2/28/18	\$ 6,829.94	
Deposit 3/5/18	715.00	
<i>(Donation of additional fee rec'd by S. Lucas for mediation in Southern Indiana)</i>		
Check #1001 to Precept Partners	<u>(140.00)</u>	
<i>(Paid to Webmaster for numerous updates)</i>		
Ending FFBT balance as of 3/21/18		7,404.94

2) Pay Pal

Balance forward from 2/28/18	48.25	
Deposit 3/11/18	<u>35.00</u>	
<i>(Dues from Donna Lucas + \$10 donation)</i>		
	83.25	
PayPal fee	<u>(1.32)</u>	
Ending PayPal balance as of 3/21/18		81.93

3) Northern Indiana Community Foundation (NICF) 9,990.82
(Balance provided by Sarah Origer on 3/20/18. Includes interest of \$2.26 earned since 2/28/18.)

Total of 3 accounts: \$17,477.69

Recap: Balance on 2/28/18 was \$16,866.75. We have a gain of \$580.94.

/s/ Kathleen Lucas, Treasurer

Paul asked how the membership would know the amount of funding that is available for a particular project. He observed much of the grant money is dedicated to a particular purpose. Steve responded that Paul asked a good question. A breakdown is needed by category to apply grants with a designated purpose or scope. He or Kathy will attempt to provide this information during the next membership meeting.

Kathy said she and Bruce have worked to make the PayPal account function more easily and allow for a better understanding of the sources. Bruce added they have made progress but have yet to complete the final stages of a functionality review with PayPal.

Sharon moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as submitted. Steve seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Website Updates Report

Steve provided a handout with updates for new Homepage core language, the 5K Color Walk/Run set for June 2 (National Trails Day 2018), and the June 23 joint workday with the Marshall County Horse Association. He said that following the February 28 meeting discussion about updating our website's homepage, which is almost like a "Mission Statement", the BIC Committee put final touches on new language. Our webmaster Steve Antisdell posted the language earlier this month. Steve Antisdell also undertook several housekeeping measures, such as deleting reference to last year's joint bike ride with the Bass Lake Property Owners Association. He reconfigured and gave the website a facelift.

First Report by 5K Color Walk/Run Committee

Donna Osborne provided a report on the initial stages of preparations for our second 5K Color Walk/Run. She said the first newspaper advertisement for the event was published earlier in the day. A notice of the 5K Color Walk/Run is now also included prominently on the PTC website. She added that "being proactive is going to help us."

Donna said she and Madison Osborne are organizing a committee to develop the event. Efforts are underway to find a good master of ceremonies. Committee membership now includes Kenny Bailey, Peggy, Mike McGregor and Kathy. She hoped that other PTC members would also provide support. Rich and Peggy Stalbrink volunteered to assist with registration. Carolla said she would also help with the event.

Donna added she wants the 5K Color Walk/Run to enjoy a profit that would help with the Erie Trail and particularly maintenance needs. But she also hoped to support quality of life in the community. "It's really all about bringing people here and doing something good here."

BIC Committee Signage and Mapping Report

Steve opened discussion of a report and request by the BIC Committee for membership comment and direction regarding signage and mapping. He said a debt of gratitude was owed to Kathy Carrier for funding two important mapping efforts of the Erie Trail and its Connectors. One is scheduled on April 1 to become a billboard at the intersection of CR 210 and CR 450 East on the south end of Bass Lake. The other is a paid ad in the BLPOA 2018 *Directory*. A proof for the *Directory* was distributed and is set forth below:



Kathy C. covered the costs these initiatives personally—making a donation for the benefit of the PTC and particularly the citizens of and visitors to Bass Lake. He said special thanks were also owed to Yancy Lucas and Lucas Corral Planning & Design for donating expertise and lots of hours to develop the maps. Steve thanked Jessica Kutch, graphics designer at Vanadco, for her patience in customizing a billboard concept typically aimed at high speed vehicular traffic to target bicyclists, walkers, and horseback riders.

Brian asked Steve what the white squares with walkers depicted on the map. He said they were trailheads that exist or that are planned.

Steve reported the BIC Committee is coordinating these mappings efforts with steps to place signs on the ground. A starting point is working with the Starke County Highway Superintendent Rik Ritzler, to purchase nuts-and-bolts yellow highway signs at two of our Connectors—S13 that uses a small stretch of CR 800 South and CR 450 East to get to Bass Lake, and S7 that uses Range Road to Bailey’s Discount Center. Sketches were circulated of the types of yellow signs to be used and their approximate placement. The Luminous Fund and Kathy Carrier provided two grants for S13. The PTC has a grant commitment from the Hardesty Memorial Fund Endowment for S7, as well as S11 and S15 and the main stem of the Erie Trail. Conditions of funding are that the funds must be expended within a year.

Brian asked what the designations S7, S11, S13 and S15 meant. Kathy responded these are designations for Connectors to the Erie Trail, using a convention adopted by the BIC Committee that could be applied to other Connectors in the future. Bruce said the four enumerated Connectors are for the four routes approved by the Board of Commissioners of Starke County for share-the-road status. Kathy added the enumerations are modeled after similar designations in Pulaski County but using the “S” prefix for Starke County rather than the “P” prefix for Pulaski County. Part of the signage project would be to place green markers along the Connectors to designate the route number and distance to a key site, such as a trailhead or major intersection.

Steve said the BIC Committee developed a strategy for identifying first-stage signage needs. “Kathy and I agreed to list highway signage thought needed for S13 and S7 and to share the list with the committee.” If a consensus is achieved within the PTC, the hope is Rik Ritzler would include the signs and needed sign posts in a county-wide bid request to sign vendors. The list was prepared and then distributed to BIC Committee members for feedback.

Bruce emailed on March 7 that the staged approach “looked good” to him. He added he would seek the price for 20 black and gold “ERIE TRAIL” signs. These would be similar to the original signs but would indicate “Erie Trail” across the bottom rather than “North Judson Trail”. He brought one of the original signs to the meeting to help illustrate. He also shared a cost estimate for new modified signage.

Carolla emailed on March 16 that she “really liked the proposed plans” for S7 and S13. She asked whether “B” signs (bicycle diamond sign with “100 feet” rectangle) should be sought for more than just replacements of existing signs at CR 800 South. The PTC could include all replacements for “B” signs in the initial communication with Rik Ritzler. She suggested we might want to seek the highway crossing signs over US 35 and SR 10 for S15—and not just those listed for S13 and S7. The understanding is INDOT approval is needed for signage associated with a US 35 or SR 10 crossing.

Russ Blais emailed on March 19, “I would like it if we could put one helmet sign at...CR 450 East and CR 210. Think it would be fitting.”

After summarizing BIC Committee action, Steve asked during the meeting if the members had suggestions or directions before the committee moved forward. Following a lengthy discussion, the membership agreed a comprehensive listing of yellow highway signs should be prepared by the BIC Committee and tendered to Rik Ritzler. Included should be the replacement of damaged or missing signs along the length of the Erie Trail, as well as new signage pertaining to the Connectors. But if Rik determined the list is too ambitious as a first stage, a less ambitious approach might be pursued that addressed only S7 and S13.

The membership also discussed the wisdom of including a sign to encourage helmet use. Susan DiSantis said she did not wear a helmet when riding and did not wish to in the future. Unless and until a helmet is legally required she did not believe a sign should be posted. Some other members acknowledged they did not wear helmets consistently, but a helmet seemed justified on share-the-road Connectors. Yet others reported they have come to wear helmets on a consistent basis. The sign illustrated to encourage the

use of helmets depicts a bicycle, but Sharon wondered whether a helmet might also be encouraged for those on horseback. The members did not endorse a helmet-use sign for the submission to Rik Ritzler. The concept was left open for future consideration and possible subsequent action.

Starke County Park Board Update regarding Possible Lease with HVRM

Steve said the Starke County Commissioners and the Starke County Park Board have proposed to the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum for Starke County to obtain a ten-year lease of the Erie Trail. During the March 13, 2018 County Park Board meeting, Board President Rogers Chaffins said he would deliver the written lease proposal to HVRM Board President Corey Bennett. On Sunday, Roger emailed Steve and informed him Roger gave the lease proposal to Corey on Friday, March 16. Roger indicated Corey told him he would “look at it and take” the proposal to HVRM’s membership. In the email Roger wrote that he asked Corey to let the Park Board “know what they thought”. Also, if the HVRM “would like any additions or deletions” to the lease proposal to please let the Park Board know. Steve said the PTC is not a party to the lease proposal, and it would receive neither legal rights nor obligations from the proposed lease, but he believes a lease could bring improved stability and security for the Erie Trail.

Kathy reflected the five-year plan Master Plan for the Starke County Park Board included a recommendation that Starke County pursue a lease with HVRM regarding management of the Erie Trail and more generally that Starke County pursue trail expansion. Although there were previous informal discussions, this month’s proposal is the first by the county to the HVRM regarding a lease. Sharon said the proposal was “encouraging news”.

Donna spoke of communications she had with Corey several months ago regarding a possible lease. Bob Albert said he looked at a draft lease, and did not have big problems with it, but he noted an error regarding the applicable railroad mile marker. He said the HVRM was working on its own five-year plan, and he believes there were provisions in the plan that would be welcomed by PTC membership.

Wine Time Club Proposal for Dedication to Karen Wittig

Brian said the Wine Time Club at Bass Lake has collected \$350 for a bench to honor Karen Wittig. The club planned to discuss the concept with Greg Wittig for his thoughts, including those as to a preferred location. The club wants to include a dedication on the bench modeled after the dedication at CR 400 and hopes for some minimal landscaping. Steve repeated a prior commitment he and Kathy made to contribute \$100. The second green bench made from recycled lids already acquired by the PTC would be set in a small concrete base similar to what was used for the first bench. Bruce said he had most of the cement needed for a base but might need to purchase a few more bags. Brian said he planned to submit a check or checks from the Wine Time Club to Kathy, as Treasurer, on condition the money would be earmarked for the Karen Wittig dedication.

Discussion of Bench Sites Landscaping and Related Topics

Kathy opened a discussion of landscaping at bench sites, including for the dedication to Karen Wittig. She recommended that the PTC develop a strategy to guide landscaping.

Susan reported she planted flowers at and near the Aldine bench she donated. Flowers along the fence line a few feet behind the bench survived, but beside the bench she dug into ballast and they have not. Carolla suggested plantings in raised beds would be a good solution. Paul asked who would provide continuing care. Linda suggested the use of native species for landscaping.

Susan recommended that the PTC place waste containers along the trail. Members raised questions concerning maintenance. Linda said containers were no longer placed at most locations in state parks because they become dumping places for unauthorized waste. A suggestion was also made that a portable toilet be placed at key locations along the trail. Susan expressed her opposition because they become unclean.

Scheduling Next Meeting

Bruce reflected that PTC meetings are usually set for a Wednesday. He suggested the next meeting be set for Thursday, April 26, to encourage the attendance of members with recurring Wednesday conflicts. The next meeting was later scheduled for April 26, 2018 at 6:00 p.m., CDT (7:00 p.m., EDT) in the BLPOA Community Center, 6996 South State Road 10, Knox (Bass Lake), Indiana.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm, CDT (8:47 pm, EDT).