

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

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

May 20, 2021

MEMBERS

Diane Blais
Russell Blais
Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Bruce Fingerhut
Joan Hardesty
Carolla Heilstedt
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Brian McMillin
Rhonda Milner
Deb Mix
Peggy Stalbrink
Larry Wickert

GUESTS

Bob Albert, Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum, Inc. (“HVRM”) Liaison
John Bawcum, Friends of Panhandle Pathway, Inc., President
Mary Topelian, Bass Lake Festival Association, Inc., Vice President

Call to Order by President

Carolla Heilstedt, President, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club Inc. (“PTC”) in the BLPOA Community Center at 5:33 pm, CDT (6:33 pm, EDT) on May 20, 2021.

Review and Approval of April 15, 2021 Minutes

Steve Lucas thanked Russell Blais for reviewing and identifying corrections needed to the draft April 15 minutes. Two were technical but one was substantive. A reference in the discussion of the Bass Lake Loops Bike Ride was made to US Highway 35 but should have been to Starke County Road 210. These corrections are recognized in the minutes presented for approval.

Rhonda Milner moved to approve the draft April 15, 2021 meeting minutes as amended. Joan Hardesty seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Consideration of Participation in Bass Lake Festival 5K Run and 3K Walk

Carolla introduced Mary Topelian who serves as Vice President and Treasurer of the Bass Lake Festival Association. She said Mary and Tabitha Dillner, who is Association

President, are essential to the success of the event that will this year be held on July 23 through July 25. Carolla is the Association's Treasurer.

Mary said the Association was inviting the PTC to serve as sponsor of the Festival's 5K Run and 3K Walk scheduled for the morning of July 24. She said she would assist with advance preparations and that 90% of registration is anticipated in advance online. PTC members would need to be present onsite by 5:45 a.m. Most work would be completed within four hours. Mary added that she was willing to serve as a consultant for the Run/Walk this year, and we "wouldn't re-invent the wheel". If the PTC and the Association continued PTC sponsorship next year, the PTC could have latitude to make adjustments. She outlined profit-sharing and said she expected the PTC would likely make a profit this year, although the pandemic makes financial predictions uncertain. This year's theme for the Festival is "The Roaring 20s".

Mary invited questions from the membership. One of the questions was how many PTC volunteers would be needed for the event. Mary responded at least eight but that she might be also able to offer a volunteer or volunteers from outside the PTC. Carolla said, "We appreciate the chance to do it." Mary excused herself so members could discuss and determine whether to participate.

Larry Wickert resumed the discussion after Mary left. He said participating in the Run/Walk "might make a little bit of money" for the PTC. But he believed the greater value was for participation in the Bass Lake community. The two-mile extension of the Erie Trail would make it more accessible to Bass Lake residents and visitors. Cooperative ventures should be supported. Larry said we need "one person kind of in charge" of our participation—a person who could help identify who would complete particular tasks.

Russ said he has assisted with directing participants and traffic at prior Festival Walk/Runs. "I think the event went really smoothly in the past."

Kathy Lucas said she and Steve would volunteer if members agreed to sponsor the event. "To me our participation would be partly about increasing awareness of the trail." We could make available trail brochures and other materials at the registration desk. Kathy said she, Diane, and Bruce discussed having "bling" and promotional materials for the trail that would not compete with Bass Lake Festival shirts. These could be available for sale at the Festival and perhaps later on the PTC website.

Deb Mix said it was important to work with the Festival promoters on a fee arrangement for T-shirt sales. Both the PTC and the Festival should benefit.

Carolla said she would work with members to set up packets for runners and walkers a day or two before the Run/Walk. She asked if the members felt they were well-enough informed to vote on whether to sponsor the event. Members responded positively.

Kathy moved to have the PTC sponsor the July 24, 2021 Bass Lake Festival 5K Run and 3K Walk with Russ as our point-of-contact. Larry seconded the motion. On a voice vote, the motion carried.

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 for the period ending May 20. She reminded members of Bruce’s successful sale of the Toro MyRide mower. As reflected during the April meeting, his special effort allowed the PTC to obtain the asking price of \$4,000.

She thanked Corinne and Marty Lucas for a \$50 donation in memory of Dale Grube, one of several donations received in his memory. She said Dorothy Grube wrote a beautiful note of support for the PTC and the connection she and Dale felt to the trail.

Kathy thanked Peg Stalbrink for managing a charity booth on May 16 during a bazaar at the Chesapeake Golf Course. Peggy sold homemade goods including fudge and cookies made by her and other PTC members and collected \$181 for our organization.

Finally, she expressed great appreciation for receipt of \$322,000 from the State of Indiana for the construction stage of the two-mile extension of the Erie Trail. The payment is the final one for the grant in NLT-1-107 from Gov. Eric Holcomb and the DNR.

Kathy said a payment was made to reimburse Paul Byer for the purpose of obtaining glyphosate to help with plant control, and particularly invasive species, along the Erie Trail. A second check was given to Paul to reimburse him for lumber and materials to repair the north deck of the Bogus Run bridge. A check was provided for powder coating the second bike rack, which was transported by Carolla, in the joint project involving students at SCILL and REMC’s RoundUp program, among others.



Treasurer’s Report May 20, 2021

FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST (FFBT)

Balance forward from 4/15/21	\$45,556.80
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INCOME

4/19/21 B. Fingerhut <i>Sale of Toro MyRide mower</i>	4,000.00
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4/19/21	Corinne & Marty Lucas <i>Donation honoring Dale Grube</i>	50.00	
4/30/21	DNR Next Level Trails <i>SE extension: final grant payment</i>	322,000.00	
5/18/21	Peggy Stalbrink, et al <i>Donation from sales @ Bazaar</i>	<u>181.00</u>	
	Total Income	326,231.00	371,787.80

EXPENSES

4/19/21	Check #1072 to Paul Byer <i>Glyphosate for invasive species control</i>	457.50	
5/05/21	Check #1073 to Technicoat <i>Powder coating bike rack #2</i>	134.51	
5/19/21	Check #1074 to Paul Byer <i>Lumber, etc for Bogus bridge repair</i>	<u>702.04</u>	
	Total Expenses	(1,294.05)	

Ending FFBT balance as of 5/20/21 **\$370,493.75**

Kathy then provided the Report of Unrestricted Grants and Donations. She reflected the obvious addition to restricted funds was the NLT grant second (and final) installment.

Luminous Fund Grant #2 (2018)	Signage BL (including "You are Here")	4,124.94
Luminous Fund Grant #3 (2019)	Matching NLT Grant	3,503.75
Luminous Fund Grant #4 (2020)	Northwest Extension	5,000.00
Hardesty Memorial Grant	Wayfinding/historic signage	6,911.50
Hardesty Memorial Grant (2019)	Matching NLT Grant	3,503.75
PTC Account Commitment	Matching NLT Grant	3,503.75
Marshall County Horse Association	Bench for Extension (location TBD)	350.00
Indiana Greenways Foundation	Matching NLT Grant	3,503.75
Lucas Lake House Guests' Donation	Future Vision/Website	700.00
Next Level Trails Grant (DNR)	2nd Installment for SE Extension	332,015.00
Mitchel-Kane Charitable Fund	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 rack grant	Balance of grant award	1,500.00

TOTAL RESTRICTED FUNDS 359,416.44

BANK ACCOUNT

First Farmers Bank & Trust (FFBT)	370,493.75	TOTAL IN BANK
	--359,416.44	RESTRICTED
	11,077.31	TOTAL UNRESTRICTED

/S/ Kathleen G. Lucas, Treasurer
May 20, 2021

Peg Stalbrink moved to approve the Treasurer's Report with the Report of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds for the period ending May 20. Russ seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Report of Southeast Trail Extension Workgroup

Bruce reported that within the last two days, Thomas Excavating & Welding began to clear and level the area between US Highway 35 and Starke County Road 700 East. Bob Albert, HVRM Liaison to the PTC, reminded members the Erie Trail is to be placed on the north one-half of the former rail corridor. Steve added that Jonathon Geels of The Troyer Group advised him INDOT on May 6 approved Permit T0000148776 for the trail crossing of US 35.

Report of Northwest Trail Extension Workgroup

Steve said that on April 29, the North Judson Redevelopment Commission and Midwest & Bluegrass Railroad closed on a North Judson sale of rail holdings in and northwest of town. These are in Starke, LaPorte, and Porter Counties. Town Attorney Justin Schramm confirmed the closing included a negotiated "Trail Easement Agreement", with a 14-foot wide easement, in favor of the PTC to construct, install, maintain, and repair the trail and facilities. "We are awaiting a recorded final document from the Town Attorney."

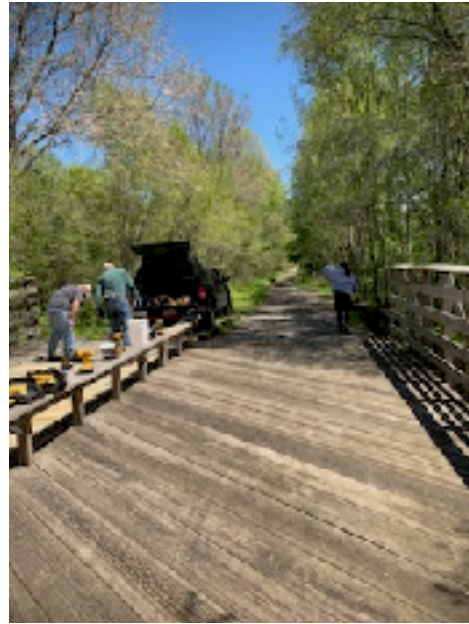
Kathy reported that she and Steve attended the May 3 meetings of the Redevelopment Commission and the North Judson Town Council. According to WKVI Radio, Schramm "touted the fact that the sale guarantees that the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum will continue to be able to run excursions, gives an easement to the Prairie Trails Club to extend the Erie Trail, and helps the Town of LaCrosse with its efforts to build a new water plant and develop retail." Kathy thanked the Town Council; Clerk-Treasurer, Andrew Rowe; and Attorney Schramm for support in helping to secure the trail easement.

Maintenance Committee Update

Repairs to Bogus Run Bridge Deck

During the April 15 meeting, Bruce related that an early stage of Erie Trail development was placement about 15 years ago of a deck on the north half of the Bogus Run bridge. Although the primary crossing is now on the south half, the north half is still used, and the deck is deteriorating. During the April meeting, the PTC membership authorized the Maintenance Committee to expend up to \$1,500 for materials to rehabilitate the north half of the deck. Paul managed to obtain the needed materials for a little more than \$700.

On May 18, Bruce with Paul and Linda Byer performed the deck repairs. This substantial effort included bringing power equipment to to cut and place treated lumber onsite. The team managed to complete the work in a single day. She said Linda and Steve also cleared invasive vegetation and trimmed native vegetation west of the bridge.



Facing east—bridge rehabilitation is underway. The left image depicts materials with tools and the placement of new perpendicular timbers nearing completion on the north half of the bridge . The right image depicts the primary crossing's diagonal timbers and Bruce and Paul working on the north half. (Image by Kathy Lucas)



Facing west—bridge rehabilitation is complete before dusk. Primary deck is on the left and north deck on the right. The two are separated by a bench. (Image by Bruce Fingerhut)

Maintenance Funding

Paul expressed concerns for the challenges posed for maintaining existing trail systems. There is a broad commitment to extending trails, but little funding for repairs to existing trails. He said there is an urgent need to provide repairs and to resurface asphalt, and meeting this need will be costly.

Steve said as connectivity among major trails improves, he believes their maintenance will come to be seen as infrastructure and not exclusively as local recreational amenities. Larry agreed and added that Governor Holcomb recognized the need when he was asked the status of Indiana trail systems by potential international investors to our state.

Kathy said the Indiana Greenways Foundation has sought support for trail maintenance. The Foundation urged the establishment of the Greenways Maintenance Fund at the state level “to build and maintain the growing number of off-road, multiple use trails in Indiana. Public funds need to be assembled to assist in maintaining greenways....” She also referenced the Indiana Trails Caucus, described as “a group of state legislators—Republicans and Democrats from the House and Senate—committed to creating a statewide trails network that provides significant health, economic and other quality of life benefits for all Hoosiers.” Kathy suggested PTC members can advance the cause for trail maintenance by urging our local legislators to join in or support the Indiana Trails Caucus.

John Bawcum, President of the Friends of Panhandle Pathway, said his organization is also challenged by the huge financial cost of trail maintenance. Volunteers provide great assistance with labor costs, but keeping asphalt and bridges in good repair needs major outside financial help. Deb Mix recommended the Friends of Panhandle Pathway and the PTC combine efforts to encourage our local legislators to support trail maintenance. John said he agreed.

Plant Control Along Trail

Linda said she and Paul were awaiting suitable weather conditions to apply generic glyphosate for vegetation control along the Erie Trail. Plants need to be dry when they are treated, and the weather forecast needs to indicate dry conditions will prevail for several hours following application. Her hope is that these conditions will arise in the next few days. As always, the emphasis is upon the treatment of invasive species, but other plants that directly impact the trail and pose safety hazards to the public require treatment.

Consideration of Warrior Bike Trip on Great American Rail-Trail

Steve distributed correspondence from Warrior Expeditions, a non-profit outdoor therapy program that supports veterans transitioning from the U.S. Military, by biking all 3,700 miles of the Great American Rail-Trail. He said Sarah Zeller of Warrior Expeditions emailed him that the veterans “spend most of the time out in the wilderness, camping.” If feasible and if PTC members have interest, we could provide a “community support stop...to provide them with a rest from the trail: where they can sleep in a bed, have a shower, do laundry, get a hot meal and resupply.” Sarah added, “This is our first year doing [the Great American], so right now we are assuming they'll travel at about 50 miles a day. At that rate, they'll reach [the Erie Trail segment of the Great American] sometime around June 12th.”

Steve added that there are five veterans scheduled to make Great American bike ride. Their deployments included differing combinations of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Afghanistan. He and Kathy could provide five beds in their home on the Erie Trail but would themselves then have to sleep elsewhere. That would make unwieldy providing other services to the veterans.

Kathy indicated Peg and Rich Stalbrink have offered to help with food. Carolla said she could provide beds in her camper. Her home is around the corner from Steve and Kathy's Bass Lake house. That could provide an alternate sleeping arrangement which would be more workable for providing other services.

Diane and Russ then volunteered their home on Bass Lake. Diane said they can provide beds for all five veterans. Bruce said he would assist with arranging to have Fingerhut items for breakfast. Several PTC members reflected the project is a good cause and that it will help illustrate a kind of service the Erie Trail, as a segment of the Great American Rail-Trail, is well-suited to provide. The Blais's gracious offer was accepted with an understanding other members will help with support for transportation and meals. Steve and Kathy will offer their home as the site for rendezvous and for bicycle storage. More details for membership participation will follow in the next few days.

Informal Review of HVRM Activities

Bob Albert reviewed anticipated HVRM activities and said regular trains were planned for Saturdays this summer. He distributed copies of the 2021 Train Schedule.

Bob said HVRM has had a good working relationship with Midwest & Bluegrass Railroad and expects train rides to LaCrosse will take place in the near future. HVRM was able to reduce insurance coverage from \$10 million to \$5 million. He said, "They seem like good people to work with."

Update on Our Solar System in Scale Initiative ("OSSIS Project")

Steve said the OSSIS Project continues to advance. Signage is being developed that would include different information on opposite sides—one side being largely artistic and the other scientific. Engineer Bob Alois has staked sites for individual signs. Proofs have been crafted for Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and one side of Uranus.

Update on Bike Racks Project

Last September the first bike rack funded in part with a grant from the Kankakee Valley REMC RoundUp Program, and built by SCILL students, was placed at Norwayne Field in North Judson. Carolla reported the second RoundUp bike rack has now been completed by SCILL students. Following powder coating by Technicoat near Grovertown, she picked up the bike rack for storage before placement this summer on the two-mile Erie Trail extension. She said two more bike racks are being fashioned and hopes they will also be ready this summer for the extension. Carolla hopes to cover the costs of these rack's power coating through a community support initiative shared with her employer.

Panhandle Pathway Sets “Moonlight Over the Tippy 2021” Event for June 4

John Bawcum reported the Friends of the Panhandle Pathway scheduled the Moonlight Over the Tippy 2021 event for June 4 at 6:30 p.m., EDT (5:30 p.m., CDT). Registration and the start of the event will be at the Winamac Train Depot on the Corner of Logan and Main Streets in downtown Winamac. Participants can ride up to 20 miles round trip. A sag stop (turnaround point) is located at Thornhope. Ride support ends at 9:30 p.m., EDT (8:30 p.m., CDT). Safe COVID-19 measures apply.

Next Membership Meeting

The next Membership meeting was scheduled for Thursday, June 17, 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 apply any Indiana social distancing and mask protocols, as well as any BLPOA requirements.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m., CDT (8:10 p.m., EDT).