

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

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

June 26, 2019

MEMBERS

Diane Blais
Russell Blais
Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Susan DeSantis
Carolla Heilstedt
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Brian McMillin
Jeff Mencl
Arlene Noble
Richard Stalbrink
Peggy Stalbrink
Rick Vlaming
Larry Wickert

GUESTS

Bob Albert, HVRM

Call to Order by President

Carolla Heilstedt, President, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club Inc. ("PTC") at 6:03 pm, CDT (7:03 pm, EDT) on June 26, 2019 in the Bass Lake Property Owners Association Community Center, Bass Lake, Indiana. She welcomed our newest member, Jeff Mencl. Introductions were made around the table.

Review and Approval of May 23, 2019 Minutes

Paul Byer moved to approve the draft minutes, as written, as the final minutes of the May 23, 24, 2019 meeting. Susan DeSantis 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 May meeting. The report provided in substantive parts:

I) First Farmers Bank & Trust (FFBT)

Balance forward from 3/14/19 **\$ 29,478.86**

INCOME

06/04/19 Deposit
Betty Lucas Memorials (Getter and Haney) 80.00
10-56 Brewing 3.00 83.00

06/17/19 Deposit
Mitchel-Kane Charitable Fund 2,000.00

Total Income **2,083.00**

EXPENSES

(None) 0

Total Expenses **0.00**

Total Transactions **2,083.00**

Ending FFBT balance as of 05/23/19 **\$ 31,561.86**

II) Northern Indiana Community Foundation (NICF)

NICF balance as of 3/31/19 **3,932.27**

Total of 2 accounts: **\$35,494.13**

Kathy offered a special thank for the generous and timely donation from the Mitchel-Kane Charitable Fund. She said the same fund last year also made a donation of \$2,000 that helped provide our match for the pending trail extension. She said this report period was unusual in that there were no expenses, but she just received a reimbursement request that will be reflected in the next report.

Kathy distributed a written breakdown of restricted and unrestricted funding. Because one bench was completed, \$350 held for it as "restricted" has been reassigned to the "unrestricted" category. The substance of her distribution is set forth below:

RESTRICTED GRANTS/DONATIONS

Luminous Fund 1 (2017)	Signage for Bass Lake Spur	\$222.29
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	8,283.72
Hardesty Memorial Grant (2019)	Match NLT Grant	5,000.00
PTC Commitment	Match NLT Grant	5,000.00

Virgil Noble	Bench at 800 South	0.00 (bench done)
Peggy & Rich Stalbrink	Bench at Signal Bungalow.	350.00
Marshall County Horse Association	Bench (Location TBD)	350.00

TOTAL \$29,206.01

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS	TOTAL	RESTRICTED	UNRESTRICTED
First Farmers Bank & Trust	\$31,561.86	\$26,206.01	\$5,355.85
Northern Indiana Community Foundation	3,932.27	3,000.00	932.27
BREAKDOWN	\$35,494.13	\$29,206.01	\$6,288.12

Diane Blais moved to approve the Treasurer’s Report including the update of Restricted and Unrestricted funds. Peggy Stalbrink seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Report of Gate Damage at Starke County Road 100 West

During the evening of June 16 or the early morning of June 17, the Erie Trail gate located on the east side of Starke County Road 100 West suffered serious damage. The damage was reported by email to the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum with the thought the HVRM might wish to investigate or make an insurance claim.

Jeff Mencl said he inspected the damage to try and determine what might be needed to perform repairs or reconstruction. A “lot of force” would have been required because a steel bolt was bent. Jeff later spoke with Bruce Fingerhut and Paul to develop a strategy to make the gate functional. He said Bruce has contacted Bob Alois to seek the gate’s specifications.

Bob Albert, HVRM Liaison, said the Museum’s insurance would likely not cover this type of an occurrence. Even if it would, the deductible amount would make a claim futile. He said the HVRM would welcome PTC volunteer efforts to repair or reconstruct the gate.

Bob observed the gate east of SCR 100 W was unlike gates nearer to the Museum and wondered why. Steve Lucas responded that County Road 100 W was the eastern extent of the first phase of Erie Trail and the western extent of the second phase. Gates west of SCR 100 W used one set of design specifications and those east used another.

Bruce reported by email that one of the vertical wooden posts damaged in the incident showed evidence of dry rot or deterioration due to carpenter ants. Linda Byer said other gate posts have been harmed by carpenter ants. Bruce, Paul and Jeff will pursue efforts to repair or replace the Erie Trail gate east of SCR 100 W and will explore the feasibility of treating gate posts to deter further damage by carpenter ants.

Development of an August 31 Color Fun Walk during Monterey Days Festival

Carolla resumed discussion for development of a color fun walk to be held in association with the Monterey Days Festival on Labor Day Weekend. She said her best understanding of the group consensus was that the event should be held on Saturday, August 31, with onsite registration beginning at 9:00 am, EDT (8:00 am, CDT) and the walk starting at 10:00 am, EDT (9:00 am, CDT). Unlike most PTC functions that are held in Starke County, which is on Central Time, this function would be in Pulaski County, which is on Eastern

Time. She asked the members if her understanding of the group consensus was correct. Several voiced the opinion that it was.

Carolla reminded members that a workgroup was formed during the May meeting to help with the Monterey color fun walk. Workgroup members are Brian McMillin, Anita McMillin, Diane, Russ Blais, Kathy, Steve and her, but other PTC members are welcome to join.

Carolla asked what entry fee was appropriate for fun walk participants. In addition to joining the walk, participants would receive T-shirts. After discussion the members set the entry fee at \$10 for each adult and \$5 for each child. Depending on interest, there was agreement that new small T-shirts might need to be purchased.

Russ volunteered to check on advertising fees in a newspaper or newspapers with good circulation in the Monterey area. Several possible newspapers were identified. Larry Wickert suggested *The Review*. The event would also be announced on the PTC's website and Facebook page.

Assistance with Raffle Drawing for Bicycles at July 13 Kid's Closet Fundraiser

Kathy reported she spoke with Linda Lewandowski, Director of the Kid's Closet Ministry, concerning a children's raffle for 20 bicycles during its July 13 Fundraiser at Norwayne Field, North Judson. Volunteers are needed to help with implementation of the raffle. Kathy said she and Steve would help and the hope is that one or two other PTC members might also be available. Her understanding is that assistance will be needed from 3:30 pm until about 6:00 pm, CDT. Lewandowski wrote later on the Kid's Closet Facebook page: "We are thankful for the Prairie Trails Club members as they will be managing the free bike raffle on the 13th! How fitting is that?"

Report of Erie Trail Extension Workgroup

Carolla said the Erie Trail Extension Workgroup met at the BLPOA Community Center on June 5. The meeting's primary purpose was to begin the development of an invitation to an engineering and architectural firm for a statement of qualifications ("SOQ"). Larry said the firm would serve as the PTC's consultant for implementation of the Next Level Trails grant and construction of the two-mile southeasterly trail extension. After the meeting, workgroup members agreed on language for the SOQ invitation, Steve sent it to three northern Indiana firms that were recommended to us and that are believed to be qualified under Indiana law. Responses from each of the three firms are due by July 9. Carolla said she recently shared the SOQ invitation with Lisa Herber, DNR Division of Outdoor Recreation Grant's Coordinator for this project. Carolla said the workgroup will provide regular reports to the PTC membership as we move forward.

Update on Signage and Benches

Several months ago, Bob Albert recommended the PTC consider a collaborative effort with the Town of North Judson for a sign near Norwayne Field to direct visitors to the Erie Trail. He said he and other HVRM volunteers had occasions when visitors came to

them for directions to the trail. The PTC's BIC Committee developed the concept for a simple directional sign. Based on this concept, membership suggested two options to the Town in December 2018. OTES then printed proofs for these options on a temporary backing and they were delivered to Andrew Rowe, Town Clerk Treasurer. On March 15, Steve met with Town representatives who selected the preferred option. OTES prepared a sign for delivery to the Town later in the month. The Town erected the sign in late May as shown below:



In June, Paul, Steve, Kathy and Linda prepared a site for a you-are-here sign northwest of the Erie Trail crossing of Starke County Road 800 South. Rick later completed erection of the sign. This sign and four other you-are-here signs are ready for the final aesthetic touches that Rick plans to accomplish in the next few weeks.

Paul and Ron Lee placed a pad and later Bruce set a new bench just southeast of CR 800 South. The bench was underwritten by Virgil Noble and dedicated to his grandchildren.

Kathy and Russ said they believe a sufficient quantity of lids have been collected for us to deliver lids and purchase benches from Green Tree Plastics in Evansville. The lids yet need to be sorted with a youth group or groups. Diane will help identify dates when an event can be scheduled for sorting at Bass Lake. Carolla and Kathy are also developing opportunities for sorting by youth groups, with the thought that a few dates when smaller

amounts of lids are sorted would be less onerous and provide for a better educational experience than one long event with one youth group.

Consideration of Website Modifications

Steve said the PTC website has not had a major overhaul in several years. He said he believed updates and refinements are needed on both the desktop and mobile versions. Linda identified a particular idiosyncrasy for a person seeking to contact the PTC on the mobile version. A FAQs page might be helpful. Wording adjustments are needed to help implement the name simplification from “North Judson Erie Trail” to “Erie Trail” agreed by the membership some time ago. Because much has been accomplished following our 2016 “Future Vision”, a new “Future Vision” is needed or at least the successes should be identified. He said members have suggested a new category of images to chronicle the extension of the trail and major trail maintenance efforts. New images are needed to freshen the website for regular visitors.

Steve added the PTC pays an annual fee to Precept Partners, LLC in Buchanan, Michigan to maintain our website with routine updates to minutes and by providing notices of meetings and events. But a website overhaul would require an additional fee. Before undertaking a list of items that might be included in an update, he wanted to gauge membership interest. He acknowledged we should be conservative with expenditures while the trail extension is in process. But if there is a consensus, he would consult with Precept Partners to obtain a cost estimate and discuss with members whether to move ahead with fundamental website changes. Members agreed that Steve should identify possible website changes, share them with Precept Partners, and return to the members with recommendations for action

Consideration of Workgroup to Develop New Erie Trail Brochures

Linda reminded the membership of the need to print new trail brochures. She suggested that the format of the current trail brochure be retained but with the trail imagery as designed by Yancy Lucas and now included on the website. A variety of questions were offered as to brochure content. Should the PTC seek sponsors who would help defray printing costs through advertisements? Should the Erie Trail map reference the two mile extension as “under construction”, “in progress” or some similar terminology? Should the brochure delete references to “North Judson” in the Erie Trail name and clarify the PTC relationship to the “Monterey” section of the Erie Trail? How can the PTC simplify contact information? How can the PTC better focus PTC involvement on Facebook? Should the brochure contain new images?

Following membership discussion, Carolla determined to form a workgroup to develop the design and content for a new Erie Trail brochure. In addition, the workgroup would make recommendations concerning sponsorship. Linda, Paul, Rick, Russ, Steve, Kathy and Carolla were appointed to the workgroup. Other members are welcome to join the effort.

Schedule Workday and Graffiti

Steve said two members requested that scheduling another workday be placed on the agenda. Kathy reported on graffiti at the Bogus Run bridge and distributed images of graffiti at the Fell Ditch bridge. Bob said graffiti was a chronic problem and experience has taught him that an aggressive approach should be taken for the removal of graffiti. With the multitude of activities now underway, and an onsite work activity taking place on the Erie Trail almost daily this summer, the members determined not to set a workday at this time. They agreed, however, that the removal of graffiti from the bridges should be a continuing PTC priority.

Authorization to Purchase Chemicals to Help Control Vegetation

Paul said he recently noted the bulk chemicals purchased several months ago, to help control vegetation along the Erie Trail, have been nearly exhausted. He and Linda have spearheaded the Maintenance Committee's critical efforts to apply chemical treatments and mow the trail. With the extended rainy period in June, invasive species and other plants along the trail have been particularly aggressive. The need for chemical treatment has never been greater.

Steve moved to authorize Paul to expend up to \$400 to purchase chemicals and related materials to assist with vegetation control along the Erie Trail. Russ seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for the BLPOA Community Center, 6996 South SR 10, Knox (Bass Lake), Indiana for Thursday, July 18, 2019 at 6:00 pm, CDT (7:00 pm, EDT).

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 pm, CDT (8:24 pm, EDT).