

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

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

**February 7, 2017
(Annual Meeting)**

ATTENDEES

**Peggy Bohac
Paul Byer
Linda Byer
Bruce Fingerhut
Kathleen Lucas
Steve Lucas
Rhonda Milner
Donna Osborne
Madison Osborne
Greg Wittig
Karen Wittig**

GUEST

Bob Albert

Call to Order

Bruce Fingerhut, President, called to order the annual meeting of the Prairie Trails Club, Inc. (the "PTC") in the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library at 6:32 p.m., CST (7:32 p.m., EST) on February 7, 2017.

Approval of Minutes

Bruce presented for approval the draft minutes of the December 7, 2016 meeting. Greg Wittig moved to approve the minutes as written. Donna Osborne seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote the minutes were approved.

Election of Officers

Bruce called for the election of officers. Officers elected in 2016 were Bruce, President; Rhonda Milner, Vice President; Steve Lucas, Secretary; Kathy Lucas, Treasurer; and Linda Byer, Liaison to the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum. Bruce asked if any of these persons wished not to serve again in 2017. None declined. He asked for additional candidates or nominations. There were none.

Peggy Bohac moved to elect the same officers as those who served in 2016. Karen Wittig seconded the motion. On a voice vote the motion carried.

Report on Status of Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum

Bob Albert said he presented the MOU, as endorsed by the PTC in December, at the January meeting of the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum (the "HVRM"). The HVRM Board of Directors approved the MOU during the January meeting.

There was a brief discussion about formalizing the MOU. Bruce suggested that since the PTC minutes for December 7 already show our agreement, the HVRM could also show its agreement with approved minutes. Bob said he would make sure approval of the MOU was referenced in the HVRM's draft minutes for approval at the next meeting. He said he needed a clean copy of the MOU. Steve said he would email a clean copy to Bob.

Discussion of Maintenance Initiative at Fell Ditch Bridge

Bruce said with approval of the MOU he was more comfortable seeking to address maintenance near Fell Ditch Bridge. Subsidence of muck along the north edge of the paved portion of the trail, with damage to the asphalt surface, may warrant remediation this spring. Winter work is not a practical option. Bruce and Bob agreed to meet onsite on a Saturday in late February or early March to determine a viable strategy for moving forward.

Update on Participation in US Bike Route 35 Project to Identify Starke County Services

Kathy provided an update on the pilot project with the Starke County Chamber of Commerce, the Indiana Rails to Trails Council, and the Indiana Office of Tourism Development to identify services along the Starke County portion of USBR 35. The other 14 Indiana counties through which USBR 35 passes are also participating. She said Linda did a great job of organizing Starke County materials and also thanked Bruce for his efforts.

Members discussed additional materials that might be included. They agreed Kersting's World of Motorcycles Museum should be included because of its unique character and its support for the project. Members agreed Steve should contact Harold Woods, who operates a bike shop on SR 10 between North Judson and Bass Lake, to determine if he wished to have the shop listed. The Starke CR 200E (which becomes Pulaski CR 400W) connection to the Panhandle Pathway that was recently approved by the Starke County Commissioners was another addition. The determination was not to include the Starke County Hospital because of its significant distance from the trail and because emergency services are coordinated based on a 911 call regardless of incident location. The general perspective was that when in doubt inclusion in the listing was favored, but with the understanding the Indiana Office of Tourism Development might edit or reduce entries.

Kathy said she was on a short turn-around schedule with Hamilton County Tourism that is coordinating the project. A copy of the draft document would be sent to PTC members in attendance at the February meeting by the end of the day on Thursday. Any comments would need to be returned to her by noon CST on February 10. The Starke County

services listing would be sent to Lexa Muehlbauer, an intern with Hamilton County Tourism, later that day.

Update on Effort to Obtain Federal 501(c)(3) Status

Kathy reported that in December she submitted a grant application to the Indiana Greenways Foundation but has not received a response. The grant could potentially cover the \$400 IRS fee for seeking 501(c)(3) status as well as some incidental expenses. She said she conferred informally with a partner in her former law firm about the responsibilities related to retaining the status and the possible consequences for not having previously filed returns with the IRS. Her law partner suggested staying under the umbrella of the Northern Indiana Foundation might be a less complex and more attractive option for a group as small as the PTC.

Bruce responded that the PTC did not have a separate bank account until a couple of years ago when opened at the Monterey Bank. The amounts in that account are still very modest. Other funds were held by the Northern Indiana Foundation which is itself a 501(c)(3) entity. The PTC has no employees. He urged Kathy to move forward with seeking 501(c)(3) status even if a grant from the Greenways Foundation appears unlikely in the near future.

Linda concurred with Bruce. She said the PTC cannot grow in the absence of 501(c)(3) status. The PTC can afford the \$400 filing fee and should move forward. Previous opportunities for funding have been lost due to lack of 501(c)(3) status.

Donna also agreed. "We can't grow without" having IRS approval as "a 501(c)(3) charitable institution."

Bob said the HVRM has 501(c)(3) status and the PTC needed it as well. He outlined his experience with the IRS and said he found the agency to be generally sympathetic to small nonprofit entities. He guessed the IRS would seek no or a small penalty for any belated filings. He said he had worked successfully with the IRS regarding a similar matter.

Bruce asked if other members present had additional thoughts. All those present urged Kathy to continue with seeking 501(c)(3) status. If a grant from the Greenways Foundation does not seem likely in the near future, she should draw the \$400 IRS fee from existing PTC funds.

National Trails Day

The American Hiking Society's National Trails Day is set for June 3, 2017. The members began an informal discussion of how the PTC might celebrate. Prominent among ideas suggested include a color run-walk, bake sale, 5K run-walk and stroller walk. T-shirt sales would likely be an element of the celebration.

Kathy suggested partnering with the Bass Lake Property Owners Association might be a good option. Home owners along the lake have expressed interest in better connectivity to the NJ Erie Trail. If a National Trails Day activity were profitable, a portion of the profits might support connectivity, including possibly the southeasterly extension of the trail to CR 600E. Kathy said she would contact BLPOA President, Rick Anderson, to determine if the organization might be interested in working with us.

New Member Madison Osborne agreed to chair a committee to gauge interest and to focus on a particular activity or activities. Bruce, Donna, Kathy and Peggy agreed to serve on the committee. The hope is that the committee may begin what becomes an annual tradition for National Trails Day. Madison will report back to the members at a subsequent meeting on the results of committee discussions.

Update on Lids-for-Benches Project

Rhonda, Greg and Karen brought additional lids for the lids-for-benches project. Rhonda has contacted Starke County 4H and believes the organization may provide the youth group needed to qualify for a discounted benches or picnic table rate at Green Tree Plastics. She said 4H leadership was meeting on February 19 to consider participation. Kathy said she would redistribute the description of lids and similar plastics that can qualify.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m., CST (8:55 p.m., EST).

Scheduling of Future Meeting

Shortly after adjournment the officers remembered the next meeting had not been scheduled. But the members had agreed at the beginning of the meeting to move the starting time to 6:00 p.m., CT rather than the traditional 6:30 p.m.

After conferring informally with persons still present following adjournment, the next meeting was tentatively set for Wednesday, March 8, 2017 at 6:00 p.m., CST (7:00 p.m., EST) in the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library. An alternate date would be considered if requested by membership.