

MEETING MINUTES OF PRAIRIE TRAILS CLUB INC.

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

November 29, 2017

MEMBERS

Peggy Bohac
Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Carolla Heilstedt
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Peggy Stalbrink
Richard Stalbrink

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 November 29, 2017 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 September 27 Minutes

Paul Byer moved to approve as written minutes of the meeting held on August 27, 2017. Peggy Stalbrink seconded the motion. On a voice vote the motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

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

!) The First National Bank of Monterey

Balance Forward from 9/29/17

\$ 5,407.58

Deposit 10/2/17

	Memberships (Paul & Linda Byer)	50.00
	Deposit 10/17/17 PayPal Transfer*	272.36
	Ending balance as of 10/31/17	5,729.94
II)	Pay Pal <i>(*transferred by B. Fingerhut to bank)</i>	
III)	Northern Indiana Community Foundation (NICF) (Interest & dividends \$26.73 as of 9/30/17)	5,293.60
	Total:	<u>\$11,023.54</u>

Kathy said the “bottom line” is that the PTC balance is \$175.97 more than September, “but we owe \$50.20 to Carpenter’s Marathon for gas purchased by Warren Burke for the blower, and \$99.80 to Steve as reimbursement for concrete at CR 400E to secure the new bench. She anticipated these bills would be paid on November 30, 2017. Kathy added she just received dues from Karen and Greg Wittig to be reflected in the next report.

Steve added that Bruce took delivery of the concrete, and there was more than required for the bench. Remaining bags were stored by Bruce to be used for a future project.

Linda moved to approve the Treasurer’s Report. Paul seconded the motion. On a voice vote the motion carried.

Distribution of Statewide USBR35 Maps

Kathy distributed copies of two-sided fold-up map received as part of PTC participation in the USBR35 project in Indiana. USBR35 currently runs from Sault Saint Marie, Michigan to Louisville, Kentucky and will eventually stretch to the Gulf of Mexico. On one side the map shows the 360-mile route through 16 Indiana counties. The other side shows scenes from each Indiana county. The Starke County image is of an entry to the Erie Trail. Step-by-step directions are available on cue sheets at WWW.IndianaUSBR35.com.

Kathy noted services are also identified on the referenced Indiana USBR35 website, and these include Starke County services along or near the route. She reported that copies of the map were provided recently to Jessica Craig, Executive Director of the Starke County Chamber of Commerce. She urged the members present at the meeting to share maps with interested persons and that they be placed at public distribution sites for pamphlets. Kathy said she would be happy to provide additional copies to PTC members and others on request.

Authorization to Change PTC Bank

Kathy asked the members to consider providing authority to transfer PTC funds to another bank that has more accessible electronic banking. The problem is acute when she is not in geographic proximity to the current bank. In addition to connectivity issues, she said the current bank charges 75 cents per electronic check deposit, “which can add up during

PTC fundraising events.” She suggested either transferring to the First Farmers Bank & Trust or to Chase Bank, neither of which has fees for electronic banking.

Peggy B. moved and Peggy S. moved to allow the Treasurer to explore and choose the bank that seemed most advantageous to the PTC. Upon the President’s concurrence, Kathy may transfer funds to either suggested bank or retain the current bank.

Board of Directors Election (4 Members)

During the July 11, 2017 meeting, the membership increased the Board of Directors from six to seven persons and provided for two-year terms. Four of the current members (Sharon Smead, Steve Lucas, Linda Byer and Carolla Heilstedt) volunteered to have their positions expire and become available for election this year. The other three positions (held by Karen Wittig, Bruce Fingerhut and Donna Osborne) will expire at the end of 2018. Steve, Sharon and Carolla are running for reelection. Linda determined not to run again.

An offer was included with the agenda email to circulate the name of anyone wishing to seek election to the Board. No one responded. Peggy Bohac said during the meeting that she wished to run. No one else volunteered or was nominated. On a voice vote Peggy B., Sharon, Carolla and Steve were elected to two-year terms on the Board of Directors.

Report of October 13 Scheduled Workday

Paul reported on the workday held on Friday, October 13. He and Linda led an effort to suppress invasive species, and particularly honeylocust, along the trail east of CR 300 East. Other participants were Brian and Anita McMillin, Bruce, Steve and Kathy.

With the assistance of the Byers’ tractor, large honeysuckle plants were pulled out by the roots. Smaller plants were pulled out by hand. A large number of autumn olive were also suppressed. Other plants within five feet of the paved portion of the Erie Trail were cut and treated. Paul said the effort was likely our most successful yet to suppress honeysuckle and may serve as a model for future workdays. Kathy added that participants thought the effort would end with lunch, but it was going so well that they agreed to work until late afternoon.

In the course of the workday, Linda identified a stand of the native species Eastern wahoo (*Euonymus atropurpureus*). Although readily distinguishable from honeysuckle after it’s identified, Eastern wahoo has a superficial similarity to honeysuckle. Linda’s expertise as a biologist allowed us to spare the Eastern wahoo plants from suppression. The hope is selective treatment of invasive species in the immediate vicinity will help the stand of Eastern wahoo prosper.

An image taken during the workday of an Eastern wahoo with fruit is shown on the next page. Please note the fruit are toxic to humans.



Report of November 16 Cottonwood Suppression

Steve expressed his thanks to Rich and Peggy Stalbrink for bringing their Gator and chain-saw to cut and treat cottonwoods west of Range Road. On November 16 he worked with them in an effort to prevent small-to-medium sized cottonwoods from becoming large trees that cause asphalt damage.

Update on Bench Placement from Lids-to-Benches Initiative

Bruce ably led the membership through phases needed to place the first bench procured through the Lids-to-Benches initiative. Scott Bortell donated funding to provide support for placement at a site near the crossing at Starke County Road 400 East. At an informal onsite meeting with Scott Bortell on September 29, a location south of the horse trail and east of the intersection was chosen for placement. The site is beneath a large hackberry tree that will provide partial shade for the bench. To improve vision for both motorists on CR 400E and walkers, bicyclists and horseback riders on the Erie Trail, a focused plant control project was begun at the intersection. The Starke County Highway Department improved safety and enjoyment by paving a short stretch of CR 400E at the intersection that was previously a gravel surface a few inches lower than the trail surface. The county road surface and the paved trail surface became consistent with each other.

Bruce designed and constructed framing for a small pad as a foundation for the bench. The goals were to provide reasonable stability for bench-use safety as well as to reduce the likelihood of theft. Bruce placed the frame onsite, and sand was brought in October 16 to help keep the frame in position. Kathy purchased and donated plaques for the bench based on Scott Bortell's specifications and with an eye to Erie Trail branding. These were forwarded to Bruce who later affixed them to the bench.

On November 23 Bruce directed placement of the small concrete pad onsite with eye bolts to later secure the bench. Assisting him were PTC members Chris Balzer, Brian and Steve.

Bruce brought the bench to the site and affixed it to the pad early on November 29. He sent an email in which he reflected the bench was "officially installed" but observed there was a need for "more sand or rock around the base". Kathy added during the PTC meeting there was also a need for modest landscaping consistent with what was placed at the Susie DeSantis bench in Aldine. The bench as placed at CR 400E is shown on the next page.



Consideration of Whether to Continue Lids-to-Benches Initiative

During our September 27 meeting, Kathy updated us on the status of the Lids-to-Benches initiative. She spoke of the generous contribution of PTC members and Starke County residents. One group she singled out was the Bass Lake Property Owners Association (“BLPOA”), a local partner that has offered to collect and store lids. Kathy asked during the September meeting whether PTC members wished to continue the Lids-to-Benches initiative and seek a third bench. She was specifically asked the question at a BLPOA meeting. But our September PTC meeting went in another direction, and no decision was made.

Kathy said earlier today she exchanged emails with Russell Blais, who expressed regrets at not being able to attend tonight’s meeting but with continuing interest in the PTC. Russ wrote that he was “still saving caps. If PTC decides to continue collecting I can help by

storing caps in my garage.” He added, “I personally am in favor of procuring of additional benches. The benches last obtained are great. Count me as a positive vote.”

Linda reflected that many of us are already collecting lids. Particularly with the help from the BLPOA in collecting and storage, continuing with the initiative seemed a good idea.

Steve said he believed the Lids-to-Benches initiative has merit. It’s a “positive statement about renewable resources, and the striking green-and-black benches can be part of PTC branding. Probably two mid-trail benches don’t get there but three or four could, most notably if one is at a trailhead. On the other hand, processing and placing the benches is a lot of work—meeting with the sponsoring youth group, transport to and from Evansville, and fitting the benches onsite. There are hidden costs and labor. Whether to continue should be a PTC membership decision.”

Kathy said we could not have delivered almost 400 pounds of lids nor returned with two benches had not Carola generously loaned her Chevrolet Silverado. Also, Rhonda Milner arranged a meeting with Starke County 4-H Youth Leadership to discuss recycling and to sort lids that had been collected.

Carolla said she was happy to assist. She added that she believed the project was a good one. Bob Albert reminded the PTC a similar initiative is being pursued at Culver.

Linda moved for the PTC to continue active participation in the Lids-to-Benches initiative with a goal of acquiring another bench or benches. Peggy S. seconded the motion. On a voice vote the motion carried.

Report of North Judson Signage Discussions

WKVI radio reported on November 7 that Peggy B. obtained North Judson Town Council approval for the PTC “to install signage at the intersection of State Road 10 and State Road 39” on Norwayne Field to direct visitors to the Erie Trail. Peggy B. said the concept was well-received by the Town Council. Members did ask that the signage be locally sourced if possible.

Peggy, Kathy and Steve followed up with the North Judson Parks and Recreation Board at its November 15 meeting. Steve reported, “We said we wished to partner with the Board to place an information sign at Norwayne Field and that we also anticipated street signage through North Judson to help long-distance travelers using US Bike Route 35 and the American Discovery Trail.” The Board agreed with the concept and reflected it would work with the PTC’s BIC Committee to choose the site and content of the signage. A Park Board member said he did not want a sign that was “gaudy”, and Steve joked that the PTC “couldn’t afford gaudy”. The Park Board underlined it would also like to have the sign locally sourced. The hope is that at least part of the North Judson signage could be placed this spring.

Bob noted he had a casual conversation with HVRM volunteers about requests he received for directions to the Erie Trail. Others responded they had similar experiences. One man offered, “There’s not a Saturday goes by that I don’t direct someone to the trail.”

Report of American Discovery Trail Discussions

The American Discovery Trail is a system of recreational trails and roads that form a coast-to-coast hiking and biking route. Horses can be ridden on most of the trail. The ADT starts in Delaware and ends in California. The ADT uses a lot of dedicated trails, including the Erie Trail between Starke CR 800 and the trailhead east of North Judson. But it also has a lot of share-the-road mileage. A goal of the ADT is to upgrade from share-the-road to dedicated trails.

Between Ohio and Colorado the ADT splits into a Northern Route and a Southern Route. Within Indiana the Northern Route passes through Starke County. Mitch Barloga is the Indiana State Coordinator for the ADT's Northern Route. He is also on the Board of Directors of the Indiana Greenways Foundation. The Greenways Foundation is a charitable trust working to promote Indiana greenways and blueways, an example of the latter being the Kankakee River. Mitch had a key role in the award of funding for our Erie Trail. His day-job is Transportation Planning Manager for the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (or "NIRPC"), the core transportation planning agency for Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties.

Steve said in October Mitch put together a draft proposal to seek funding to extend the dedicated portion of the Erie Trail from the trailhead on Main Street at the east side of North Judson through English Lake and on to LaCrosse. An informal steering committee met in LaCrosse on November 3 to consider the draft. The committee agreed a funding request was premature. "But I expect the effort will continue, and I think the PTC needs to be an active participant." Our mission includes the ADT in Starke County.

Steve reflected that with one exception the ADT and USBR35 follow the same route in Starke County from CR 800 South and along the Erie Trail, through North Judson, and northwest on English Lake Road to CR 400 South where the ADT splits and goes straight west. The exception is that USBR35 and the ADT follow different routes through North Judson. Kathy distributed a sketch with the membership that showed the ADT and USBR35 routes through North Judson. The same sketch was shared with the North Judson Park Board on November 15. Steve said "Mitch Barloga is working with us to cause the ADT to follow the same route previously endorsed by the North Judson Town Council for USBR35 through town. This change will help the PTC simplify wayfinding signage."

Steve added Mitch Barloga expressed a willingness and interest in attending and speaking with the PTC members at one of our regular monthly meetings. He asked about member interest in hearing from Mitch, and if so, when would be a good time. After considerable discussion the members agreed there was interest and that he should be invited to the meeting set for March 28, 2018.

Consideration of Agenda Item with Invitation to Law Enforcement Representatives

Steve noted the membership has discussed briefly inviting key law enforcement agencies to join us in support of public health and safety on the Erie Trail, as well as on related trails and bike routes. Rich Stalbrink said having communications and coordination can encourage better understanding and effective responses in the event of a serious illness, accident or criminal activity.

PTC membership expressed support for tendering an invitation to law enforcement to join us at a future meeting. Rich suggested the PTC send individual letters to the Indiana

State Police, DNR Division of Law Enforcement, Starke County Sheriff, and North Judson Town Police to ask that a representative of these agencies come to a regularly scheduled meeting. The consensus was that the April meeting or another spring meeting would be good timing.

Scheduling Next Meetings

The members considered meeting in December 2017 or January 2018. They decided not to schedule a meeting until February, but with the understanding the President could set a meeting in either of those months if a contingency arose that he thought warranted a meeting.

The members then agreed to schedule the next two PTC meetings in the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library. The first was set for Wednesday, February 28, 2018 at 6:00 p.m., CST and the second for Wednesday, March 28, 2018 at 6:00 p.m, CDT.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m., CST.