

# MEETING MINUTES OF PRAIRIE TRAILS CLUB INC.

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

July 18, 2019

## MEMBERS

Diane Blais  
Russell Blais  
Bruce Fingerhut  
Carolla Heilstadt  
Kathy Lucas  
Steve Lucas  
Jeffrey Mencl  
Anita McMillin  
Brian McMillin  
Deb Mix  
Sharon Smead

## GUESTS

Bob Albert, HVRM Liaison  
Mitch Barloga, Greenways Foundation & ADT  
Laura Lanman Givens Ferazzi

## Call to Order by President

Carolla Heilstedt, President, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club Inc. ("PTC") at 6:05 pm, CDT (7:05 pm, EDT) on July 18, 2019 in the Bass Lake Property Owners Association Community Center, Bass Lake, Indiana. Introductions were made around the table.

## Review and Approval of June 26, 2019 Minutes

Kathy Lucas moved to approve the draft minutes, as written, as the final minutes of the June 26, 2019 meeting. Bruce Fingerhut seconded the motion. The motion carried.

## Celebration of Greenways Foundation Grant for NextLevel Trails Initiative

Carolla said we were honored by the attendance of Mitch Barloga. He is President of the Board of Directors of the Greenways Foundation and also serves as coordinator for the Northern Branch of American Discovery Trail (the "ADT") in Indiana. The ADT crosses Starke County from the Kankakee River on US 421 going southeast, passes through North Judson, uses the Erie Trail, and exits to Pulaski County near Tippecanoe River State Park. Carolla thanked Mitch and the Greenways Foundation for contributing a critical \$5,000 match toward the PTC's grant application for the two mile Erie Trail extension southeast of Highway US 35.

Mitch then presented an oversized \$5,000 check to the PTC which he designed as a visual emblem of the Greenways Foundation contribution to the successful NextLevel Trails

grant. He also handed the actual check to Kathy as PTC Treasurer. A round of applause from the members followed.

Mitch explained that the Greenways Foundation is a charitable trust working to promote the growth, enhancement and use of Indiana greenways. To these ends the Foundation solicits donations and make grants in support of greenway development, enhancement and operation. The primary source of funding is through the proceeds received through the Foundation's [Indiana BMV specialty license plate](#).

Mitch said his regular employment is as the Transportation Manager for the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission. NIRPC is interested in working with La Crosse and North Judson to foster non motorized trail connectivity that would ultimately link Lake, Porter, LaPorte and Starke Counties. He would like to work with North Judson in the near future to move forward the ADT and the newly formulated Great American Rail Trail (the "GART"), both of which already use the Erie Trail. Kathy said that following the meeting, "we'll be having dinner with Mitch, and you're all welcome to join us."



Board Members and Mitch Barloga. From left to right: Bruce, Sharon, Steve, Mitch, Kathy, Carolla and Diane. Image by Laura Ferazzi.

## Special Recognition of Bruce Fingerhut Contributions to Erie Trail

Carolla called for special recognition the extraordinary contributions of Bruce Fingerhut to the Erie Trail and to the PTC. She thanked him and a small group of local residents who had the vision to begin our trail development. She also thanked Bruce for his incredible guidance and support as President.

Brian McMillin said in 2006 he and wife Anita McMillin joined with Bruce, Rhonda Milner, Marty Lucas and Corinne Becknell Lucas to form the core group that would become the PTC. Bruce provided the leadership and served as President from the beginning. Carolla reminded members that Bruce continues to serve as Chairman of the PTC Board but stepped away from the organization's presidency this year.

Kathy said members within the group wanted to honor Bruce for his steadfast hard work and leadership as PTC President and for his efforts even before there was a PTC. She then presented Bruce with a plaque recognizing his service and a gift certificate for Buck's Bicycle Shop in Valparaiso. These were supported by individual contributions and not from PTC funds. Members gave a round of applause.



Image by Laura Ferazzi.

## Review and Approval of Treasurer's Report

Kathy circulated copies of the Treasurer's Report for the period that followed the June meeting. The report provided in substantive parts:

I) **First Farmers Bank & Trust (FFBT)**  
**Balance forward from 3/14/19** **\$ 31,561.86**

**INCOME**

06/27/19 Deposit <i>S. DeSantis (concrete for bench)</i>	25.00
07/02/19 Deposit <i>Network for Good</i>	20.00
07/02/19 Deposit <i>Kyle Fingerhut Lifetime Membership</i>	250.00

**Total Income** **295.00**

**EXPENSES**

06/28/19 Check #1040 to Rick Vlaming <i>Reimbursement for sign materials</i>	195.31
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**Total Expenses** **195.31**

**Total Transactions** **99.69**

**Ending FFBT balance as of 07/18/19** **\$ 31,661.55**

II) **Northern Indiana Community Foundation (NICF)**

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

**Total of 2 accounts:** **\$35,593.82**

Kathy distributed a written breakdown of restricted and unrestricted funding. Because one bench placement was completed, \$350 held for it as “restricted” has been reassigned to the “unrestricted” category. Only one unplaced bench remains in our inventory. The substance of her distribution is set forth below:

**RESTRICTED GRANTS/DONATIONS**

Luminous Fund 1 (2017)	Signage for Bass Lake Spur	\$157.19 (Vlaming sign 65.10)
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	8,153.51 (Vlaming sign 130.21)
Hardesty Memorial Grant (2019)	Match NLT Grant	5,000.00
PTC Commitment	Match NLT Grant	5,000.00
Peggy & Rich Stalbrink	Bench at Signal Bungalow.	0.00 (Bench done)

Marshall County Horse Association	Bench (Location TBD)	350.00
TOTAL		\$28,660.70

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS	TOTAL	RESTRICTED	UNRESTRICTED
First Farmers Bank & Trust	\$31,661.55	\$25,660.70	\$6,000.85
Northern Indiana Community Foundation	3,932.27	3,000.00	932.27
<b>BREAKDOWN</b>	\$35,593.82	\$28,660.70	\$6,933.12

Sharon Smead moved to approve the Treasurer’s Report including the update of Restricted and Unrestricted funds. Deb Mix seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Update on Gate Damage at Starke County Road 100 West**

Bruce said he was “in the process of taking apart” the damaged gate. Only one of the steel rods appears to have been damaged, but returning functionality to the gate is going to require the reconstruction of both sides. He said he expects the effort will be a full summer project.

**Update on Color Fun Walk during Monterey Days Festival**

As he promised, Russ Blais checked on advertising fees in newspapers with circulation in the Monterey area. He learned that most advertising options would result in expenditures of hundreds of dollars of unrestricted PTC funds.

Several options were discussed that would instead involve press releases or posting on websites. Partly because the membership agreed this initiative is largely to help with understanding and goodwill in Monterey, and not as a fundraiser, the determination was made to focus on non-advertising options to announce the event. The PTC will pursue opportunities with *Catch and Release*, on Facebook, on our official website, on WKVI as a news item, and with the *Pilot* as a press release.

**Report of July 10 Presentation to Philanthropic Educational Organization**

At the invitation of member Joan Haugh, on July 10 Kathy made a presentation to the Philanthropic Educational Organization (the “PEO”) of Starke County. The PEO is a philanthropic organization where women celebrate the advancement of women; educate women through scholarships, grants, awards, loans, and stewardship; and motivate women to achieve their highest aspirations.

Kathy supported her presentation with visual aids including a poster showcasing wild-flowers growing along the Erie Trail. She outlined the history, current activities, and PTC aspirations in support of the Erie Trail and more broadly supporting our Starke County trail systems and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Kathy said PEO members asked great questions and she believes the presentation was well-received. She said there may be future opportunities for the PTC to work cooperatively with the PEO.

## Report of July 13 Bike Event with Kid's Closet

Kathy said she, Russ, Diane and Steve helped with implementation of a free bicycle raffle held by the Kid's Closet Ministry during its July 13 Fundraiser at Norwayne Field. Twenty new children's bicycles were donated by supporters of the Kid's Closet. The bikes were given to participating local children through a late afternoon drawing. All but four of the bikes included helmets, and Kathy said she agreed on request to purchase helmets for children who drew bikes without them. In person and online, Kid's Closet Director, Linda Lewandowski, thanked the PTC for supporting this project.

## Monthly Report of Erie Trail Extension Workgroup

Carolla said that on July 15 the Erie Trail Extension Workgroup had a a teleconference with the Department of Natural Resources to advance implementation of the NextLevel Trails grant. Workgroup participants were she, Bruce, Larry, Russ, Kathy and Steve. Bob Bronson and Tom Laycock participated for the DNR.

During the teleconference, the PTC workgroup agreed to suggest language to the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum (the "HVRM") to help clarify questions raised by the DNR. Language as follows was later formulated by the PTC Workgroup and tendered to the membership for consideration and its concurrence or for amendment:

At the request of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, the PTC and HVRM wish to clarify the intent of their "Addendum to Memorandum of Understanding" entered on February 9, 2019 as follows: (1) the Next Level grant has now been approved and construction of the asphalt trail and horse trail will be on the north one-half of the subject corridor; and (2) the commitment made between the PTC and HVRM to develop and maintain permanently, both these trails and a possible future rail line, includes a commitment to DNR to maintain the north half of the corridor for the benefit of the trails for at least 25 years.

An extended membership discussion considered the tendered language. Bob Albert said he did not have a problem with the language and that he was willing to share it with other HVRM Board members for their perspectives. He asked about design plans for the two-mile extension, and Bruce responded the effort was not yet that far along. Carolla agreed and said the workgroup was reviewing SOQs from three possible applicants that might serve as our consulting engineer and architect for the project.

Bruce moved for membership concurrence with the language as tendered by the Erie Trail Extension Workgroup. Deb seconded the motion. The motion carried.

## Proposal for Updated Map for PTC Brochure and Website

Steve reminded members that during our last meeting Carolla appointed a workgroup to develop new Erie Trail brochures. He believed there was consensus that trail imagery should be based on the PTC broader scope website version that was designed by Yancy Lucas, while using the format and structure of our current brochures. Steve said he has asked Yancy if he would be willing to update this website version to show the ADT with greater particularity and include a new reference to the GART, as well as to show the two-mile extension that has been funded and is now being designed. Yancy responded that

he was willing. Deb moved to approve these steps for use on both the brochure and on the website. Sharon seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Steve asked that Carolla consider appointing a chair to schedule workgroup meetings and help move this initiative forward. Carolla then appointed Steve as chair.

### Update on Signage and Benches

Jeff Mencl, Bruce and Paul sited and placed a bench across from the signal bungalow just east of the intersection of the Erie Trail and Starke County Road 200 East. This bench was underwritten by Rich and Peggy (Dunn) Stalbrink.



Image by Kathleen Lucas

Russ indicated that Rick Vlaming was preparing the final elements for framing the you-are-here signage, as well as the posts and framing for the interpretive signage both at Lena Park and at the intersection of SCR 800 South near Bass Lake. He said Rick hoped to move onsite with these projects within the next week.

Kathy said that she spoke with Kathy Carrier concerning the possibility of using existing restricted Luminous Fund money for design and development of *Vin Fiz* interpretive signage at Aldine. She said a modified use of restricted funding was possible because Yancy designed two sets of interpretive signs (one for Lena Park and the other for Bass

Lake), as well as other signs and maps without fee, and because members and local government donated both labor and materials to other signage projects on the Erie Trail. The availability of funding has gone well beyond expectations. Kathy Carrier decided that the interpretative project at Aldine was near enough to Bass Lake and of sufficient local significance that she wanted this modification made to the restricted usage. The modification will apply to Luminous Fund Grant 2.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for the BLPOA Community Center, 6996 South SR 10, Knox (Bass Lake), Indiana for Thursday, August 15, 2019 at 6:00 pm, CDT (7:00 pm, EDT).

### **Schedule Joint Work Day with Marshall County Horse Association**

Sharon suggested scheduling for September 14 a joint work day with members of the Marshall County Horse Association. The PTC membership agreed and set the event to begin at 9:00 am, CDT (10:00 am, EDT) in the rest park at the intersection of the Erie Trail with Indiana Highways 10 and 39.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 pm, CDT (8:33 pm, EDT).