

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

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

September 28, 2016

**MEMBER ATTENDEES**

Linda Byer  
Paul Byer  
Bruce Fingerhut  
Kathy Lucas  
Steve Lucas  
Anita McMillin  
Brian McMillin  
Rhonda Milner  
Sharon Smead

**Call to Order**

Bruce Fingerhut, President, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club (the "PTC") at 6:30 p.m., CDT on September 28, 2016 at the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library.

**Approval of Minutes with Amendments**

Bruce presented the draft minutes of the July 11, 2016 for additions or corrections. Rhonda Milner moved to amend the final paragraph addressing "Consideration of Lifetime Memberships" by adding the phrase "effective immediately" after the word "approve" and before the word "a" and deleting the second sentence. Brian McMillin seconded the motion. On a voice vote the motion carried. The minutes were approved as amended.

**Treasurer's Report**

Kathy Lucas presented the Treasurer's Report. Effective September 28, 2016 the PTC had the following funds:

First National Bank of Monterey	\$1,313.37
PayPal	7.15
NICF	4,429.27

TOTAL

\$5,749.79

Linda Byer asked how many new members joined, as a result of efforts at the Mint Festival, the Bass Lake Festival and otherwise with the new membership year. Kathy responded she thought at least five and that she would provide an update in the next meeting.

#### Effective Date of Lifetime Membership Resolution

With amendments approved to the draft minutes of the August 10 meeting, this agenda item was mooted.

#### Status of Chamber of Commerce Inquiry Regarding USBR 35

Kathy provided a status report on discussions with Deb Mix of the Starke County Chamber of Commerce regarding the US Bicycle Route 35 Pilot Project. In cooperation with the Hoosier Rails to Trails Council and the Indiana Office of Tourism Development, the project would advance knowledge and use of USBR 35 by the 15 Indiana counties through which USBR 35 passes. Mix had asked if the PTC would assist with the project for the portion of USBR 35 in Starke County. During the August 10 meeting the PTC agreed to assist the Chamber of Commerce and asked Kathy to inform Mix.

Kathy emailed Deb Mix and advise her the PTC agreed to assist. Mix responded on September 21 that Starke County made a commitment of \$250 to the Indiana Office of Tourism Development which is coordinating an application for grant money. Mix has informed other counties that Sandy Kersting, Kathy and potentially others have offered to support this \$250 Starke County financial commitment. Mix is now waiting to hear back from the IOTD.

Kathy said she suspected when information on services is sought from the counties, the push will require a quick turnaround. Bruce said he shared an email which several years ago listed services along the American Discovery Trail in Starke County, and this listing of services should also apply here. Kathy thanked Bruce for offering a good starting point. Assuming the project advances successfully, PTC members may be asked to participate in a subcommittee which completes IOTD information requests.

#### Scheduling of Meetings Subsequent to October 26, 2016

Bruce deferred discussion of the agenda item until the October 26 meeting.

#### Consideration of Executive Document Summary for PTC Goals

Steve Lucas introduced this item. He said organizations, such as the Quality of Place Committee of the Starke County Chamber of Commerce and nearby trail associations, urged the PTC to approve a planning document to outline goals and visions. A planning document can assist with public understanding, including the ability to qualify for grants. He said the *North Judson-Erie Trail Project Overview*, as attached to the agenda, is an effort to serve the planning function. The document was prepared by Yancy Lucas, Lucas Corral Interpretive Design, partly as a volunteer contribution by Yancy to the PTC and partly through financial contribution to him by an anonymous donor.

Steve said he hoped that if approved by the PTC, the *North Judson-Erie Trail Project Overview* would be placed on the PTC website and shared with governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Yancy created the document from PTC concepts approved previously. But in applying concepts to a document with mapping, PTC would likely need to provide clarification. Steve asked the membership for additions and corrections to the *North Judson-Erie Trail Project Overview*.

Steve said Kathy Carrier was unable to attend this evening's meeting but emailed him to express a preference that Phase 2 and Phase 3 be emphasized. In responding to her he wrote that phases helped provide structure, but one phase was not limited by another. Phase 1 was seen by some as an opportunity to demonstrate a PTC success and might be more easily accomplished than Phase 2 or Phase 3.

Bruce reflected he thought Phase 1 to provide a spur to Bailey's Discount Center was "very doable". He agreed with the proposed phasing and also with the idea that the enumeration should not be considered a limitation on one phase relative to another. "We move forward as soon as we're able."

Brian commented generally on the thoroughness of the document. He added it was an important step forward.

Rhonda said she agreed that when approved the document should be placed on the PTC website. "That's a great idea."

A suggestion was offered that changes in goals or direction would likely occur as projects move forward. Sharon Smead agreed but added the document was needed. She said we would probably modify our goals in the future, but a good master plan is important.

Nathan P. Origer, Executive Director of Pulaski County Economic Development, spoke to the members. He said Pulaski County is developing a system of trails and bicycle routes. An aspect of the system is to provide connectivity to neighboring counties. Of primary importance is improving connectivity between the Panhandle Pathway in Pulaski County and the American Discovery Trail (including the NJ Erie Trail) in Starke County. Nathan said he shared elements of the trails and bicycle routes system with several members of the PTC, most notably the use of Starke County Road 200 East (which becomes Pulaski County Road 300 West when the county line is crossed) to connect the NJ Erie Trail and Pulaski County Road 100 South west of Winamac. This proposal was one of two routes proposed between Starke County and Pulaski County within Phase 4 of the *North Judson-Erie Trail Project Overview*.

In addition, Nathan said he reviewed the second route proposed within Phase 4. The route passes near the east side of Tippecanoe River State Park using a share-the-road crossing over the Tippecanoe River and south to a point east of Winamac. Pulaski County endorsed the second route to terminate on the north at Pulaski County Road 800 North (also known as Starke County Road 900 South). If Phase 3 is completed an easy roadway connection could be made from this termination point to the junction of Starke County Road 600 East and the Bass Lake Erie Trail. The termination of the second route is also a short distance and within sight of the former Erie Railroad. If the Bass Lake Erie Trail

were extended southeast of CR 600 E along the railroad right-of-way, a short and direct connection could be made to the Bass Lake Erie Trail.

Nathan said on he requested conceptual and signage approval by the Starke County Board of Commissioners for both the first and second route. During presentation to the Board he also mentioned plans by the PTC to identify roadway connections from the NJ Erie Trail to Bass Lake. The Commissioners approved the Pulaski County Economic Development's request during their September 6 meeting.

Linda identified a clerical error on the map on page 24 of the draft document. Pulaski CR 300 W is shown as Pulaski CR 300 N. Also, the footprint for the Kankakee River Fish and Wildlife Area shown on page 7 and page 21 does not include the full expanse of the DNR property today. This deficiency is notable on the southwest portion of the property where the footprint does not include the Toto Road office. Other technical modifications sought by the membership were addition of the Winamac Fish and Wildlife area on page 24 and repagination to reflect the 17-page document.

With these amendments the membership approved the *North Judson-Erie Trail Project Overview*. Kathy was authorized to cause Steve Antisdal to place the document on the PTC website.

#### Discussion of Proposed Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Fundraiser

Bruce introduced the discussion. He reported he has been working with Becky Weigand of TravelStar to develop a trip to Cleveland and its Hard Rock Casino, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and the Great Lakes Science Center. The proposed trip would begin on St. Patrick's Day and extend for two nights. Pricing would vary depending on whether participants stayed at the Hilton Garden Inn Downtown, Doubletree Downtown or Drury Plaza. He said a trip with one overnight might be a less expensive possibility. Options anticipated at least 30 people would participate.

Linda asked how the event would be a fundraiser. Bruce answered that the PTC would receive a fraction of the participation fees. He was uncertain what fraction would go to the PTC and would inquire further of TravelStar.

Rhonda asked whether one night instead of two nights might be more feasible. Bruce said he would also inquire about one-night options.

The members agreed the subject should be revisited at a subsequent meeting.

#### Planning for October 1 Work Date

The work date is scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m., CDT at the rest park on Starke County Road 250 West and Indiana State Road 10. Intermittent showers were predicted for the work date at the time of the meeting, but the members agreed to attempt to go forward.

Rhonda said the Indiana Bicentennial Torch Relay was scheduled to travel through Starke County on October 7. Included was a stop at the rest park on State Road 10 before the torch was carried by train to North Judson. She said she hoped the rest park would be

“spiffed up” for the torch relay. Paul Byer reflected the HVRM recently mowed the rest park and sprayed weeds with herbicide along the trail west of the rest park.

Bruce spoke of the need to address invasive species, particularly Siberian elms, between CR 250 West and CR 100 West. Trail use would be supported by clearing and providing herbicide treatment to invasive species in the area.

Sharon asked what equipment she should bring. Paul responded she should bring gloves. Bruce said the PTC has access to a good array of equipment and she probably did not need to bring additional equipment unless she wished.

The consensus was that participants could choose to direct attention either to the rest park in preparation for the torch relay or to the area between CR 250 W and CR 100 W to address invasive species.

### Discussion of September 17 HVRM Meeting and Actions

Linda reported on a good exchange of ideas at the HVRM meeting held September 17. She asked what the HVRM wanted from the PTC. Members responded that the HVRM focus was from the rest park west. Complex negotiations are underway among the HVRM, Town of North Judson and the company that would operate a commercial railway on the same tracks as the HVRM. The HVRM is now precluded from operations north of English Lake.

Linda said the HVRM wanted to avoid construction of buildings that might impede possible use of the former Erie Railroad right-of-way east of CR 250 W. The HVRM was not opposed to small improvements such as benches and picnic tables or to signage that could be easily removed in the event of reuse as a railroad. The HVRM welcomed PTC efforts to control vegetation along the trail and horse path.

Rhonda reflected improvements need to be attached securely enough that they would be resistant to vandalism or theft. Bruce agreed.

Paul noted signs were recently placed facing both north and south on US 35 at the site of former Bass Station. The signs identify the trail and the opportunity for parking. He added the signs were small but visible from the highway.

The HVRM welcomed the concept of a liaison from the PTC to assist with communications. Linda said she would be willing to serve in this role.

The HVRM indicated it would consult with legal counsel to begin developing terms for an agreement or memorandum of understanding to outline PTC activities along the NJ Erie Trail. HVRM members suggested the PTC should also suggest concepts to make our efforts more effective.

Steve asked if it might be appropriate for the members to designate Linda as PTC liaison to the HVRM. Bruce agreed it was.

Kathy moved to select Linda as the Prairie Trails Club liaison to the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum. Rhonda seconded the motion. On a voice vote the motion carried.

Rhonda asked if Steve or Kathy would be willing to make a first draft for simple language to address the placement of benches, picnic tables and signs, as well the control of weeds and other vegetation. Steve agreed to try and to share the effort with PTC members by email for comment. When a consensus is achieved the draft would be forwarded to Linda to share with the HVRM at or before its meeting set for November 19, 2016.

Bruce said that in a related matter an item of equipment was acquired several years ago by the PTC or a predecessor club to the PTC. A person has expressed interest in buying the item including a three-year-commitment commitment to also use it to help control weeds along the trail. Kathy agreed to help draft a simple document to set sales terms. The draft would be tendered for PTC consideration during a later meeting.

### Adjournment

Rhonda moved to adjourn. Anita McMillin seconded the motion. By voice the motion was approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m., CDT.