

MEETING MINUTES OF PRAIRIE TRAILS CLUB INC.

BLPOA Community Center
6996 South SR 10
Bass Lake (Knox), Indiana

July 25, 2023

MEMBERS

Diane Blais
Russ Blais
John Bulger
Renee Bulger
Paul Byer
Charlotte Liss
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Brian McMillin
Rhonda Milner
Sharon Smead
Peg Stalbrink
Rich Vallicelli
Larry Wickert

Call to Order by President and Introductions

On July 25, 2023, Rhonda Milner, President, called to order a membership meeting of the Prairie Trails Club Inc. (“PTC”) at the BLPOA Community Center, 6996 South SR 10, Knox at 5:40 pm, CDT (6:40 pm, EDT). Introductions were made around the table.

Review and Approval of Membership Minutes of June 29, 2023

With substitution of the word “ants” for the word “bees” in the “Maintenance Workgroup Report”, Paul Byer moved for approval of the membership meeting minutes of June 29, 2023. Peg Stalbrink seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Review and Approval of Treasurer’s Report and Report of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds

Russ Blais distributed written copies of the Treasurer’s Report and Report of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds.



**Treasurer's Report
July 24, 2023**

FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST (FFBT)

Balance forward from May 11, 2023

\$72,194.44

INCOME

06/30/23	Memberships: Renee & John Bulger	\$50.00
07/05/23	Doral Renewables Donation (maintenance)	<u>5,000.00</u>
Total Income		\$5,050.50

EXPENSES

None

ENDING FFBT BALANCE AS OF 4/13/23

\$77,244.44

RESTRICTED/UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

**TOTAL AMOUNTS
PER CATEGORY**

Benches

Blais-Vlaming Bench	For 210/450 site or other	\$350.00	
McMillin Bench	For Bass Lake area	350.00	
			\$700.00

Signage/Web

Luminous Fund Grant #2 (2018)	Signs Bass Lake (incl UR Here)	1,130.54	
Hardesty Memorial Grant	Wayfinding or historic signage	3,767.10	
Lucas Lakehouse Guest Donations	Future Vision/Website	662.50	
			\$5,560.14

Northwest (or Other Extension)

Luminous Fund Grant #4 (2020)	NW Extension or operations	5,000.00	
Luminous Fund Grant #5 (2021)	NW Extension or operations	5,000.00	
Luminous Fund Grant #6 (2022)	NW Extension or operations	10,000.00	
Mitchel-Kane Charitable Fund	NW Extension or operations	6,000.00	
VFW Grant	For "trail improvements"	5,000.00	
PTC Contribution to ITP Match	Trail Extension	10,000.00	
Gene Novello	Trail Extension	1,200.00	
Naylor Pipe	Trail Extension	400.00	
			\$42,600.00

Maintenance

Mower Sale Funding	General maintenance	1,368.42	
Hardesty Memorial Fund (Joan)	Trail maintenance	1,783.42	
HVRM (and Buckeye Pipeline)	Trail maintenance	2,368.42	

Rich Stalbrink Mem, Donations	Maintenance or Most Needed	2,699.11	
Doral Solar Contribution	Bridge/Trailside Clearing	10,000.00	
			\$18,219.37

TOTAL RESTRICTED 67,079.51

FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST	TOTAL IN BANK	\$77,244.44
	— RESTRICTED FUNDS	<u>\$67,079.51</u>
	== UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	\$10,164.93

Kathy expressed great appreciation to Doral Renewables for contributing its second part of the \$10,000 promised for upgrading the Fell Ditch Bridge and clearing vegetation that is encroaching on the asphalt and equestrian trails. She noted these significant donations to trail maintenance would have been impossible without considerable effort by Larry Wickert. Kathy thanked John and Renee Bulger for joining the PTC.

John Bulger moved for approval of the Treasurer’s Report and the Report of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds. Brian McMillin seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Northwest Trail Extension Workgroup Report

Receipt of a \$300,000 DNR grant to help extend the trail for one mile through the Town of North Judson was previously announced on Facebook, our website Homepage, WKVI news, and in the notice of this meeting. The Erie Trail and what would become the Grand Kankakee Marsh Trail going northwest of town is a testament to the dedication of our members, donors and friends.

Larry outlined a meeting held on July 21 at the North Judson Town Hall to help advance the project and to explore options to augment a trailhead in the “Triangle” (a space across the active tracks from HVRM’s Grasselli Tower). In attendance were representatives from the PTC, the Town and Territorial Engineering.

Maintenance Workgroup Report

Paul informed the members that he recently mowed the trail from Starke County 700 South to Starke County 100 West. Charlotte Liss said she and husband Corey Liss hooked up their mower only to learn Paul had already made the effort. Paul obtained sand and filled cracks near Range Road in anticipation of a group workday on August 2 to use the rubber applicator to seal cracks.

Paul expressed a need to purchase ten bags of cold pack. Steve moved to approve the purchase. Russ seconded the motion and the motion carried. Paul said he needed the paperwork from Kathy to establish the PTC’s tax exempt status. Kathy said showing tax exempt status is quirky because some retailers want proof of the Federal exemption and some want proof of the Indiana State exemption. She handed Paul a document showing the exemption and told Paul she would obtain another for him if needed.

Paul and Rich Vallicelli also cleared branches and timber from the asphalt trail.

Paul replaced a cracked deck board at the Fell Ditch Bridge on July 11.

Selfie by Paul Byer



Paul collected estimates for the purchase of collapsible bollards that would supplement or replace insect-damaged wood posts at intersections. He said costs among bollard types, materials and designs vary significantly. Bollards are used on the Panhandle Pathway. There would be substantial expense to replace all existing wooden gates with durable bollards, as well as labor for their installation. The members discussed whether wood posts would need to be removed as bollards are installed. The members deferred action until determining which wooden posts are no longer effective. Since the proposed use of bollards would constitute a trail design change, it was also determined there should be consultation with the HVRM.

Steve said he groomed the area adjacent to the signal bungalow art project and Rich and Peg Stalbrink's bench near Starke County Road 200 East.

Final Preparations for Bass Lake Festival 5K Run/3K Walk

Brian said the bases for the Run/Walk were covered except for passing out vests. Kathy said she would assist. Several members noted that showers and thunderstorms were predicted for the time of the event. Rich asked what would happen in the event of bad weather. The response was that the event is listed as taking place "rain or shine", but it would have to be suspended if lightning poses a threat. Brian said set-up for the event would begin at 5:45 am, CDT.

Review of Warrior Expeditions Great American Rail Trail Trek

Earlier in the day, Sarah Zeller emailed to us a "Warrior Expeditions Great American Trail Update" in which she reported that "Britt [Greene], Steph [Buffett], and Aaron [Ledbetter] finished their journey last weekend! Tim [Davis] is in North Bend WA today, and Jared [Thomas] is currently in Valentine NE waiting for a new tire. He should be on his way again tomorrow."

Last week Stephanie expressed her appreciation to the PTC for its support of the project and shared an image of her celebration with Brittany at the Pacific Ocean shore. They were the first this year to complete the trek.



You-Are-Here Signage and Non-Motorized-Vehicles-Only Signage

Diane Blais said she had spoken recently with her brother Rick Vlaming. He plans to provide the carpentry for our replacement and new You-Are-Here support posts. She added that Rick is currently closing on his own home purchase, and working full-time on two home construction projects, but hopes to begin the sign project in the near future. Four posts west of Starke County Road 700 South would have sign replacements and would use existing posts. Three new signs would be placed at US Highway 35, Starke County Road 600 East, and Starke County Road 700 East. These would require new posts.

John asked what problems the PTC has experienced with carpenter ants on the You-Are-Here signs. He suggested a metal post option might be preferable to wood for new sign posts. Steve said the existing posts are uniformly painted green treated timber. Also, Rich has said he would contribute posts that he has currently in storage. Charlotte Liss said that in her experience Ortho Home Defense Insect Killer is a good option to resist insect damage to wood structures.

Members discussed the possibility of placing signs on the three new posts to clarify that the trail is restricted to use by pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles. There are limited exceptions for emergency vehicles, maintenance vehicles, ADA compliance, and certain E-bikes. DNR specifications for the two-mile trail extension east of US 35 did not identify signage for the restriction against motor vehicles, but the restriction was a condition for obtaining funding and is implicit to its status as rails-to-trails property.

E-bikes have been discussed during prior PTC meetings. The June 22, 2022 meeting minutes state on page 11:

According to the *Indiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2021-2025)*, E-Bikes are now “regulated the same as bicycles....” They are assigned to one of “three classes based on their maximum

speed and components. All classes of e-bikes must follow the same rules and be given the same responsibilities as any other bicycle.... [O]nly Class 1 and Class 2 e-bikes are allowed on multi-use, hard surface trails or paths," such as the Erie Trail, "unless a broader or stricter policy is specified by the local authority...."

Our members recognized the HVRM should be a key participant if there was interest in pursuit of a broader or stricter policy. Steve spoke with Bob Albert after the meeting in June. As noted in the August 24 meeting minutes, Bob said he discussed new E-bike laws with the HVRM's Board of Directors. There was agreement within the HVRM Board that the legislation was clear and workable, and neither a broader nor a stricter policy should be pursued. Steve then suggested the matter be referred to the BIC Committee for consideration as to whether a new brochure or new signage should acknowledge the Erie Trail is governed by E-bike laws. The members expressed concurrence during the August 24, 2022 meeting.

John said he believes people understand the difference between E-bikes and off-road vehicles. Charlotte suggested there are people who will go around gates and abuse the trail with unlawful vehicles, but the PTC needs to place signage to confirm these types of vehicles are unauthorized. Several different sign possibilities were brought up on cell phones and discussed. Options include larger signs than currently present on the trail, but there was not consensus on language or how much larger signs were warranted. Larry moved to approve the purchase and placement of new signage in the two-mile southeast trail extension with the understanding we could post more specific signage later. Diane seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Reminder of Annual Membership Dues

Kathy reminded members that August is renewal time for members paying annual dues.

Review of HVRM Activities

Paul said ridership continues to be strong with most riders being from outside Starke County.

Next Membership Meeting

The next Membership Meeting was set for Thursday, August 24, 2023 at 5:30 p.m., CDT (6:30 p.m., EDT) in the BLPOA Community Center, Bass Lake (Knox).

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:39 p.m., CDT (7:39 p.m., EDT).