

MEETING MINUTES OF PRAIRIE TRAILS CLUB INC.

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

September 21, 2022

MEMBERS

**Diane Blais
Russ Blais
Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Joan Hardesty
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Brian McMillin
Rhonda Milner
Peg Stalbrink
Rich Vallicelli**

Bob Albert, Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum Liaison

Call to Order by Vice President

On September 21, 2022, Rhonda Milner, Vice 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 5:34 pm, CDT (6:34 pm, EDT).

Review and Approval of Membership Minutes of August 24, 2022

Diane Blais moved to approve, without modification, draft minutes of the August 24, 2022 membership meeting. Paul Byer seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Final Report of 2022 Bass Lake Festival 5K Run/3K Walk

Brian McMillan reported on the fiscal reconciliation of the Bass Lake Festival 5K Run/3K Walk. He, Diane, and Kathy Lucas met recently with Mary Topelian, Treasurer of the Bass Lake Festival Association, Inc., and they agreed upon \$2,543 as the PTC's net income from the event. Brian said he believed the 5K Run/3K Walk was a success and that he and Anita McMillin were willing to chair the event again next summer. His summary and the expression of willingness to provide leadership for next year's event were met with a round of applause.

Brian and membership also expressed their appreciation to Rich Vallicelli for serving as starter and emcee and hopes that he would serve similarly next year. Rich reflected he was willing and would next year provide more emphasis upon PTC participation and merchandise. In 2023 the Bass Lake Festival 5K Run/3K Walk is expected to be held on July 29.



Left to right: Peg Stalbrink and Miss Bass Lake Festival, Tessa Conroy; Rich Vallicelli announces race start; and Tessa Conroy presents trophy with event co-chair Anita McMillin
 Images by Kathy Lucas

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

Kathy distributed written copies of the Treasurer’s Report as follows:



**Treasurer’s Report
 September 21, 2022**

FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST (FFBT)

Balance forward from 08/24/22 \$64,757.31

INCOME

08/24/22	Membership Dues <i>Y. Lucas, N. Corral Frias, T. Blazer & C Balzer</i>	\$100.00
08/25/22	Honey Hole/Bass Lake Pizza Joint <i>Brochure Ad</i>	100.00
08/25/22	Membership & Donation <i>Joan Hardesty</i>	50.00
08/25/22	Merchandise sales <i>Erie Trail Logo T-shirts</i>	50.00
09/02/22	Deposit from Amazon Smile donations	13.97

09/08/22	Proceeds from Bass Lake 5K Run/3K Walk	2,543.00
09/08/22	Merchandise sales <i>Erie Trail Logo T-shirts</i>	20.00
09/12/22	Merchandise sales <i>Erie Trail Logo T-shirts</i>	25.00
09/12/22	Membership Dues <i>Michael McGregor</i>	25.00
09/15/22	Donation from Gene Novello	<u>950.00</u>

Total Income **\$ 3,876.97**

\$68,634.28

EXPENSES

08/25/22	Check #1122 to Precept Partners <i>Website updates and new information</i>	\$112.50
08/25/22	Check #1121 to K. Lucas <i>Reimb. personal check to P. Byer for asphalt roller</i>	<u>350.00</u>

Total Expenses **\$462.50**

ENDING FFBT BALANCE AS OF 09/21/22 **\$68,171.78**

RESTRICTED/UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

Benches

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

Signage/Web

Luminous Fund Grant #2 (2018)	Signs Bass Lake (incl UR Here)	1,418.54
Hardesty Memorial Grant	Wayfinding or historic signage	4,205.10
Lucas Lakehouse Guest Donations	Future Vision/Website	662.50

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

Maintenance

Mower Sale Funding	General maintenance	3,368.42
Hardesty Memorial Fund (Joan)	Trail maintenance	2,518.42 (-\$350 for asphalt roller)
HVRM (and Buckeye Pipeline)	Trail maintenance	2,368.42

Miscellaneous

Stalbrink donation	Scholarship or "most needed"	100.00
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TOTAL RESTRICTED 47,041.40

FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST	TOTAL IN BANK	\$68,171.78
	— RESTRICTED FUNDS	<u>\$47,041.40</u>
	= UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	\$21,130.38

Kathy expressed special appreciation to Gene Novello for his generous donation. She reflected that successful completion of the Bass Lake Festival 5K Run/3K Walk provided funding that can help fill much needed PTC goals, including a possible northwest trail extension. She thanked Joan for her membership augmented with a donation and thanked Yancy, Nadia, Tabitha, Chris and Michael for their annual memberships.

Rhonda asked if there were questions or if a member wished to move approval.

Peg Stalbrink moved to approve the Treasurer's Report and Restricted and Unrestricted Funds Report as presented. Russ Blais seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Review and Approval of New Brochure

Members and other interested persons were provided with a "proof" of the new PTC and Erie Trail brochure in a September 15 email from the Secretary. Steve said responses he has received regarding the new brochure have been universally positive. The brochure is a product of the BIC Committee, but in particular Susan Byer, Linda Byer, Russ Blais, Yancy Lucas and Kathy Lucas made huge contributions.

The new brochure largely tracks a former brochure which resulted in the March 2020 printing of 3,000 copies. Yancy provided a revised base map recognizing the two-mile Next Level Trails extension east of US Highway 35, as well as adjustments to hosted transAmerican trails and Connectors that have either been approved or are in the process of approval. The printable version of the base map is accessible on our website at <https://www.prairietrailsclub.org/maps>

Adjustments were made to sponsorships. Renewed with some modifications from the 2020 printing were ads from Fingerhut Bakery, Christos Family Dining, JK Deli, and Bass Lake Pub & Ristorante. Replacement ads were provided for prior sponsors from Scoops and Smiles, Bass Lake Pizza Joint and Honey Hole, and the Woodshed Tap. Russ marketed these sponsorships, and Susan crafted renditions for Scoops and Smiles and for Bass Lake Pizza Joint and Honey Hole. Language on the sponsorship page was adjusted to acknowledge explicitly the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum as one of the PTC's key supporters.

Linda reoriented the brochure folding so all ads would be adjacent to one another. She caused the pamphlet's outside to have a consistent blue background with our traditional Erie Trail and Prairie Trails Club logos on the front. On the back are Rules of the Trail. These were modified to acknowledge that Class 1 and 2 e-bikes are now allowed. Images on the back were updated to include features from the two-mile trail extension completed last October.

On the inside of the brochure, the “Who We Are” element was rewritten to reflect the PTC mission statement and aspirations contained in *Future Vision 2022-2026*. Base map site references were adjusted to identify current sponsorships. Images were freshened.

Rhonda asked whether a member wished to seek additional changes. No request was made, and several of those in attendance expressed support for printing the new brochure as distributed.

Linda asked how many copies should be printed. The consensus was to seek 5,000 copies this time since the 3,000 copies printed in 2020 were exhausted so quickly. After discussion, Russ moved to authorize Linda to seek 5,000 copies of the new brochure from the same printer as provided the service in 2020. Anita seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Northwest Trail Extension Workgroup Report

Steve reported that Kirt Verhagen and Larry Wickert are pursuing consensus on a trail route from Main Street through North Judson to the five way intersection that includes Starke County Roads 500 South, 450 West northbound, and English Lake Road. This pathway is the PTC’s current aspiration for an Indiana Trails Program (“ITP”) grant application to DNR which will be due the end of February, 2023.

Kirt is at the center of a dialogue among the Northern Indiana Railroad, Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum, Town of North Judson, and the PTC to design a route through town. Kirt and Larry are also working on obtaining a route, which should not require Northern Indiana Railroad concurrence, between the northwest limit of North Judson and the half-section line extension from 450 West, if the road were extended in a straight line beyond English Lake Road. Kirt and Larry are making good progress, but there is still much work to be done.

An essential element of an ITP grant application will be the completion of DNR-approved real estate appraisals. Steve recommended that members authorize Kirt and Larry contract for appraisals to fulfill this DNR requirement.

Diane asked if the PTC has any choice as to whether to obtain appraisals. Steve answered that the PTC was allowed to provide valuations for real estate, using a method other than appraisals, for the Next Level Trails grant. But this option is not included in the ITP grant guidelines. He said approved values for realty could be part of a soft match, if a grant is awarded to the PTC, and he thinks but is not sure the cost of appraisals might be eligible for soft match credit. The PTC would be required to obtain appraisals, before submitting a grant application, if it is to receive match credit for the value of the real estate. There is no guarantee that the PTC will obtain a grant if it makes an application. Diane asked what source might be available for funding appraisals. Steve responded he believed funding dedicated to trail expansion should qualify.

Diane moved that Kirt and Larry be authorized to make reasonable expenditures to obtain real estate appraisals qualified for an ITP grant application to extend the Erie Trail northwest through North Judson toward English Lake. Peg seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Maintenance Workgroup Report

Paul reported that he, Brian, and Russ performed extensive asphalt crack sealing on the Erie Trail west of Bogus Run bridge. Steve and Kathy said they had bicycled this trail segment recently. The surface was still somewhat uneven, but the asphalt sealing effort markedly improved conditions. They praised the three men for their productive work.



Images by Kathy Lucas

Paul said he would soon apply the remaining sealer. Russ, Brian, and Steve offered their assistance.

Paul suggested replacing the current plank surface with concrete on the Fell Ditch bridge. Because the bridge was built according to designs when repurposed as a bicycle crossing, members wondered whether its capacity to carry cement should be assessed by a professional engineer. Bob Albert said he would also discuss Paul's concept with the HVRM Board of Directors.

Paul and Linda discussed several options for chemical suppression of plants along the trail and particularly the equestrian trail. Chemical costs have risen significantly since last year. The members focused on one option that was a broad-based herbicide. Paul estimated the cost of this chemical at roughly \$1,500 for the trail length. After further discussion, Brian moved to give Paul and Linda discretion to purchase the chemical at what they view as a reasonable cost. Russ seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Linda suggested the October 1 workday and weed wrangle be focused on the control of bush honeysuckle and other invasive species immediately west of Bogus Run bridge. The members agreed to this location and to a starting time of 9:00 a.m., CDT (10:00 a.m., EDT). Participants will rendezvous at the rest park adjacent to the Indiana Highway 10 crossing of the Erie Trail

Update on Trail Counters

Joan Hardesty and Linda implemented an ambitious effort to activate two trail counters purchased with funding from the PTC's NLT-10-07 grant. Paul located the counters in a manner supportive of the DNR grant. Joan distributed written interpretations of early data. Prospectively the data should be augmented with narratives developed by PTC member observations onsite. As would probably be expected, early data suggests the greatest usage of the Erie Trail, both east and west of US Highway 35, takes place on weekends.

Consideration of OSSIS Event on October 16

Jacque Ryan, Director of Development at Starke Community Foundation, emailed Steve that the Constellation of Starke Creative Network is presenting the Our Solar System in Scale ("OSSIS") project onsite on Sunday, October 16, from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. The OSSIS project depicts planets of our solar system in a scale of 1:355 million over several miles of the Erie Trail. Jacque reflected the event would not be a race but rather "an opportunity for more people to come out to the Erie Trail" and explore OSSIS, at the "start at Main Street, just east of the Hoosier Valley Rail Museum in North Judson.... The planets Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars are an easy one-mile round trip walk from the trail crossing at Main Street." Jacque's perspective was that "To get to the far flung gas giants, such as Jupiter and Neptune, [a participant would] need to cover many miles of the trail so bicycle travel is recommended...."

Jacque wrote that she and Corinne Becknell Lucas "plan to have cider at the start of the trail.... Also, water/power bar stations might be set [at some] signs depending on the number of volunteers." She asked for "the Prairie Trails Club to be involved however [it would] like to be, like maybe selling PTC shirts or passing out pamphlets or membership forms at the start of the trail." She also spoke of the possibility of holding the event in collaboration with a train ride.

Steve asked membership for thoughts on possible participation in the October 16 OSSIS event. Kathy, Peg, and Brian volunteered to manage a table near Main Street with PTC shirts and brochures. There are a few remaining brochures from the 2020 printing, but 2022 brochures would be shared if available. Steve will manage a stand or small table at the Neptune sign, with water and power bars, and inform bicyclists that Neptune is currently the final easterly element of the OSSIS project. Bob Albert said he is unaware of any commitment to collaborate with the Starke Community Foundation on train rides. Steve concluded by saying he would ask Steve Antidel, PTC's webmaster, to update the OSSIS project information including its official opening.

Informal Review of HVRM Activities

Bob Albert, Liaison from the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum, gave an overview of HVRM upcoming activities. After an extensive multi-year restoration and intense crew training, the Bock Lumber Company No. 1, a steam locomotive built in 1908, will provide power for excursions. Steam excursions on this popular locomotive are set for October 8, October 15 and October 22. Multiple Pumpkin Train rides are set for each of October 8, 15, 22, and 29. The Halloween Train is also scheduled for October 29.

Bob added that the HVRM was recently informed Lanracorp, a contractor for Buckeye Pipe Line Company, L.P., will be accessing its right-of-way along the Erie Trail to mow brush, remove trees or trim limbs overhanging the right-of-way. Steve said an employee for Lanracorp spoke to him “at our cabin by the trail.” The employee characterized the activity as being mostly mowing and said large trees would not be removed. Bob gave Steve a copy of the Buckeye Pipe Line letter received by the HVRM.

Report of Boy Scouts of America Buffalo Bicycle Stampede Event

Kathy reported that the Sagamore Council of the Boy Scouts of America conducted its third annual Buffalo Bicycle Stampede on August 27. The event featured five route lengths all coursing in and around the Tippecanoe River valley in the Indiana counties of White, Pulaski, and Cass. For the first time, the grueling 100-mile Century Ride visited Starke County on the Erie Trail. Rides started at Camp Buffalo, 9400 North Boy Scout Road, Monticello (near the village of Buffalo).

Kathy said that following communications with organizers of the 100-mile Century Ride, she and Steve placed water with an informal sign “to welcome riders near our cabin.” Eight riders finished the Century Ride successfully. She said her understanding was that the PTC could have a more notable role next year if there is membership interest.

Report of Posting PTC Governance Document on Website

During the COVID lockdown, membership approved amendments to our “Governance of Board of Directors and Membership for Prairie Trails Club Inc. Activities” which became effective July 1, 2020. These are essentially the PTC bylaws. Posting the Governance Document online was deferred until our new 5-year plan was approved and posted—with the thought the 5-year plan could have required an amendment—but an amendment was not required. Our webmaster was requested to post the Governance Document on the PTC website, and he did so earlier this month. It was included in the drawdown ABOUT immediately below the item Future Vision 2022 Overview. Our webmaster comped us for this posting.

PTC Purchase of PC

Paul suggested the membership consider purchasing a PC to process and maintain records of the organization. At present documents are developed on the privately-owned computers of individual members and often not easily sharable. Differing platforms pose compatibility challenges for data access. Housing PTC information on PCs that have the records of individual members may also pose security issues.

Joan said her preliminary research suggested that a basic PC could now be purchased for under \$400, although she added that inquiry should be made into what programs a particular PC would be required in order to perform for PTC business.

Paul moved that those members who provide computer-based services confer and seek consensus on PTC purchase of a PC that would serve exclusively serve the PTC. Brian seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Weed Wrangle Workday

A weed wrangle workday was scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m., CDT (10:00 a.m., EDT) on October 1, 2022. Participants will rendezvous at the rest park adjacent to the Indiana Highway 10 crossing of the Erie Trail. Work will begin on the west side of the Bogus Run bridge over the Erie Trail.

Next Meeting

The membership scheduled the next meeting for Thursday, November 3, 2022 at 5:30 p.m., CDT (6:30 p.m., EDT) in the BLPOA Community Center, Bass Lake (Knox).

December Meeting

The membership also scheduled a meeting for Thursday, December 1, 2022 at 5:30 p.m., CST (6:30 p.m., EST) in the BLPOA Community Center, Bass Lake (Knox).

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m., CDT (8:13 p.m., EDT).