

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

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

June 17, 2021

MEMBERS

**Diane Blais
Russell Blais
Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Bruce Fingerhut
Carolla Heilstedt
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Brian McMillin
Rhonda Milner
Deb Mix
Peggy Stalbrink
Larry Wickert**

GUESTS

**Bob Albert, Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum, Inc. (“HVRM”) Liaison
John Bawcum, Friends of Panhandle Pathway, Inc., President
Paul Cook, Warrior Expedition—Great American Rail-Trail Trekker
Jay Muddy Waters, Warrior Expedition—Great American Rail-Trail Trekker**

Call to Order by President

Carolla Heilstedt, President, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club Inc. (“PTC”) in the BLPOA Community Center at 5:36 pm, CDT (6:36 pm, EDT) on June 17, 2021. She introduced Jay Waters and Paul Cook who are trekkers on a joint initiative by Warrior Expeditions and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy for a coast-to-coast bike ride on the Great American Rail-Trail. She reminded members that the PTC is providing support for the initiative through Starke County and invited Jay and Paul to speak.

Jay said the bicycle trek is the inaugural event by Warrior Expeditions and the Rails-to-Trail Conservancy on the Great American Rail-Trail. He has enjoyed the experience as a whole. Five trekkers started at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC and progressed through Maryland, West Virginia and Ohio. “We entered Indiana near Richmond and were most recently in Peru where they visited the local VFW. “I served for 30 years in the Army and was stationed at Ft. Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis between 1987 and 1991.” He said regarding the trek, “Lately, it’s been a little hot, and I’m starting to get sunburned.” Jay said he was looking forward to a day’s break from trail riding with a stay in Starke County.

Paul Cook said the trek was “for us partly to help with recovery from PTSD.” There is so much thats going on, but most people are supportive. “You meet a lot of really nice people. There are so many who are compassionate.”

Carolla said we were honored by the presence of Jay and Paul and thanked them for coming to the meeting. She added the members would discuss more about scheduling activities later in the meeting.

Review and Approval of Abbreviated Treasurer's Report including Report of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds (with More Comprehensive Report in the Minutes)

Kathy said First Farmers Bank & Trust was upgrading its online banking platform. The bank noted there might be connectivity problems, and, in fact, she was unable to access current information. She thus provided an abbreviated report.

Kathy said she applied to the Luminous Foundation for a grant to assist PTC activities and received an award of \$5,000. She noted that Dave and Kathy Carrier have provided amazing support. While the hope is this new grant will be used for another extension of the Erie Trail, the grant terms are remarkably flexible and could be applied to accomplish asphalt resurfacing or other critical needs. She also identified funding occasioned by Paul Byer's purchase of the wand weeder and reflected a need to clarify how that is to be allocated. She thanked Michael McGregor for renewing his annual membership.

Kathy indicated she would include a more comprehensive report for inclusion with draft minutes which would be distributed to members later in June. Paul moved to approve the abbreviated report with the understanding a more comprehensive amended report would accompany the draft minutes. Peggy Stallbrink seconded the motion. The motion carried.

As anticipated, Kathy developed a more comprehensive "Corrected Treasurer's Report" effective August 26, 2021. The corrected report is set forth on the following page:



**Corrected Treasurer's Report
June 17, 2021**

FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST (FFBT)

Balance forward from 5/20/21 \$370,493.75

INCOME

5/21/21 PTC Members cash for wand weeders	120.00
5/25/21 Amazon Smile donation	5.50
6/1/21 L.Wickert check for wand weeder	30.00
6/1/21 Luminous Fund Grant	5,000.00*
6/1/21 Michael McGregor dues	<u>25.00</u>

Total Income 5,180.50

EXPENSES

-0-

Ending FFBT balance as of 6/17/21 \$375,674.25*

**Note: During the "Mobile Banking Solution" changes by FFBT in June of 2021, the \$5,000 Luminous Fund Grant was not reflected on the mobile accounting as of the date of the amended Treasurer's Report. This Corrected Treasurer's Report now properly reflects the Luminous Fund Grant.*

*/s/Kathleen Lucas, Treasurer
Corrected August 26, 2021*

Warrior Bike Trip on Great American Rail-Trail

A welcome sign was placed along the Erie Trail near CR 100 West to guide trekkers to a rendezvous at the home of Steve and Kathy. Diane said she and Russ Blais would host a dinner for the Warrior Expedition trekkers the following evening, June 18, and requested a headcount of members who expect to attend. Jay and Paul would be joined by trekkers Allison and Alan Garrigus. Russ said he planned a tour for interested trekkers to include the Knox VFW, American Legion, Starke County War Memorial Plaza, and Starke County History Museum.



Brian and Anita McMillan, Bruce Fingerhut, Peg, Carolla, and Kathy offered to help with food preparation for the dinner and for breakfast on June 19. Rick and Mary Vlaming will assist with hosting the dinner. Kathy said because Jay and Paul arrived a night earlier than anticipated, and had already downloaded things at the Lucas cabin, they would overnight with Steve and her. Allison and Alan would stay with Russ and Diane.

OSSIS Project Update

Steve said the OSSIS Project continues to advance. The model for Mercury was placed along the Erie Trail a short distance southeast of Main Street in North Judson. Other planet models have been designed and are being constructed and will later be placed by OTES. Onsite images below are obverse (left) and reverse (right) by Kathy Lucas.



Steve said the OSSIS Project workgroup invited the PTC to offer language for the reverse side of a sign to be placed on the two-mile extension for Pluto, a dwarf planet. This side will be the first side seen by travelers coming to the Erie Trail on Starke County Road 700 East and traveling northwest. It would be an introduction to them of the OSSIS Project. Another and possibly more detailed description would be placed near the Sun model at

North Judson for those traveling southeast. Steve then shared the following proposed language:

In 2019 Constellation of Starke proposed Our Solar System in Scale. What has become the "OSSIS Project" envisioned models of the Sun, planets, and other heavenly bodies in-scale as to size and distance along the Erie Trail. Starke County Community Foundation included the OSSIS Project in its successful 2020 application to the Lilly Endowment's GIFT VII program. A workgroup was formed for implementation. Included was Robert Aloj and Territorial Engineering that scaled and located the models onsite. Martin Lucas designed and executed artwork with construction and placement by OTEs of North Judson. Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum authorized use of its right-of-way, and the Prairie Trails Club provided additional support. With completion of the OSSIS Project, the Sun model is at Main Street in North Judson with planets to the southeast and the outermost model here, the dwarf planet Pluto.

Members expressed their concurrence with the proposed language without amendment. Steve said he would convey the proposal and membership concurrence to the OSSIS workgroup at his first convenience. He also noted he has worked with our webmaster to optimize visibility of the OSSIS Project on the PTC website.

Report of Southeast Trail Extension Workgroup

Bruce and Carolla reported on the southeast extension. They reflected the centerline of the corridor was being marked and the possibility of moving the equestrian trail further north was in discussion. They anticipated The Troyer Group would be submitting an amended set of plans to the DNR in this regard.

Report of Northwest Trail Extension Workgroup

Steve said he has learned an opportunity for an easement in PTC's favor going northwest from North Judson toward LaCrosse has not been signed or recorded as believed. He is hopeful finalization can be achieved in the near future.

Maintenance Committee Update

Paul reported he and Linda Byer completed chemical application of herbicide to help suppress plants encroaching on the asphalt trail and the equestrian trail. Carolla said this task is grueling and mostly thankless, but she wanted "to express our appreciation for their effort." The effort is typically an annual undertaking, extending this year over two days. As a side project, Paul and Linda also removed a large cherry tree which had fallen on the trail, with Bruce and Steve lending assistance.

Report of Bass Lake Festival 5K Run and 3K Walk

Russ is chairing the workgroup to coordinate the Bass Lake Festival 5K Run and 3K Walk scheduled for July 24. Volunteers are critical to making the run-walk a success. Russ distributed a sign-up sheet to help identify who would be working and in what capacity. Members were urged to contact him or Diane to assist with this initiative. The goal is to have the pieces coordinated by the time of our July 22 meeting.

Announcement of Starke County Convention and Visitors Commission Award for Fall Walk, Run, or Ride

On behalf of the PTC, Bruce and Rhonda Milner completed and submitted a timely grant application to the Starke County Convention and Visitors Commission to help stage a fall walk, run or ride. Their application was one of six Starke County organizations receiving an award. Funding for the grant comes from the Starke County's innkeepers tax. Carolla said she expected the PTC would soon receive its funding award of \$1,000.

Bruce will chair a committee to implement the grant. Committee members will include Rhonda, Brian, Anita, Diane and Russ. The walk, run, or ride will be held on October 2.

The membership discussed what items should be acquired to help advance the event. Paul moved to authorize Bruce to acquire T-shirts, using the funding award, and to also authorize Kathy to acquire 50 black shirts with gold lettering, similar to those she bought previously and donated to the PTC, at the best available price. The committee will also discuss and make recommendations on the purchase of other items such as bags and bottles. Those not used in the event may be offered for sale on the PTC's website.

Informal Review of HVRM Activities

Bob Albert provided an interesting update on HVRM activities. He said the organization would have to "play it by ear" and comply with COVID-19 requirements, including some applicable uniquely to railroads, but he was optimistic the summer would bring them closer to operational normalcy. Two additional locomotives are anticipated from New York. He said the HVRM was working on issues pertaining to private crossings across the railroad corridor, an issue which would be of significance to the trail as well as to the railroad.

Next Membership Meeting

The next Membership meeting was scheduled for Thursday, July 22, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., CDT (6:30 p.m., EDT) at the Bass Lake home of Russ and Diane Blais, 5339 South State Road 10, Knox, Indiana. Members may also then assist with preparations for the Bass Lake Festival 5K Run and 3K Walk scheduled for July 24.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m., CDT (8:38 p.m., EDT).