

MEETING MINUTES OF PRAIRIE TRAILS CLUB INC.

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

May 23, 2024

MEMBERS

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

GUESTS

**Bob Albert, Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum
Lisa Misch, LaCrosse Public Library
Sharon Nalezny**

Call to Order by President

On May 23, 2024, 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 5:38 pm, CDT (6:38 pm, EDT). Peg Stalbrink introduced Lisa Misch who directs youth services at the LaCrosse Public Library. Rhonda welcomed Lisa to the meeting. The members also welcomed Sharon Nalezny who was introduced by Charlotte Liss.

Review and Approval of Minutes of April 26, 2024

Charlotte moved to approve the minutes of April 26, 2024 without amendments. Peg seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

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

Kathy Lucas distributed written copies of the Treasurer's Report and Report of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds. With clerical corrections made in these minutes, her report follows:



Treasurer's Report May 23, 2024

FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST (FFBT)

Balance on April 18, 2024 **\$114,871.37**

INCOME

04/23/24	RunSignup Payout #2	35.00
04/29/24	Cash donation from Peg Stalbrink	20.00
04/29/24	Dues from Dennis Newcomb (NEW MEMBER)	25.00
04/30/24	RunSignup Payout #3	25.00
05/14/24	RunSignup Payout #4	545.00
05/15/24	State of Indiana ITP #23-03 (Payment #1)	17,589.06
05/22/24	RunSignup Payout #5	<u>310.00</u>

Total Income **\$18,549.06**

EXPENSES

04/18/24	Check #1152 to Knots & Spots (T-shirts first 1/2)	500.00
04/23/24	Check #1153 to J&K Excavating (Limestone east of 700 E).	3,000.00
04/23/24	Check #1154 to J&K Excavating (SideArm Mow US 35-CR400E)	2,000.00
04/30/24	Check #1158 to Territorial Engineering (Invoice #24-106-1).	21,986.33
05/03/24	Check #1155 to Brian McMillin (Media Ads for 5K/3K)	80.00
05/03/24	Check #1157 to Brian McMillin (Medals for 5k/3k)	188.80
05/03/24	Check #1160 to Knots & Spots (T-shirts final 1/2)	500.00
05/10/24	Check #1159 to Paul Byer (Glyphosate)	442.50
05/15/24	Check #1161 to Becky Gibbons (Refund of 5K signup)	25.00
05/20/24	Check #1162 to K&G Lawn Service (Payment #1 for mowing)	100.00

Total Expenses **(\$28,822.63)**

ENDING FFBT BALANCE AS OF 05/23/24 **\$104,597.80**

RESTRICTED/UNRESTRICTED FUNDS**TOTAL AMOUNTS
PER CATEGORY****Benches**

Blais-Vlaming and McMillin Bench	\$350 each; awaiting placement	\$700.00	\$700.00
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Signage/Web

Luminous Fund Grant #2 (2018)	Signs Bass Lake (incl. UR Here)	960.64	
Hardesty Memorial Grant	Wayfinding or historic signage	3,198.32	
Lucas Lakehouse Guest Donations	Future Vision/Website	662.50	
			\$4,821.46

Northwest Extension

Luminous Fund	Grants #4, #5, #6 (2020-24)	-0-	(Full \$20,000 expended)
Mitchel-Kane Charitable Fund	NW Extension (or operations)	6,000.00	
VFW Grant	For "trail improvements"	4,013.67	(Reduced by \$1,986.33)
PTC Contribution to ITP Match	Trail Extension	10,000.00	
Gene Novello	Trail Extension	1,200.00	
Naylor Pipe	Trail Extension	400.00	
NICF Grant	Trail Extension	25,600.00	
Rails to Trails Conservancy	Trail Extension	7,500.00	
			\$55,113.67

DNR Reimbursement

ITP 23-03 (Payment #1)	17,589.06	\$17,589.06
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Maintenance

Mower Sale & NICF/Verhagen	Maintenance (now Rest Park Mow)	1,000.00	(Reduced by \$2,468.42)
Hardesty Memorial Fund	Trail maintenance	594.00	(Reduced by \$1,074.08)
HVRM (and Buckeye Pipeline)	Trail maintenance	2,68.42	
Rich Stalbrink Mem, Donations	Maintenance or Most Needed	2,699.11	
Doral Solar Contribution	Bridge/Trailside Clearing	7,269.48	
CVC Grant for 5K/3K trail event	Featured Event	-0-	(Full \$2,000 expended)
			\$13,931.01

TOTAL RESTRICTED \$92,155.20**FIRST FARMERS BANK & TRUST**

TOTAL IN BANK	\$104,597.80
— RESTRICTED FUNDS	<u>92,155.20</u>
= UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	\$12,442.60

Kathy reported the State of Indiana's 80% reimbursement for Territorial Engineering's first billing was processed more quickly than expected. This billing was for survey work and approximately one-half of the design work for the DNR's ITP #23-03 grant to extend the trail northwest through North Judson. Sources for payment to Territorial from the Northwest Extension fund were the Luminous Fund and the Knox VFW. Reimbursement was directed to a new category called "DNR Reimbursement". This restricted fund will be used for subsequent stages of the trail extension as the project progresses.

Kathy said for purposes of identifying restricted and unrestricted funds, she allocated the two payments to J&K Excavating, purchase of the glyphosate, and the first \$100 mowing payment to K&G Lawn Service from among the mower sale fund, the Hardesty Memorial Fund, and the Verhagen grant made through NICF. Going forward the Mower Sale & NICF/Verhagen funding category will be referenced as NICF/Verhagen and used

solely for mowing and related maintenance in the former rest park adjacent to the Erie Trail crossing of Indiana State Road 10.

Bob Albert, Liaison from the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum, asked about the quantity of limestone used for the new parking area adjacent to Starke County Road 700 East. Paul Byer responded that it was approximately 70 cubic yards and the cost of the project included leveling. Bob said that was a “pretty good price”, and Rich Vallicelli agreed.

Paul moved for approval of the Treasurer’s Report and Report of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds. Diane Blais seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Northwest Trail Extension Workgroup Report

During the April meeting there was discussion concerning the route for trail placement in North Judson near a signal bungalow. At the time Bob Alois expressed hope the issue was resolved, but further discussions have been scheduled at an onsite meeting set for June 7.

Maintenance Workgroup Report

Paul and Linda Byer reported that despite often unfavorable conditions, both high winds and an unusually large amount of rain, they have treated the trail with Glyphosate to help control encroaching plants. Steve Lucas reflected the undertaking was a huge endeavor and thanked them for their efforts. The results were particularly noteworthy along the portion of the trail where the 5K Run and 3K Walk is to be held.

Paul and Linda removed a fallen tree west of the Fell Ditch Bridge. The tree had blocked the trail completely.

Final Preparations for May 25 5K Run 3K Walk and Bike Ride on the Great American Rail-Trail

Brian McMillin reported good progress on preparations for the event. Members have succeeded in getting the word out through Facebook, the BLPOA, the PTC website, and printed media. After a slow start with event sign-ups, committed participation has reached the 40s, well exceeding our expected turnout. The emphasis is shifting from how to get people to come to how to maximize safety and provide a fun atmosphere. Brian asked those helping with management of the event to arrive at 7:15 am, CDT, to make the final preparations.

Final Preparations for Hosting Warrior Expeditions Trekkers on the Great American Rail- Trail

This year the Warrior Expeditions’ seven trekkers on the Great American Rail-Trail are Brandon Blankenship, KP Haueter, Michael Kohler, Callie Leaver, Allen Megginson, Suzanne Williamson and John Wirth. They began their journey at Washington, DC on May 8. On May 22 John and Michael were at Miamisburg and the other five at London, Ohio.

Kathy said because she and Steve have a home immediately adjacent to the trail, they are well-suited to be the point of contact for the trekkers. In small groups they can also provide overnight accommodations. But she said they would appreciate assistance with an evening group meal and possibly with overnight accommodations if the group came at the same time. Diane said she and Russ would host an evening meal, and they could also provide assistance with overnight stays. Peg also agreed to help with meals. Char noted that she and Corey now have a vacation home adjacent to the trail and might be able to receive trekkers in the future.

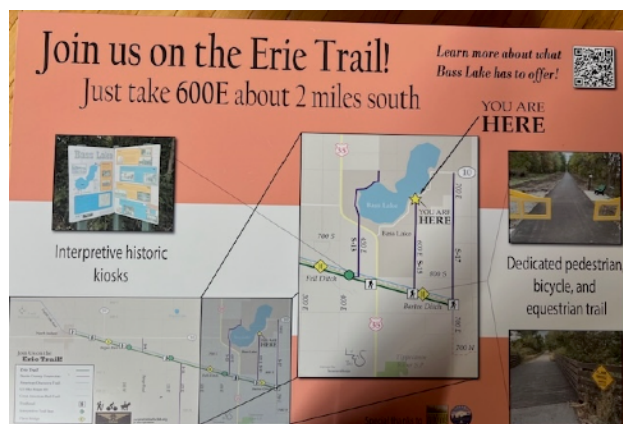
Development of Facebook Blasts to Identify PTC Accomplishments and Challenges

Char provided an overview of a new initiative to highlight PTC accomplishments and challenges. She thanked Carolla Heilstadt for her wonderful assistance with the effort. The current emphasis is upon communications through Facebook. Char provided an overview for how members can maximize the algorithms for explanations of what the PTC does in support of the trail and for trails and greenways and blueways generally. Rich expressed a continuing importance for the PTC to communicate positive messages.

Update on Bass Lake—Erie Trail Signage

As reported in November and December 2023 meetings, Kathy Carrier has graciously provided funding for signage to improve understanding of the proximity of the trail to Bass Lake and particularly the Bass Lake Beach and Campground. With Kathy Carrier's guidance, Yancy Lucas designed five signs for the project. These were manufactured by OTES and picked up by Steve and Kathy Lucas on April 2, 2024.

Kathy Lucas reported she and Steve met on May 21 with Tracy Williams, Superintendent for the Starke County Parks Department, to discuss placement of two signs at the Bass Lake Beach and Campground. Tracy agreed to place the "You Are Here" sign on the chain link fence for the Beach near the junction of Indiana State Road 10 and Starke County Road 600 East. She also agreed to place a general information sign (which is not site specific) within the Campground.



On the right is the "You Are Here" sign to be placed near the junction of Starke County Road 600 East and Indiana State Road 10

Image by Kathy Lucas

Additionally to be placed are two directional signs (one for southeast bound traffic and one for northwest bound traffic) on the trail at its intersection with SCR 600 E, as well as the final general information sign. During the meeting Russ Blais agreed to spearhead an effort to identify businesses who would like to be listed on a link to the QR code that is included on all five signs.

Report of April 25 Greenways Foundation Trails Celebration Luncheon

Steve said that PTC members Tabitha Balzer, Kirt Verhagen, Brian, Russ, Kathy and he shared a table at the annual Greenways Foundation Luncheon. For the first time the meeting was held in Indianapolis near Lucas Oil Stadium. The PTC members were later join by Michelle Lagestee, President, and Charlotte Groet, member, of the Jasper County Trails Club.



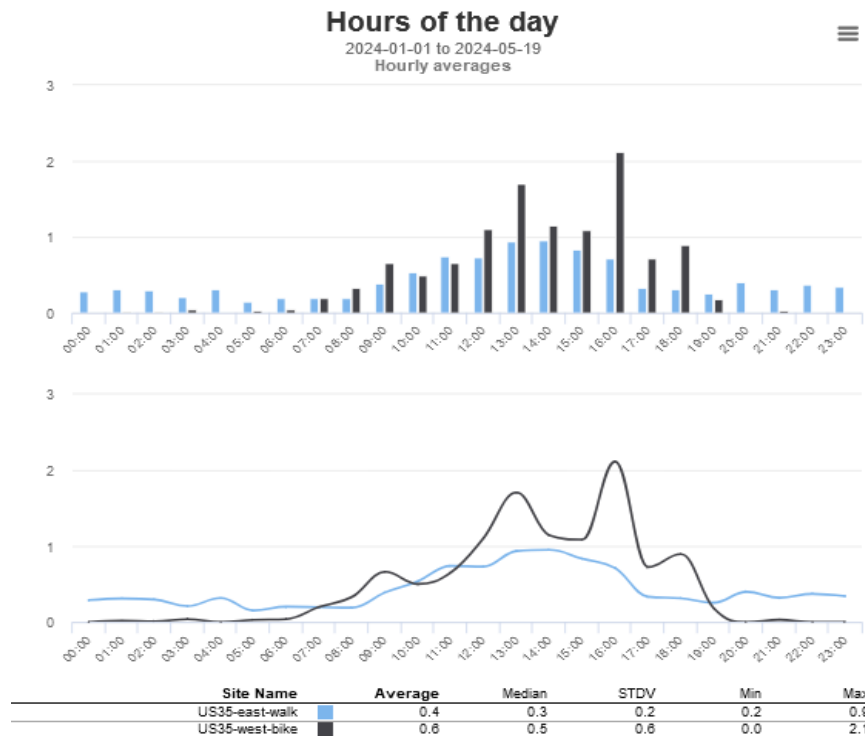
Pictured from left to right are Steve, Michelle, Kathy, Charlotte, Russ and Brian.

Trail Counters Report

Joan Hardesty provided an updated trail counters report and circulated printed graphics. She expressed great disappointment that someone found and dismantled one of the trail counters then left its key components in the open. They were filled with rain water, and the counter has been destroyed.

Members expressed a consensus that data collected from the trail counters is valuable to the PTC and is an important statement to legislators of the importance of trails to its constituents. The possibility of purchasing a replacement trail counter will be discussed at a future meeting when Joan is available.

On the following page are portions of the Trail Counters Report that are referenced by “Hours of the day” and a “Master Summary” of available data for 2022, 2023, and 2024.



Master Summary

Download as [Excel](#) [CSV](#)

Year	Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	ADT†	ADT†x365	Days with data
2022	US35-east-walk									564*	490	372	217*	14,034	5,123	87
	US35-west-bike									844*	598	339	116*	16,067	5,865	89
2023	US35-east-walk	235*	218	555	892	888	734	593	527	315	282	271		15,624	5,703	319
	US35-west-bike	103*	234	522*	1,039*	985	941	588	648*	438*	628*	465*		20,525	7,492	283
2024	US35-east-walk	102	213	258	489	689*								10,275	3,761	138
	US35-west-bike	271	331	349	534*									11,429	4,183	105

ADT† = Average Daily Traffic

* = based upon that month's ADT [Learn more](#) Indicates months with less than 6 days of data.

Can directly compare Oct, Nov, Mar and April.

Report of April 27 “Celebrate Trails Day 2024” Event

PTC members Joan, Brian, Anita, Russ, Diane, Kathy, and Steve met at the southeast trailhead for a Celebrate Trails Day event on Saturday, April 27. A planned activity had been to move the vertical railroad tie, which references HVRM ownership and has a box containing PTC trail brochures, from within the new gravel parking area to the eastern edge of the parking area. But those in attendance of April 27 were pleasantly surprised to learn upon arrival that Paul had previously accomplished the move on his own. With assistance from Russ, Brian staked key elements of the 5K Run/3K Walk. Members also tidied the trailhead area. With help from Diane and Anita, Rhonda cooked a lunch with hot dogs, chips, and cookies

Review of Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum Activities

Bob Albert reported that the HVRM is moving into the high tourist season with both diesel excursions and steam excursions. He added that “Civilians and Soldiers Day” has been set for July 25. The event includes period re-enactors and was a big success last summer.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Provides Great American Rail-Trail Signage

Steve reported the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has provided four free signs to identify the Erie Trail as host to the Great American Rail-Trail. One of these was placed at the trailhead on Starke County Road 600 East and a second at the US Highway 35 crossing. The other two signs are currently slated for the trail crossing of State Road 10 (and State Road 39) and the other for the trailhead at Main Street in North Judson.



Next Membership Meeting

The next Membership Meeting was confirmed for Thursday, June 27, 2024 at 5:30 p.m., CDT (6:30 p.m., EDT) in the Starke County Community Foundation Meeting Room, 300 Keller Avenue, North Judson.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m., CDT (8:28 p.m., EDT).