

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

**BLPOA Community Center
6996 South S.R. 10
Knox (Bass Lake), Indiana**

August 21, 2018

MEMBERS

**Diane Blais
Russell Blais
Linda Byer
Bruce Fingerhut
Carolla Heilstedt
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Rhonda Milner
Sharon Smead
Larry Wickert**

Bob Albert, HVRM

Call to Order by President

Bruce Fingerhut, President, called to order a membership meeting of the Prairie Trails Club Inc. (“PTC”) at 6:04 p.m., CDT (7:04 p.m., EDT) on August 21, 2018 in the Bass Lake Property Owners Community Center, Knox, Indiana. He welcomed new member Larry Wickert.

Approval of July 19, 2018 Minutes

Sharon Smead asked that the minutes be supplemented to reflect trail participation by Scotty Eskridge on June 23. Her amendment request was approved, and the minutes were supplemented. The membership agreed the draft minutes otherwise represented correctly the actions that were taken.

Russ Blais moved to approve the July 19, 2018 minutes with the Eskridge amendment. The motion was seconded by Rhonda Milner. The motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Kathy Lucas circulated among the members a written copy of the Treasurer's Report. The following summarizes the report:

1) **First Farmers Bank & Trust (FFBT)**

Balance forward from 7/19/18		\$ 24,222.86
7/26/18 Check 1013 to Les Jensen <i>(1/2 authorized contract for trail repairs)</i>	(3,500.00)	
7/31/18 Check 1014 to Carpenter Oil <i>Gas for blower used by Warren Burke</i>	(20.15)	
8/9/18 Deposit <i>Membership & donation: Sharon Smead</i>	50.00	
8/9/18 Deposit <i>Memberships: Linda & Paul Byer</i>	50.00	
8/16/18 Check 1015 to Les Jensen <i>(Last 1/2 payment for trail repairs)</i>	(3,500.00)	
8/20/18 Mobile Deposit <i>(Memberships: Betty Lucas, Yancy Lucas, Nadia Corral Frias, Tabitha & Chris Balzer)</i>	125.00	
8/21/18 PayPal Transfer (less fee) <i>(Memberships: Laura VanMeter & Rhonda Milner)</i>	47.94	
8/21/18 Check 1016 to Starke Co Hwy Dept <i>(Safety signage for county roads & intersections)</i>	(1,237.48)	
Ending FFBT balance as of 8/21/18		\$16,238.17
2) Northern Indiana Community Foundation (NICF)		3,927.08
Total of 2 accounts:		\$20,165.25

Bruce asked Kathy if Buckeye Pipeline had sent the anticipated \$600 match. She said she had not yet received it.

Rhonda moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Linda Byer seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Report of USBR35 and ADT Sign Placement in North Judson

Steve Lucas said the Town of North Judson placed the combined US Bike Route 35 and American Discovery Trail signage on August 9. The Town also placed the first new black-and-gold Erie Trail sign at the trailhead on Main Street. Funding for sign construction was provided by a generous donation from the Hardesty Memorial Fund in association with the Starke County Community Foundation.

Kathy added that Andrew Rowe, North Judson Clerk-Treasurer, was key to accomplishing the project and getting people together to celebrate the success of the PTC and partners. Town Superintendent Marshal Horstman and municipal employees Jason Manns and Kim Kapp set the signs at no additional cost to the PTC. Representing the Starke County Community Foundation on August 9 were Jessica Martinovic and Miranda Shepherd.



Nan Wellman donated to the effort by having OTES make the signs at a reduced cost. Graphic design to include the official logos of both the ADT and USBR35 in similar sizes, with directionality, was developed by Yancy Lucas for the PTC and Amanda Brewer for OTES. Nan and Amanda represented OTES and Steve and Kathy represented the PTC at the celebration. Peggy Bohac assembled a thorough image catalog for the August 9 events, including the one shown above, and was the correspondent for a front page news report published in *The Leader* on August 17. WKVI also provided coverage.



Diane Blais reflected that the North Judson signage was an important accomplishment, and it was nice to have the positive publicity. Bruce said he has driven the streets where the signs are posted and they look good. On August 26, Kathy took the image above at the western end of the Erie Trail along Main Street.

Report of Pavement Repair and Contract Completion

Kathy reported that as anticipated in the July meeting, she and Carolla Heilstedt worked with Bruce to finalize a written contract with Les Jensen for Erie Trail repairs. A contract in the total amount of \$7,000 (two payments of \$3,500 each) was able to address all three locations identified as priorities in the May PTC meeting: “asphalt pavement and repair west of ...Range Road, Fell Ditch and Aldine.” In addition to contractual requirements, Les Jensen repaired several spots as a community service.



Image by Sharon Smead near Fell Ditch Bridge

Kathy thanked Paul and Linda Byer for inspecting Jensen’s work prior to final approval. The Byers and Jensen conferred, and he agreed to augment efforts west of Range Road where subsidence had caused significant depressions in the pavement.

Larry said he was impressed by the repairs undertaken on the Erie Trail. He rides the trail frequently. Following Jensen’s efforts, Larry reflected the places that were most in need of repairs were “paved and nice”. The PTC’s successful maintenance project was a significant factor in his decision to join the organization.

Bruce said he was pleased with the repair effort. Maintenance is critically needed for the trail and these repairs were an excellent beginning.

Russ said the trail is now safer. Having two tricky bumps smoothed west of Aldine was a really good thing. The effort shows that the PTC is serious about supporting Erie Trail maintenance. “It’s a lot better, it’s a lot safer.”



Image by Peggy Stalbrink west of Range Road

Kathy said when she delivered the final \$3,500 payment to Jensen, he suggested the possibility of sealing segments of the trail on a per-tank basis. Jensen added he would later calculate costs and make a proposal to the PTC.

Action on August 7 BIC Committee Recommendations

The BIC (“Branding, Identity and Continuity”) Committee met on August 7 to advance signage priorities and placement. Members who attended were Russ, Linda, Carolla, Paul, Kathy, Steve, Yancy and Sharon. “Draft Notes from BIC Committee Meeting” were distributed during the PTC meeting. A summary of action items from the notes follows:

Placement of new ERIE TRAIL signs on main stem

Purchase eight 8-foot long metal posts for placement of black-and-old gold ERIE TRAIL signs (top) and combined USBR35/ADT TRAIL signs (bottom) along the main stem of the Erie Trail. Also, purchase additional tamper-resistant hardware as appropriate to attach signage on 7-foot and 8-foot posts.

Purchase Sacrete (or similar) post cement for secure but removable posts. Reference Yancy's graphics to help guide location of placement. Membership is authorized to place posts as outlined.

New caution signs (effectively also information signs) to indicate "Plank Bridge" at Bogus Run and Fell Ditch

Purchase two yellow diamond-shaped signs (the shape for "caution") for each of Bogus Run and Fell Ditch. Steve is authorized to explore interest from OTES and TCS for supplying signs that would state "Bogus Run Plank Bridge" and "Fell Ditch Plank Bridge". Costs should also be compared relative to signage that state merely "Plank Bridge". If both potential suppliers have interest, the BIC Committee would determine which is the more attractive bid.

Developing new informational signage

Due to the complexity of trail routes extending from the intersection of the Erie Trail and CR 800 South, this site is the first priority for directional assistance and for Bass Lake interpretation. Images have been collected for Lena Park interpretation, and this site seems less likely to suffer vandalism because of proximity to a residence. The site is the second priority for interpretation. Financial and time constraints may delay implementing a lesser priority. If practicable, Aldine is the third priority for interpretation. The site would lend itself to town history, including a railroad whistle stop, as well as the 1911 *Vin Fiz* flight. But whether signage for interpretation is now feasible, the site would serve well and should be advanced for wayfinding.

Russ and Yancy are authorized to coordinate the effort to develop informational signage within these guidelines. Steve would assist them as requested—as well as any other PTC member who wishes.

Bruce urged that serious consideration be given to incorporating the PTC's QR Code into the signage initiative. A QR (abbreviated from "Quick Response") code is a machine readable matrix that contains information about the item to which it is attached. He said the PTC's QR Code is active but not attached to our website. Russ responded that he and Yancy would include the PTC's QR Code in signage discussions.

Bruce suggested an additional opportunity for an interpretative site might be the remains of a train signal bungalow east of C.R. 200E. He said he would not want to pursue this possibility unless supported by the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum. He then asked Bob Albert, HVRM liaison, whether he would be willing to take a look at the site with him. Bob responded that he would. This concept was made a contingent fourth priority to be added as the final sentence of for "Developing new informational signage": If approved by the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum, add interpretative signage for the train signal bungalow east of C.R. 200 East."

Steve moved to approve the referenced recommendations of the BIC Committee, with the addition of the fourth contingent priority for the signal bungalow, as PTC action items. Diane second the motion. The motion carried.

Discussion of Bridge Maintenance

Linda urged that maintenance be performed this autumn on the Bogus Run Bridge and the Fell Ditch Bridge. Bruce agreed and said they should be power washed and sealed. There was a suggestion a PTC workday should be dedicated for these purposes. The subject is expected to be placed on the agenda of the next meeting.

Discussion of Restrictions on Gifts and Grants

Bruce reflected upon the need to present a clear understanding within the PTC and to potential donors as to purposes for which funds can be allocated. As a general concept, PTC funds should be expended as approved by the board of directors or the members and not encumbered by use restrictions. He acknowledged there were exceptions to the concept, such as when the PTC successfully pursues a grant application. The grantor will typically restrict usage to purposes specified in the grant. Also major projects such as new trail construction are often performed on a cost-share basis, and funds need to be secured that can be dedicated to the cost-share project.

Bob referenced his experiences with a non-profit organization (not the HVRM), where a handful of specific dedicated options for donations were provided as check-offs on the membership form, with one option being unrestricted. Having check-offs with described purposes within the organization's mission increased the amount of donations received overall. The nonprofit would consider a donation made outside the check-off options, but it might ask a donor to redirect to an existing check-off if the proposal did not fit the nonprofit's mission.

Diane said a similar approach is applied by the BLPOA. On the annual membership form in addition to the required annual fee, persons can select from a short list any of several voluntary donations.

Larry said he supported the concept of having membership fees and donations go into a fund that is limited only by the PTC's missions. But crafting a reasoned listing that showed exceptions to the concept would be a good strategy.

Bruce suggested and the membership agreed directions regarding gifts and grants should be revisited at the next meeting with the hope of developing a policy statement. The subject is expected to be placed on the agenda of the next meeting.

Membership Drive

Bruce renewed an expressed intention to write to former members who might rejoin the PTC. He may also write to persons who have not been members but he believes may have an interest.

During the March 22, 2016 meeting, Rhonda reflected that in a prior year the PTC had agreed August 1 was the date by which dues for membership should be paid. Members affirmed the August 1 date during the March 2016 meeting. According to the minutes, "there was a consensus that the August 1 date should be affirmed for 2016 and applied indefinitely going forward."

Kathy reflected that most active PTC participants are current with their dues, but the email list includes persons who have not paid for multiple years. Sharon reflected that to perform the functions of membership, such as voting or holding office, a person should

have current membership. That does not mean a non-member would be prohibited from attending a meeting, but membership is a requirement for voting, elected office, or any other membership privilege. Diane agreed. She said BLBOA membership is on a real estate basis, so there is only one vote per household, but to vote or hold office, a person must be current on dues.

The membership urged that when emailing this month's minutes, the Secretary include a reminder that August is membership month. We appreciate those who have supported us with membership and hope they will renew before September 1. Email service and listings after August 31 should reflect current membership with reasonable accuracy.

Grant Application Discussion

Sharon, Carolla, Kathy and Yancy met on August 7 to discuss grant opportunities. The group is developing an application to the Kankakee Valley REMC Roundup program. There are other grant opportunities the group may pursue this fall. They expect to report back to the membership at the September meeting.

Possible PTC Monthly Rides from Bass Lake in 2019

On July 14, the Bass Lake Property Owners Association held its second annual informal bike ride from the lake to and along the Erie Trail. Last year BLPOA members joined PTC members for a ride as far as Range Road. This year several BLPOA members went all the way to North Judson.

In an email, PTC member Thomas I. Jones, M.D., urged that we consider developing monthly bicycle rides from Bass Lake during the spring and summer of 2019. Sharon said the concept seemed to have merit—would encourage exercise and provide better public understanding of the Erie Trail. Russ and Diane said they would work with the BLPOA to gauge interest, and, if there is interest, to publicize when rides are scheduled.

Scheduling Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library on September 27, 2018 at 6:00 p.m., CDT (7:00 p.m., EDT).

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm, CDT (8:40 pm, EDT).