

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

**The Depot, Starke County Chamber of Commerce Office
400 North Heaton Street
Knox, Indiana**

May 24, 2018

MEMBERS

Kenneth Bailey
Paul Byer
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Rhonda Milner
Arlene Noble
Donna Osborne
Rich Stalbrink

Bob Albert

Call to Order by Vice President

Rhonda Milner, Vice President, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club (“PTC”) at 6:06 p.m., CDT (7:06 p.m., EDT) on May 24, 2018 in The Depot, Starke County Chamber of Commerce Office, 404 North Heaton Street, Knox, Indiana. She thanked Jessica Craig and the Chamber of Commerce for allowing the PTC to use its office.

Approval of April 26, 2018 Minutes

Paul Byer moved to approve the proposed April 26, 2018 minutes without amendment. Kathy Lucas seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Kathy circulated among the members a written copy of the Treasurer’s Report. Included was the following summary:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| 1) First Farmers Bank & Trust | |
| Balance forward from 4/16/18 | \$20,690.32 |

Reimbursement to P. Byer <i>(Herbicide and sprayer)</i>	(\$482.00)
Deposit 5/3/18 <i>(Marshall County Horse Association)</i>	50.00
Payment to Sports Unlimited <i>(5/22/18 check #1004 T-shirts for 5K Color Walk/Run)</i>	(449.00)
Deposit 5/24/18 <i>(2 new members and 2 color run tickets)</i>	100.00

(\$781.00)

Ending FFBT balance as of 5/24/18	\$19,909.32
2) Northern Indiana Community Foundation <i>(Same as last month)</i>	\$9,895.82
Total of two accounts	\$29,805.14

Rhonda moved to approve the Treasurer’s Report as submitted. Anita McMillin seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Update on Lids to Benches Initiative

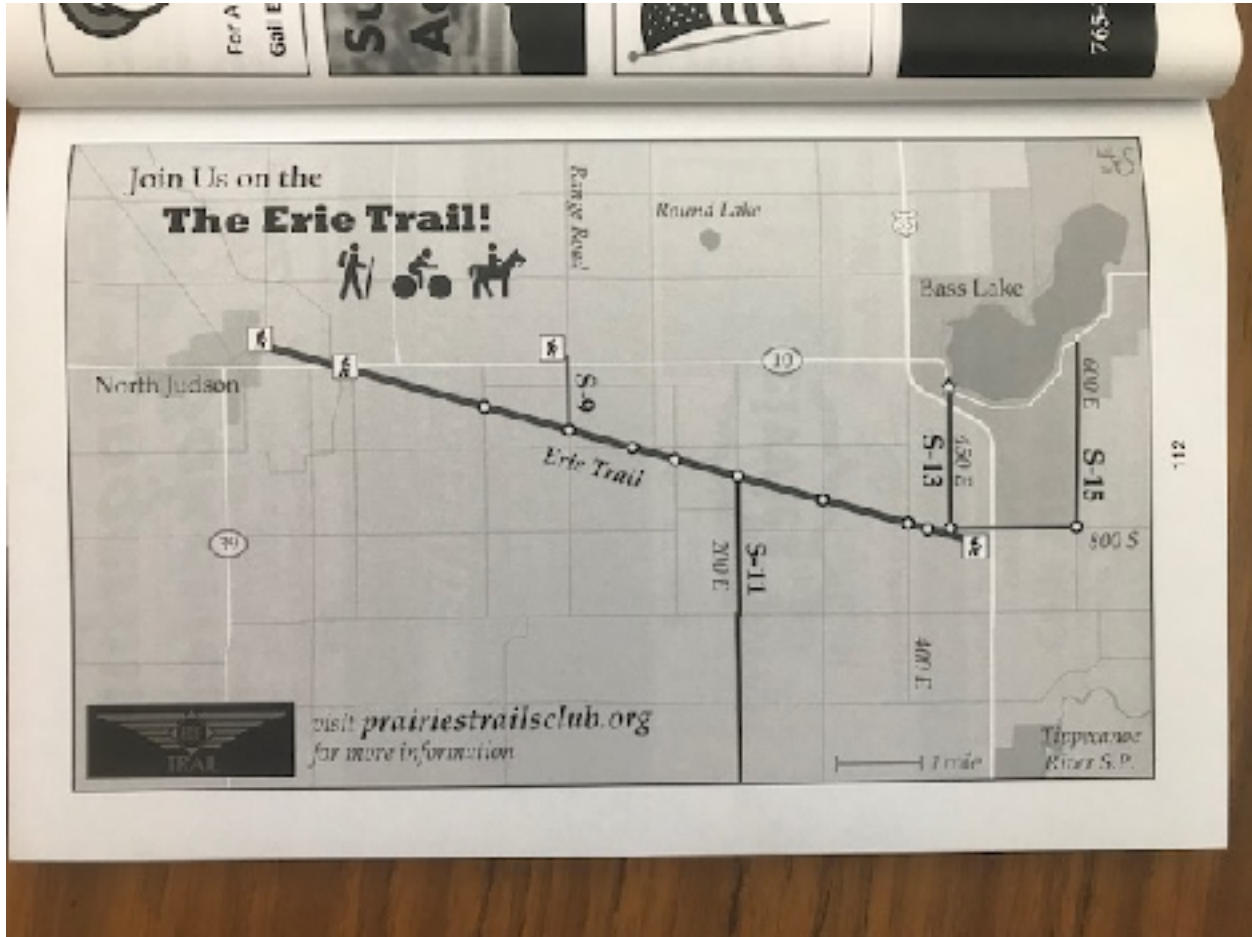
Kathy said she has set out a number of bright green containers as depositories along with information regarding qualified lids. Our partners at the Bass Lake Property Owners Association have been very active in promoting the lids-to-benches initiative. The BLPOA newsletter reported the initiative in its newsletter. The PTC needs to identify a youth group to help with weighing and sorting the lids. Sharon Smead has generously offered her truck to deliver lids to Evansville and to return with a bench or benches.

BIC Committee Signage Updates

Steve reported on three aspects of BIC Committee efforts pertaining to signage. These were for the ERIE TRAIL sign design and manufacture. A cooperative effort with the Starke County Highway Department is progressing to purchase and place yellow-and-black signs on county roads. Approval by the North Judson Town Council was obtained to place on its streets wayfinding signage for the American Discovery Trail and US Bike Route 35.

With respect to ERIE TRAIL signs, he reminded members of April 26 meeting discussions and a bid received previously from Imagine That with two alternate approaches. In April members directed him to seek a second bid from Traffic Control Specialists. He pursued the TCS bid and learned the Imagine That bid was made without a computer-ready design

for the sign. In the initial discussion with TCS, the possibility of developing a workable design was discussed. But the one prepared by Lucas Corral Planning and Design for the BLPOA Directory, as set forth in the lower lefthand corner of the image below, was ultimately used.



Steve said both local businesses made attractive bids, but TCS provided a bid that was slightly less costly and included a protective overlay not included in the Imagine That bid. In April the members had encouraged selection of its more expensive black powder option, but the TCS overlay seems to provide reasonable resistance to vandalism. Both the Imagine That and the TCS options use decals rather than spray painting so that VOC concerns are addressed. He recommended approval of the TCS bid using the ERIE TRAIL configuration by Lucas Corral Planning and Design. Funding for signage construction and hardware would come from the Hardesty Memorial Endowment.

Kenny Bailey reflected the ERIE TRAIL design was attractive and simple and could lend itself to a merchandizing opportunity. Black T-shirts with old gold lettering identifying the ERIE TRAIL and the Prairie Trails Club could be sold at events or on our website.

Donna Osborne moved to approve the bid made by Traffic Control Specialists in Knox as recommended. Arlene Noble seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Steve said that he and Kathy met on May 18 with S. Rik Ritzler, Starke County Highway Superintendent, to review the status of yellow-and-black signs on connectors and at the intersections of the Erie Trail and county roads. Rip said he is moving forward with the purchase of signs requested by the BIC Committee as part of a large county-wide bid. The reimbursement from the PTC to Starke County would be \$40 a sign with post, for a total of about \$2,500 to \$3,000. The early estimated cost for these signs was \$5,500.

Rik informed us he intended on June 4 to request authority from the Starke County Commissioners to place the signs using Highway Department staff at no cost to the PTC. Our members are urged to attend the Commissioners meeting to express appreciation for the Highway Department's help. Rik added that the PTC would be invited to help with selecting locations for individual sign placements. If all goes according to plan, the signs would likely be erected in August or September.

Donna asked what funding sources would be used by the PTC for this aspect of signage. Steve answered that the signage associated with connector S-13 (CR 450E, as well as a short segment of CR 800S) would come from the first Luminous Fund Grant. For other sites within Starke County roadway jurisdiction, funding would come from the Hardesty Memorial Endowment.

Paul moved to approve the expenditure of up to \$3,000 for yellow-and-black signage as reimbursements by the PTC to the Starke County Highway Department. Rich Stalbrink seconded the motion. The motion carried.

On May 7, Peggy Bohac, Kathy and Steve presented to the North Judson Town Council the PTC's wish to place signage through North Judson for the American Discovery Trail and USBR 35, as well as to connect to the Erie Trail trailhead on the east side of town. The Town Council gave conceptual approval and indicated we should work with Andrew Rowe, Clerk Treasurer, to address specifics.

Steve reported Andrew, Kathy and he "did a walk-through this morning and roughed out site locations for wayfinding signage, including possible you-are-here signs for the Erie Trail and the broader view of long-distance trekkers and bicyclers." The next step would be to seek computer designs, "probably in the form of signs that contain both the ADT and the USBR35 logos and cardinal directions. In accordance with wishes of the Town Council and the North Judson Parks and Recreation Board, we would then seek a bid for plastic signs from OTES in North Judson."

Steve said any proposal for funding regarding the North Judson signage element would be vetted through the BIC Committee before submission to PTC membership. He did not believe a motion was needed at this time but would try to address questions and include thoughts from the membership. Donna said she thought seeking the services of OTES was a good idea.

Preparations for June 2 5K Color Walk/Run (National Trails Day)

Donna provided an update on preparations for the June 2 5K Color Walk/Run. She thanked Kenny for preparing new banners, including the attractive and highly visible one at the intersection of SR 10 and SR 39 South in North Judson. She said announcements of the Color Walk/Run have been published in the *Market*, the *Leader*, on our website, on Facebook, and posted throughout schools, libraries and businesses. Also, a second publication in the *Market* is scheduled for May 30. Madison (Osborne) Fingerhut will be interviewed regarding the event live on WKVI radio.

Kathy said the supplier informed her tomorrow is the last day when the PTC can order color powder with assurances of arrival before the event. With initial ticket sales being slow, perhaps due primarily to unseasonably chilly and rainy weather, she was unsure of how much to order. Donna expressed the view that sales were beginning to pick up and urged purchase of color powder comparable to last year. To this purpose, she moved that the membership authorize Kathy to expend \$1,400 for color powder. Anita seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Rhonda volunteered to again perform traffic control for the event. Anita said she and Brian would do the same.

Donna said she was pursuing match pledges from local businesses based on ticket sales and the effort was quite encouraging. She said the steering committee for the Color Walk/Run was invited to meet with her at the North Judson offices of Osborne Advantage Real Estate on May 29 to put final touches on event preparations. Kathy said she would, by email, distribute notice to members and other interested persons.

Maintenance Committee Priorities for Pavement Repair and Mowing

Donna urged that the membership approve purchase of a new mower for use within the Erie Trail corridor. She said users who supported last year's 5K Color Walk/Run have complained about mosquitos and the unsightly look of the trail this spring. In particular, the main trailhead at SR 10 east of North Judson is badly overgrown. The HVRM member who mowed the trailhead in the past was unlikely to mow prior to this year's event. She said Michael McGregor who lives near the Main Street trailhead has offered to mow all the way to US 35 and to provide housing for the mower.

Donna said she spoke with PTC President, Bruce Fingerhut. He recommended she talk to Dave Altman about the type and model of mower to buy. Donna said she spoke with Dave Altman, and he supported purchase of a TimeCutter HD MyRide from Heinold and Feller in LaCrosse. She said a good deal for the mower had been negotiated at Heinold with a purchase price of \$5,487. The price also includes a gas can.

Steve said the membership needed to determine priorities for its functions. Active use of a committee system could be helpful. The need is particularly critical as to maintenance. Grant requests have included maintenance, but no grantor has approved maintenance as a purpose. All maintenance must come from funds in the unrestricted PTC account. In

April there was about \$12,000 in the unrestricted account, and some of that has since been spent in support of the 5K Color Run. Trail maintenance is critical, but the PTC must function within its limited financial resources.

Kenny said he agreed with prioritizing and the need for the PTC to stay within its limited resources. But he also believed there was a need in advance of the Color Run for a good mower.

Steve said if a mower were to be purchased as the first maintenance priority, there needs to be an understanding that it is the PTC's property and available to PTC volunteers to maintain rights-of-way in our trails system. He said Bruce emailed that he hopes to be able to mow this summer. Steve said he was not opposed to buying the mower if that is the membership consensus for most critical immediate need. But he believed the next priority should be the asphalt pavement. On several occasions members and other trail users have spoken about the need for asphalt repairs.

Paul reflected that there are major areas, particularly in the eastern half of the Erie Trails right-of-way, where large honeysuckle and autumn olive bushes require control and where mowing cannot now be effective. He said it was important to have a mower that would not sink into the sands of the bridle path. Donna responded she had spoken with Dave Altman, and he was confident the mower would work well along the trail.

Rich Stalbrink noted that for the first time the mower would be a significant PTC asset and suggested it be insured. He said membership also needed to be able to easily locate the mower.

Kenny referred to a bid a few months ago of \$10,000 to perform maintenance and repairs just west of Range Road and just west of the Fell Ditch bridge. He reminded members of the need to complete repairs west of Aldine where a cottonwood was felled to prevent worsening of a buckled pavement, but pavement damage has not been corrected.

Steve moved to authorize Donna to purchase, from Heinold and Feller in LaCrosse, a TimeCutter HD MyRide mower, with gas can, at the price of \$5,487. The purchase would be made with the understanding that the next maintenance priority would be to address asphalt pavement and repair west of the following: Range Road, Fell Ditch and Aldine. Rich seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Preparation for June 23 Work Day with Marshall County Horse Association

Members were reminded a workday is scheduled jointly with the Marshall County Horse Association on Saturday, June 23, at 9:00 a.m., CDT (10:00 a.m., EDT) beginning at the junction of the Erie Trail and Starke County Road 300 East. Paul spoke of the successful joint workday last year with the Horse Association when participants cleared all identified honeysuckle and autumn olive from the paved trail to a cultivated farm field. He said, "We didn't get as far along the trail but the result was more positive. It makes it easier for me to get the few remaining isolated invasive plants that way." He thought both the Byers and Sharon Smeed were likely to bring work vehicles. Bruce emailed his intention to join the effort this year.

Communications with Law Enforcement for Trail Emergency Responses

Last year the membership had exploratory discussions about engaging law enforcement and other first responders for a better understanding of the Erie Trail. Rich is a former Indiana State Police Commander. He said coordination can forge better understanding and effective responses in the event of a serious illness, accident or criminal activity. Rich and Rhonda will co-author a letter to major law enforcement and to other first responders to carry the effort forward. Rich circulated a draft letter at the meeting and invited members to comment on wording. He said he would make personal calls to agency heads to ask for their participation in a joint meeting or meetings.

Scheduling Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library on June 21, 2018 at 6:00 p.m., CDT (7:00 p.m., EDT).

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm, CDT (9:04 pm, EDT).