

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

**North Judson-Wayne Township Library
208 Keller Avenue
North Judson, IN**

May 17, 2017

MEMBERS

Russ Blais
Peggy Bohac
Linda Byer
Paul Byer
Bruce Fingerhut
Kathy Lucas
Steve Lucas
Anita McMillin
Brian McMillin
Rhonda Milner
Sharon Smead
Greg Wittig
Karen Wittig

GUESTS

Jessica Craig
Joshua Schreiner
Rick Vlaming

Call to Order

Bruce Fingerhut, President, called to order a meeting of the Prairie Trails Club (the PTC) at 6:02 p.m., CDT on May 17, 2017 in the North Judson-Wayne Township Library. He welcomed Jessica Craig of the Starke County Chamber of Commerce and Joshua Schreiner of the Starke County Young Professionals Group. Introductions were made around the table.

Approval of Minutes

Greg Wittig moved to approve without amendment the minutes of the meeting held on April 12, 2017. Kathy Lucas seconded the motion. On a voice vote the motion carried.

Report on IRS Approval of the PTC as a 501(c)(3) Organization and Treasurer's Report

Kathy affirmed recent emails to members reporting the Internal Revenue Service in March approved the PTC as 501(c)(3) organization. The IRS letter for the March approval was apparently misaddressed but was orally communicated during her April 25, 2017 telephone status inquiry. On May 4 the IRS confirmed the oral communication in a letter which stated in part:

We issued a determination letter in March 2017, recognizing [the PTC] as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3).

Our records also indicate [the PTC is] not a private foundation as described under IRC Section 509(a) because [the PTC is] described in IRC Section 509(a)(2).

Donors can deduct contributions they make to [the PTC] as provided in IRC Section 170. [The PTC is] also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, legacies, devices, transfers or gifts under IRC Sections 2055, 2106, and 2522.

Kathy said following IRS 501(c)(3) approval she was able to purchase T-shirts for the June 5K Color Walk/Run applying the tax-exempt status. “We saved \$50.95 because we are a not-for-profit organization.” In addition Bruce purchased lifetime PTC memberships for himself and his daughter, new member Sarah Osowski, that can qualify for matches in his employment with Buckeye Pipeline.

Kathy then gave a Treasurer’s Report. She said the PTC has \$1,235.52 in the account with the First National Bank of Monterey. The amount includes the two new lifetime PTC memberships from Bruce and \$727.85 paid for 5K T-shirts. Kathy said the PTC has \$103.34 in the PayPal account. Finally, there is \$5,273.93 in the NICF account. This amount includes a memorial to David Becknell, the father of Corrine Becknell who died earlier this year. This amount also includes payment of \$216 to Precept Partners, Inc. that manages the PTC website. The total amount in PTC accounts is \$6,612.79.

Report on May 6 Marshall County Horse Association and PTC Joint Work Day

Sharon Smead reported that on May 6 a joint work day was held by the Marshall County Horse Association and the PTC. She and six other members from the Horse Association participated. These were Joyce Heistand, Lola Boles, Ruth Clark, Sharon Woods, Linda Collard and Ellen Miller. Participants from the PTC were Paul Byer, Rhonda Milner, Brian McMillin, Anita McMillin and Steve Lucas. The group worked from 9:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. “We mainly removed honeysuckle” from the equestrian trail (south) side of the NJ Erie Trail right-of-way immediately west of C.R. 300 East but also trimmed trees and other plants in the area. Paul provided leadership, chainsaw service and dyed Roundup for invasive species control. The emphasis was to achieve effective honeysuckle removal from the right-of-way south to the bordering farm field rather than to move a long distance along the trail.

Sharon said the day started “windy and pretty chilly”, but the area was mostly sheltered. By late morning working conditions were good. Marshall County Horse Association members told her “We had a really good time.” Sharon said she later rode the trail on horseback from the rest park at S.R. 10 going east with mixed results. She expressed hope the work day might be repeated next year and help lead to a growing emphasis upon enjoyable trail use by horseback riders.

Report of Committee Meetings and Update on June 3 5K Color Walk/Run in Celebration of National Trails Day

Speaking for Committee Chair Madison Osborne, Kathy provided the report of committee meetings and an update for the June 3 Color Walk/Run in Celebration of National Trails Day. She said workers would report at 7:00 a.m., CDT (8:00 a.m., EDT) to coordinate the

event. Participants would sign in by 8:00 a.m., CDT with walkers leaving the starting point in Norwayne Field, North Judson at 8:30 a.m., CDT. Runners would start later. The Walk/Run will begin at the Main Street Trail Head and follow the trail to S.R.10 then return to the point of beginning—a distance of about 5K. The participation fee is \$20 until May 27 or \$25 beginning May 28 and entitles a participant to an official T-shirt, eyewear and a color packet.

Kathy said through the efforts of Donna Osborne donations and partnerships to date are as follows:

Johnny on the Spot	Two porta-potties with hand sanitizers
Meridian Title	Personal sunscreen bottles
Heartland Market	Two cases (24 bottles each) of Aquafina and a cooling system with a box of bananas (100 count). She said Donna will buy three or four more cases.
Mitchell Fingerhut	Cold Brew coffee with a PTC donation from proceeds.
Doug Fingerhut	Donuts and more with a PTC donation from proceeds.
Charlie Adams	Will volunteer for master of ceremonies duties if not otherwise committed.

Kathy reported on marketing efforts. Madison was on WKVI on Monday. Kenny Bailey had a banner prepared which, through Peggy Bohac's efforts, was put up at Norwayne Field by the North Judson Volunteer Fire Department. Dr. Dalphond's staff signed up (total of \$100) and posted flyers and provided for sign-up in his office. Mike McGregor distributed flyers and sign-up sheets in Knox and North Judson. Kathy said she would prepare a poster with information and materials along the trail adjacent to her home when weather permits.

She noted the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum (HVRM) is offering \$2 off June 3 train tickets to participants in the 5K Walk/Run upon showing proof of participation. The hope is many people will choose to enjoy both the 5K and a train ride.

Kathy asked whether the PTC should charge \$1 per bottle. Sharon suggested the \$1 fee was appropriate but she suggested the amount should be described as a donation rather than a charge. Steve said he believed the committee should have discretion whether to ask for a \$1 donation depending upon attendance and conditions at the time of the event. If high temperatures present an extraordinary dehydration risk, participants should not be discouraged from drinking water.

Kathy said the committee needed volunteers to work at the event. Russell Blais, Greg and Karen Wittig and Brian and Anita volunteered during the meeting.

Kathy reported 200 T-shirts have been ordered and purchased. An equivalent order of color kits would cost \$6 per order. With an order of this size four colors would be provided. In Culver a recent similar event used only two colors (yellow and orange) which

disappointed some participants. The T-shirts are undated so the PTC would have the materials for a second event next year if tickets sales are modest this year.

Peggy said the Color Walk/Run is a new idea for the PTC and in North Judson. If this year's event is done well, greater participation can be achieved next year for what we hope will be an annual event. "You have to start somewhere."

Update on Discussions of Possible Trail Lease between Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum (HVRM) and Starke County

WKVI reported Deb Mix, President of the Starke County Park Board, planned to write to the HVRM to inquire about interest in a lease of the trail right-of-way. Bruce said he spoke recently with a representative of the HVRM who said the organization was meeting with attorney Todd Wallsmith to consider the possibility of a lease. Kathy said she spoke recently with Wallsmith and understood his intention was to draft a lease resolution with the idea that a proposed draft lease would come from Starke County. Linda said HVRM Board member Bob Albert has expressed concerns the configuration of the present paved and equestrian trail complicates hopes to extend the railway east of the rest park at S.R. 10.

Update on Bicycle Ride from Bass Lake to NJ Erie Trail and Bailey's Discount Center on July 15 and Discussion of Possible Winter Bicycle Event

Steve said he spoke recently with Rick Anderson, President of the Bass Lake Property Owners Association (BLPOA), concerning plans for an informal bike ride on July 15. The ride would begin at the BLPOA building at S.R. 10 and follow C.R. 210 along the south side of Bass Lake to C.R. 450 East. The route would follow C.R. 450E south across U.S. 35 to C.R. 800 South and go west a short distance to its intersection with the trail. Those participating would then follow the trail to Range Road and go north across S.R. 10 to Bailey's Discount Center. He reminded PTC members the Starke County Commissioners recently approved the applicable portions of C.R. 450E, C.R. 700S and Range Road as share-the-road routes that will later have signage designations.

Kathy said Rick estimated the length of the ride to be about 16 miles to and from the BLPOA Building. Kenny suggested accommodations could be made to drive participants, their bikes and purchases from Bailey's back to the BLPOA building.

Members discussed an appropriate starting time for the event. Steve said he recalled 9:00 a.m., CDT, was proposed. Russ suggested that with the ride being scheduled for mid-summer, an earlier starting time might be warranted. He added the event could be announced at a BLPOA meeting. Steve agreed and said he hoped members of the BLPOA and the PTC would volunteer to help with this informal event. A participation fee is not anticipated.

Joshua Schreiner asked about seasonal usage of the trail. Steve responded that trail use at his home with Kathy east of C.R. 100 West is significant almost year round. He once made a conservative estimate of 8,000 people annually. Traffic seems to be increasing. In midwinter when the trail is snow covered, however, there is not much usage.

Joshua expressed interest in promoting a midwinter event for bicycles with large tires. Bruce said the trail is open for use during the day and not seasonally restricted. A thought was a winter bicycling event might be developed through the PTC.

Scheduling of Next Membership Meetings

Bruce identified multiple dates on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in June when his work schedule would allow him to attend a PTC meeting. He also recommended scheduling the July meeting. Steve reflected recent meetings have been held on Wednesday, which is good for him, but some members have not been able to attend because of repeating Wednesday conflicts. He wondered whether a meeting should be set on a Tuesday. After member discussion, the next two meetings were scheduled as follows for the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library at 6:00 p.m., EDT:

Wednesday, June 14
Tuesday, July 11

Scheduling of Initial Board of Directors Meeting

The members agreed to schedule the initial Board of Directors Meeting for Wednesday, June 14, at 5:00 p.m., EDT in the North Judson-Wayne Township Public Library. The hope is to set general principles for Board purpose and membership and to consider matters referred to the Board by the membership.

Consideration of Volunteer Group to Develop Strategies for Consistent PTC Branding and Media Stream

Steve reflected this topic was tabled from the April 12 meeting. He believes the PTC can provide a stronger message and better serve trail users through consistent terminology for the trail in on-site signage and electronic communications. What we commonly call “our trail” is a segment of the American Discovery Trail (the ADT) and all but the far eastern portion is a segment of U.S. Bike Route 35 as well. “The ADT and USBR 35 have consistent signage strategies, but our trail does not.” It is called the North Judson-Erie Trail, the NJ Erie Trail, the Erie North Judson Trail, the North Judson Trail and by other names. Signs on the trail are gold and black with one design and black and white with another. The logo for the PTC is distinctive but because of its complexity may need simplification or modification for some usages. He asked that the topic be referred to a committee of volunteers for recommendations to the membership.

Rhonda Milner reflected that the trail stopped at U.S. 35 because of INDOT complexities concerning a highway crossing. The Monterey-Erie Trail was a small segment funded near the town of Monterey. Steve added the PTC vision statement adopted last year described the trail extension from U.S. 35 to C.R. 600 East as the “Bass Lake Erie Trail” or the “BL Erie Trail”.

Linda reminded the members the PTC does not own the trail. She urged that the trail be called simply the “Erie Trail”. She asked whether another trail in the vicinity was called the “Erie Trail”. Bruce responded the trail in Lake County, which is along the northwest extension of the same abandoned railway, is called the “Erie Lackawanna Trail”.

Steve said he was not advocating for a particular name but rather for consistency. For those of us who are familiar with “our trail”, the name is not important. We know what and where it is. But for visitors to Starke County the different names can be confusing.

Karen suggested the issue be referred to the Board of Directors for review and action. The members agreed and the referral was approved.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 p.m., CDT.