

Friends of the Blue Star Trail

Meeting Minutes – December 13, 2012

Present: Jim Van Buren, Jeanne Van Zoeren, Julie Werkema, John Adams, Carol Leneway, Jim Birkes, and Nancy Owen.

Minutes: The minutes of the November 15, 2012 were approved as distributed.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer's Report was approved as distributed. The Friends officially joined the Michigan Trails and Greenways. Jeanne received a contribution check and will get it to John. We are in need of operating expenses for the upcoming year for such items as ancillary charges for the Owens Group, consulting services for government grant application preparation and filing, and for marketing and promotion of the Trail project once the capital campaign is underway.

Committee Reports:

Publicity: Jim Van Buren discussed the brochure and whether it should just be online or also in print. He will have some printed at his expense (300 copies for \$70.00) and will send some to Nancy Owen so she can use them during interviews.

Carol suggested links from other sites such as MTG (Michigan Trails and Greenways) so that our site would have more visibility. The websites of Allegan County and the League of Michigan bicyclists was also recommended as well as the South Haven and Saugatuck/Douglas Visitors Bureaus. Jim will see how to get the Friends on the directory of MTG. Jeanne will contact the former director of Pure Michigan who resides in South Haven.

Jim has been in communication also with Lisa Shanley of the Van Buren/South Haven Convention and Visitors Bureau. She is very supportive and willing to help.

Nancy Owen also suggested that we be linked to health sites such as area hospitals and the Wellness Center. It was also mentioned that we should identify companies with wellness programs such as Albermarle.

Nancy Owen will make contact with the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail for suggestions about ways to increase exposure.

The fall Newsletter is ready for publication. It includes the Pay Pal link for donations and payment of membership dues. Jeanne praised Jim, Carol, and John for their efforts. It looks great!

The Lakeshore Harvest Bike Tour task force met on Dec 13th. The starting point has been changed to the Black River Park boat launch in South Haven, which will then connect with the Stephenson farm in Casco Township. There may be as many as 8 farms/markets on the tour. The goal is to double the

number of participants from 125 to 250. The City of South Haven and the Lakeshore Harvest Country are members of the task force. Registrations will be available on our website. Jim will add a waiver of liability, which will be printed by the registrant. Jim Birkes volunteered to assist with organizing volunteers for the tour stops. We will need someone to chair this committee. At least, 50 volunteers will be needed.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Jeanne discussed the special meeting at Casco Township and the Trustees' letter of support. The FOTBST did obtain a letter of support with these conditions: Casco Township would not be responsible for local matching funds or for ownership of the trail.

The BST was among 3 projects recommended for CMAQ funding during the upcoming 3 year cycle. Allegan County Road Commission, the required legal applicant, will file the allocation application for \$355,000 on our behalf. The plan is to commence construction in October 2014. .

Jim Van Buren made a motion to hire Prein and Newhof for CMAQ application at a cost of \$1,000. Seconded by John Adams. Motion passed. Jeanne will follow up,

Jeanne will initiate discussions with the Allegan County Commission and Parks Commission in order to promote the adoption of the BST as a County owned linear park. Presently the County owns and operates a horse trail as a linear park. Bob Kaarlie, an Allegan County Road and Parks Commissioner will be the key contact for us. Nancy Owen advised us to frame the issue around healthcare.

Report from Nancy Owen:

She has completed 35 interviews and intends to conduct 25 more. A summary of her comments follows:

- 14 of the interviewees identified themselves as bikers.
- Biggest question: Who is going to own it?
- A pliable barrier to slow down vehicles was suggested by one person.
- Some questioned why the trail wasn't on Lakeshore Rd. Nancy suggested that we allow people to share their thoughts on questions like these. Ask them how they think it should be done, so that we can remain neutral.
- Meetings need to happen soon to determine easements and education as soon as possible.
- It may be helpful to move board meetings to different venues to encourage participation.
- Utilization projections would be helpful for Nancy in her interviewing and would also be helpful to the Friends. She will contact Laketown Twp. to see if they have collected these numbers for their trail.
- There is a major case to be made for the health benefits of the trail.
- The trail should be tied in with Pure Michigan and healthy kid's grants.
- Meijer Corp may be a funding source. Jeanne advised that they are currently working with the City of South Haven to assist in trail development between Phoenix and Baseline Roads.

Nancy Owen discussed leadership ideas for capital campaign. (See hand out for names). Possible corporate sponsors were discussed. Possibilities are: Perrigo, Big Sky Enterprises, Holland Hospital, Ruppert (Hawkshead). Nancy will contact these entities. Nancy stressed importance of presenting entire project and figures to donors. Don't break down into pieces. Include 10% for endowment up front. Get multi- year commitments from donors. We need to develop a revenue and expense projection for the entire 20 miles of trail.

Jim Birkes reviewed his concerns about the existing the draft f Allegan County Community Foundation contract. Contract is too protective of the Community Foundation and needs more input from Friends. It was noted that the County would likely administer endowment long term so we need flexibility. Jeannie will approach David Dobreff (attorney) to join the BST Board and assist John with negotiating changes to the existing contract. Carol suggested we also discuss D and O insurance again.

Next meeting: January 3, 2013t 4:30 PM at Casco Township Hall.