

## Friends of the Blue Star Meeting

May 7, 2015

Present: Jeanne Van Zoeren, John Adams, Jim Sullivan, Clark Carmichael, Jim Van Buren

1. The April, 2015 Minutes were approved as distributed.

2. Issues/Concerns/Updates - Jeanne

- Resignations - Jeanne informed the Board that both Carol Leneway and Julie Werkema have asked to resign from the Board for personal reasons. The motion to accept their resignations, with regret, was approved by all Board members. We will all try to identify capable individuals that can join the Board that can help us build on the momentum Carol and Julie helped create.
- City of Douglas has the new Trail sign for the portion of the Trail currently under construction between Zing's and I-196. The sign is in the City office in Douglas near the schoolhouse. Construction is expected to be completed within the next few weeks.
- Jeanne and Jim Sullivan will be presenting at the Tuesday Talk in Saugatuck on July 7<sup>th</sup>.

3. Social Media – Jim Van Buren

- Jim led a review and discussion of a 4.5 hour social media online training program that both he and Clark participated in with the goal of determining if the Friends group should pursue creating a presence on Facebook and/or other social sites. Jim explained that social media can be effective in increasing awareness and communicating those interested in our message and if implemented, it should supplement, not replace, the other forms of communicating to your supporters and stakeholders. We then went on to have a lengthy discussion on what we think the brand of the FOTBST is and

should be and how we can best use social media to inform, engage and grow our audience and network of Friends. Facebook appeared to be our primary vehicle. See Jeanne's summary attached.

#### 4. Treasurer's Report (John Adams)

- John said he filed (in April) Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax , for the year ending 2014.
- John updated us on the invoice he recently received from Tim Stewart of Hurley & Stewart LLC (HS), the engineering firm that is preparing the design and overseeing the right of way easement process. The easement process is being handled by Land Matters, a subcontractor affiliated with Hurley-Stewart Phase II. HS had accidentally sent their first invoice to the wrong email address and as a result, Tim had contacted John to inquire about payment. HS acknowledged it was their error and John immediately initiated payment. Tim updated the board about the projected costs related to Phase II. Even though HS's engineering cost projection was basically on budget, the portion related to the right of way easement process was experiencing excessive cost overruns of nearly 40%. The detailed engineering study determined that Land Matters (LM) was having to approach 26 property owners rather than 12 (original projection of 12 was based on crude topographic maps). LM said the vast majority of the property owners are supportive of the Trail and that the actual increase in the cost of acquisition will likely not be significant because they anticipate many owners will donate their property for the Trail development. Lastly, Tim told John that because of a new Rare Species requirement, the FOTBST will now need to hire a specialist to prepare a report for the MDNR. Given the Trail is primarily adjacent to the Blue Star Hwy, it is unlikely that the study will discover anything alarming and the projected cost for the study will be \$6,000.

The Board had a lengthy discussion on the cost overruns and how we should proceed with HS and the impact it will have on our fundraising efforts. Currently we must raise at least \$200,000 (required community match) by

October 2015 if we are to secure the DNR Trust and MDOT grants. We decided to ask Tim and Debbie Poeder (Land Matters) to meet with the Board so that we can a more detailed analysis of the situation at the May 28<sup>th</sup> board meeting to determine how can develop a mutually acceptable contract for all parties concerned. Among the Board concerns that need to be raised at the next meeting are: hold harmless indemnification, engineering performance guarantees, timely invoices going forward, and future project work in relation to Phase II.

4. Meeting adjourned at 6:10 PM.

Next meeting: May 28th, Thursday, 4:00 pm at Casco Township Hall