

**MINUTES OF THE KANKAKEE RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
HELD THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2014 AT
9:30 AM CDT
KANKAKEE FISH AND WILDLIFE AREA HEADQUARTERS
4320 W. TOTO ROAD
NORTH JUDSON, IN 46366**

Chairman Chris Knochel called the meeting to order and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Secretary Jim Lambert called the roll.

Members present

Kevin Breitzke	Dennis Estok	Larry Fisher
Tony Hendricks	Chris Knochel	Jim Lambert
Tom Larson	John Law	Don Lode
Randy Matthys	Kim Peterson	Russ Pumroy
Ken Purze	Bruce Shepherd	Vince Urbano
James Walstra		

Guests Present

Michael Aylesworth		Allen Cameron
Jim Carter		Gus Ellicott
Steve Engleking	Jim Fahey	Marge Hefner
Elizabeth McCloskey		Terry McCloskey
Harvey Nix	Gus Nyberg	Lyle Patchett
Dan Plath	Joe Skelton	Jim Sweeney
Joe Toth	Mark Wunderink	David Zack

Staff Present

Jody Melton

Jody Melton introduced the new St. Joseph County Commissioner appointment, Randy Matthys, a member of the St. Joe Drainage Board

Chairman Knochel asked for self-introductions from all guests.

Approval of Minutes

Ken Purze made a motion to approve the December 10, 2013 meeting minutes with a correction to the New Business portion where the 4 County Yellow River Drainage Board is improperly named. Kevin Breitzke seconded. The minutes were approved.

Finance Report

Jody Melton presented the final financial report for 2013. The breakdown shows remaining funds in each county's emergency fund and remaining allocated monies to be spent. The second page shows the general fund and balances. There is not a proposed contract with the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission since NIRPC is in the process of downsizing and is not prepared to offer a contract to the KRBC yet pending office remodeling. The proposed budget for 2014 reflects the numbers used in 2013 with a boost in salary and expense line items. Ken Purze made a motion to accept the proposed budget for 2014 and Tom Larson seconded. Kevin Breitzke explained the changes being discussed about NIRPC and physical space and possible logistic changes. Motion was called and the budget was passed unanimously.

Old Business

Jasper County Surveyor Vince Urbano has met with regulatory agencies and is stilling working to get the permits for the levee work between US 231 and SR 49. There has been a great deal of discussion about levee maintenance in general and what is entailed in that process. While levee protection should not be detrimental to the environment, it also is a necessary step to prevent flooding and erosion. The KRBC has discussed a "vision" of what a typical levee should look like and Vince wants to continue that dialogue. Elizabeth McCloskey from US Fish and Wildlife has been working with Vince to get a project plan that will be permitable. There are special concerns about the Indiana bat in the area as well as another bat which is soon to go on the threatened species list. There are many concerns about width and clearance

and access. After much discussion Vince Urbano, Liz McCloskey, Jody Melton, and Marty Maupin will meet on site to figure out how to prepare a project that protects environment and strengthens levees.

Tony Hendricks, LaPorte County Surveyor, said that he has been working with the Izaak Walton League to determine a proper model and reference for working on levees. He will send that out in email soon.

Bill Emerson, Lake County Surveyor, said he had been to the river in Lake County and the situation was stable. Jody Melton said that Shady Shores had a little flooding from the inside bayou. It is unclear exactly what happened but the county highway brought 2 pumps in and lowered the water in the bayou and shortly the river level fell and the problem went away. Until the water levels go down, it is not possible to check the culverts so the highway department has agreed to watch the situation and if the bayou starts to rise, they will get the pumps working. Jody Melton also said that the new bridge at Clay Street (Range Line Bridge) will be started this summer.

Tony Hendricks told the board that LaPorte County did not receive the 319 grant for the Mill Creek watershed in LaPorte County. The Drainage Board will continue to pursue that grant. The LaPorte County Drainage Board and the Izaak Walton League have been pursuing a project within a 30 acre wetland for opening an old river meander. There was a private partner involved and some preliminary engineering work was done. The site did not qualify for wetland mitigation so the partner has left. LaPorte County would like to continue to pursue the project and would like \$50,000 to be authorized for it. The money would come from money designated for the 3 County Drainage Board. The 3 County Drainage Board continues to function but this is money that has not been used. Ken Purze made a motion that the \$50,000 from the designated 3 County fund be authorized for use by LaPorte County on the meander project. Kevin Breitzke seconded and the motion was approved.

Dennis Estok said that more trees have collapsed into the Yellow River and he is preparing projects to get them removed. He has also contacted the homeowner on the bank of the river near the Marshall County line. There is discussion about the fate of the house and outright purchase.

Marshall County has purchased the house in Plymouth to prepare for the maintenance project. The house is still standing but will be removed in the near future.

Abonmarche Engineers is working with Newton County to identify public and private ditches within the wetlands of the DeHaan Ditch where it joins the Kankakee. Encroachments in the easements have been identified. Chris Knochel is attempting to find ownerships and identified wetlands to prepare for receiving Jasper County water.

LaSalle Fish and Wildlife Area has approached the Newton County Drainage Board wanting to put in a structure to hold more water inside the property.

Porter County Drainage Board is awaiting permits for work near the Pleasant Township Ditch and the Heimberg Ditch. Kevin Breitzke has been informed that he should get the permits by the end of the week.

John Law said that the New Energy ethanol plant on the southwest side of South Bend has been purchased and there are plans to reopen it. That should ease the groundwater problems of the houses in the area

The St. Joseph County Drainage Board is concerned about St. Joseph County Energy, a project to build a natural gas fired electric generating plant, discharging pollutants into the Niespodziany Ditch and then into the Kankakee. The Drainage Board asked IDEM for a public meeting but did not receive one. The permit has been granted and the Drainage Board stands by its concerns of polluted runoff. The St. Joseph County Drainage Board is considering their legal rights about this project.

They are awaiting better weather to clean the upper Dixon-Place Ditch (Kankakee River) on the south side of South Bend, a distance of about 6 miles.

Jim Sweeney asked the Porter County representatives about an article in the local newspaper concerning a drainage committee being established in Porter County. Kevin Breitzke responded that the committee is going to look at funding issues within the county pertaining to drainage. The committee will not be dealing with drainage itself.

Jody Melton told the members that for many years the KRBC has used Key Bank as its financial institution. While there are no problems with KeyBank, it is not a local bank and all transactions are by US mail. NIRPC did a financial review last year and found that Horizon Bank offered the best service for them. Horizon is locally headquartered in Michigan City but has a branch a few blocks from the NIRPC office. Horizon also offers an

interest bearing checking account. The KRBC through KeyBank has only been able to do long term notes and that is no longer practical. On a recommendation by Jody Melton as staff, he asked that the KRBC funds be formally moved to Horizon Bank. Ken Purze made a motion that allows the funds to be transferred, Russ Pumroy seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

Ken Purze discussed the meander project that the LaPorte County Drainage Board had been working on and the time and effort of Tony Hendricks. Tony has been assisted by Terry McCloskey and Jim Sweeney from the Izaak Walton League and Ken publicly thanked them.

Larry Fisher asked about the KRBC property held in Newton County. He suggested that the KRBC consider creating a wetland mitigation bank on that property. It was discussed and deemed to be a good idea but complicated. More research is needed to bring this into a discussable project. Gus Nyberg from NICHES said that area is the last farmland directly on the Kankakee in Newton County. John Law said there is a piece of property in St. Joseph County that would lend itself to this type of program too.

On March 15 the Northwest Indiana Paddlers Association will have its regular meeting and Tony Hendricks will be honored for his work. The KRBC will also receive recognition for its involvement.

The next meeting of the KRBC will be April 10, 2014 at the Kankakee Fish and Wildlife Headquarters.