

**Friends of the Rouge Board of Directors**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**June 9, 2021**  
**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

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**MISSION OF FRIENDS OF THE ROUGE**

*To restore, protect, and enhance the Rouge River watershed through stewardship, education, and collaboration.*

**VISION OF FRIENDS OF THE ROUGE**

*We envision a future where a clean and vibrant Rouge River is the center of our community. Individual and community actions protect and improve the health of the Rouge River, assuring that its natural, economic, and recreational value enhance the quality of life in the Rouge River ecosystem.*

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**I. ROLL CALL**

**Directors Present:**

- Laura Wagner (LW), President
- Alice Bailey (AB), Vice President
- Sam Lulkin (SL), Treasurer
- Sara Rubino (SR), Secretary
- John Deslippe (JD)
- Paul Draus (PD)
- Erma Leaphart (EL)
- Mike McNulty (MM)
- Brandy Siedlaczek (BS)
- Bill Hazel (BH)
- Al VanKerckhove (AVK)

Total Directors Present - 11

**Directors Excused:**

- Susan Thompson (ST)
- Melissa Weydendorf (MW)
- Dave Norwood (DN)

Total Directors Excused – 3

**Directors Absent:**

- Orin Gelderloos (OG)

Total Directors Unexcused - 1

**Staff Members Present:**

- Marie McCormick (MMC), Executive Director
- Karen Hannah (KH), Operations Manager
- Lara Edwards (LE), Development Coordinator

Total Staff Members Present - 3

**Guests/Members Present:**

- None

Total Guests/Members Present 0

**II. CALL TO ORDER**

LR called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

EL made a motion to approve the agenda for the June 9, 2021 Board meeting. Motion seconded by JD. Motion carried.

**III. APPROVAL OF PRIOR BOARD MINUTES**

A motion to approve the May 12, 2021 Board meeting minutes was made by SR. Motion seconded by EL. Motion passed.

**IV. REPORTS (Please refer to reports in Board packet.)**

(A) Executive Committee by LW

- The Executive Committee met last week to create the agenda for this meeting. The Executive Committee discussed, among other things, Board development work (which will be discussed later in meeting); Board member welcome packet and recruitment packet (also to be discussed later in the meeting); return to work plan (MMC will cover in her report) and the Rouge Cruise (to be covered in New Business).

(B) Executive Director by MMC

- Refer to reports attached for highlights.
- MMC highlighted two new funding sources. The EGLE water shed council fund in the amount of \$39,908 will be used for asset mapping that will help underserved and underrepresented communities. The University of Maryland funding will be used to create Watershed Report Cards. Many other grants and funding opportunities are listed on individual program reports.

- MMC reported that the COVID-19 protocol in the packet is not up to date and revisions are underway. MMC recently advised FOTR staff that fully vaccinated individuals could remove masks in the office with proper verification. FOTR staff are not mandated to be in office and are given discretion to work where they do best. Public will also be allowed in the office but no office hours have been set at this time. MMC will continue to keep the Board updated.
  - Be on the look out for videos from SEMCOG for One Water Interviews.
  - Please see agenda for save the dates.
  - Gateway Greenway, one mile connector with estimated project cost of approximately \$4 million. FOTR will be making any additional ask from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr Foundation. If the additional funds are provided, approximately \$1 million to \$2.5 million would be held in a separate account. This may balloon the budget.
- (C) Education (REP) Report
- No report.
- (D) Restoration/Monitoring (PI) Report
- No report.
- (E) Rouge River Water Trail Leadership Report
- No report.
- (F) Membership Committee Report by SR
- SR reported that the committee recently met and reviewed a variety of survey / polling options from LE. SR advised that LE may send a sample poll to the Board and requested that the Board participate in the same.
- (G) Board Development Committee Report by MM
- Board Welcome Packet was developed to provide new board members with information about FOTR and responsibilities. MM will cover further under new business.
  - Timeline will be developed to identify and vet potential candidates and that will be covered later in the meeting as well.
- (H) Fund Development Committee Report by AB
- FOTR is signed up for the Free Press Marathon.
  - Discussion on Rouge Cruise will be held under New Business.
- (I) Finance Committee / Treasurer Report
- Please refer to report in packet.

- SL reported that YTD investment balances are doing well. Cash flow looks good. Everything looks in order. Re-reading audit opinion.
- KH stated that the project expenses are increasing but that is a typical trend for this time of year. Expect to see revenue from rain barrel and plant sales soon. Those sales have helped boost revenue when needed.
- Motion to approve the April 2021 Financials made by MM . Motion seconded by AVK. Motion passed.

(J) Advocacy Committee Report

- LW reported on behalf of DN. DN will be meeting with Morgain B. MacDonald to focus on building equity and DEI into the advocacy committee.
- DN will be joining Sally Petrella for a meeting with the candidate Mayor of Dearborn, to learn about his position on the future of the Warren Valley Golf Course.

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

A) Rouge Cruise

- LE reported that meeting scheduled for tomorrow at noon is canceled. AB will send out notice of the same.
- LE explained that, in the Spring, the thought was to do another UnCruise; however, she requested opinions from the Board on preference for a traditional in-person event versus the virtual UnCruise.
  - JD inquired about financial advantage of virtual over in person. MMC reported that the virtual event, on paper, was successful but the time, costs and energy of staff involved in planning must be considered.
  - PD and KH expressed that enthusiasm for virtual events may have died down.
- LE stated that the UnCruise was so successful that she wants to keep some of the spirit of the UnCruise in the traditional Cruise. LE posed the question: What makes the Rouge Cruise so special?
  - LW shared that it's a big event and special time with friends. The UnCruise was also special because you had so many experts and can see parts of the river that you wouldn't normally get to see.
  - EL also shared that other events on the Diamond Jack are a lot of fun.
- LE stated that there can be different ticket level prices and recognition for those who give additional money.

- LE also received feedback that the UnCruise was very educational, and people really enjoyed such an in-depth learning experience. LE suggested having a morning cruise that is geared more towards education and learning.
  - KH explained that a day-time cruise may be a hard time for people. Many valuable resources and experiences during the evening. Cannot bring outside food must use boat catering services.
  - EL suggested to have one tour as an educational tour and to have the tour advertised in that manner and the other as a more social cruise.
  - SL suggested designating certain areas of the boat for specific topics at different times so that people would be know that time is when you are supposed to listen.
  - MM recommended keeping the cruise with what people are familiar with enjoy. A large draw is learning about what you are seeing as you see it.
- The Board continued to share and discuss a variety of possibilities for changes to the Cruise which will be taken into consideration.
- LE reviewed the list of former sponsors and there was discussion regarding potential new sponsors, including: PEA, CFCU, Motor City Canoe Rentals, Edward C. Levy, DTE Company, GEI, Limno Tech, REI / MooseJaw, Detroit Bridge Authority, Interlake Steam Ship, St. Mary's Cement, Detroit Salt, AKT Peerless, Great Lakes Towing.
- MMC advised that ticket prices generally range from \$70 - \$100.

B) Board Development

- MM presented the New Board Member Packet which was designed to welcome new Board members and includes:
  - Welcome Letter
  - Board Member Job Description, Duties and Commitments
  - Description of the Committees
  - Calendar of Events
  - Fundraising Expectations
  - Board Member Matrix
  - Contact List for Board Members and Staff
  - Forms (Conflict of Interest)
- EL suggested some additional information. Discussion to add annual report.
- MM also reviewed the Recruitment Guiding Document that was created and will be shared as a Google doc.
- MM requested that each Board member identify at least one potential candidate by August 1, 2021.

- MM shared the Email template / conversation template /talking topics.
  - Please contact MM with any suggestions or revisions.
- C) Board Team Building Event: PARC Rain Garden Planning, June 11, 2021
- LW reminded the Board of this event and that it will begin at 1pm. All guests are welcome.
- D) PARC Ceremonial Planting, June 17, 2021.
- MMC explained that all staff and Board are invited to this public event which will include a ceremonial planting and some speakers, including, MMC. Great chance to show support for FOTR. Board representation would be appreciated. AVK will be there working the 3-D model.
- E) Additional Issues from the Floor
- None.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

JD made a motion to adjourn the June 9, 2021 FOTR Board meeting. Motion seconded by PD. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Sara B. Rubino  
FOTR Secretary