

**Friends of the Rouge Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
October 14, 2020
Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

MISSION

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

VISION

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.

Directors Present: Alice Bailey (AB), John Deslippe (JD), Paul Draus (PD), Orin Gelderloos (OG), Bill Hazel (BH), Andrew Hoffman (AH), Mike McNulty (MM), Dave Norwood (DN), Elizabeth Palazzola (EP), Brandy Siedlaczek (BS), Susan Thompson (ST), Al VanKerckhove (AVK), Laura Wagner (LW) (13 total)

Directors Excused: Dave Maurice (DM) (1 total)

Directors Absent: None (0 total)

Staff Members Present: Marie McCormick (MMC), Karen Hannah (KH), Jackie Heikkila (JH) (3 total)

Guests:

1) CALL TO ORDER

President LW called the meeting to order at 5:09pm

2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve agenda made by OG, seconded by DN. Motion carried

3) APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES

a. May 13 and September 9, 2020

Motion to approve the May 13 and September 9, 2020 board minutes made by DN , seconded by OG. Motion carried

4) REPORTS (also refer to reports in Board packet)

a. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee (EC) is scheduled to hold calls on a monthly basis. The committee met last week to prepare agenda for the board meeting. All items discussed are on the agenda for this meeting

b. Executive Director Report

Refer to reports attached for highlights

Ralph C. Wilson Grant awarded to FOTR is being finalized. The amount awarded is \$326,000 and will allow for funding of a full time trail manager

A new intern was hired to support Rain Gardens to the Rescue and Water Words that Work projects

c. Education (REP Committee)

Refer to reports attached for highlights

Year 2021 and 2020 are almost fully funded

d. Restoration/Monitoring (PI Committee)

Refer to reports attached for highlights
Plan to install one more rain garden this year
Strategizing as to what Rouge Rescue may look like next year

e. Rouge River Water Trail Leadership Committee

A Ralph C. Wilson Foundation grant proposal was submitted that would support work on the Rouge Gateway Connector, boat launches at the Bessey Field House in Melvindale and Belanger Park in River Rouge.

A paddling event is planned for October 24, 2020 and the final route is in the process of being finalized. Route options are being considered prior to finalizing. Logjams and *E. coli* concentrations on the Lower Rouge are factors in consideration of the route being chosen.

The Alliance of Rouge Communities, Wayne County and Dearborn are investigating the sources of the elevated *E. coli* in the Lower Rouge. There are several large logjams near Andiamo's on the Lower Rouge that are very challenging.

f. Membership/Committee

Memberships have increased and memberships are being granted to persons giving donations at any level. There are over 450 members currently.

g. Board Development Committee

MMC and MM are working on board development and recruitment
Four bios were submitted and ten persons interested in running for the Board of Directors
Two board members are not running again
The board will be apprised of the list of candidates and that list will be provided for the next board meeting

h. Fund Development Committee

Thanks to all that have worked so hard on the Rouge "Uncruise" - it was a great success
The focus will now be on the Free Press Marathon Charity Partner fundraising - participants can collect donations through October 31, 2020 and the event weekend is October 16-18, 2020
MMC and her family have signed up to run and MMC is fundraising. Seven runners total have signed up to participate
The next fundraising goal is #Giving Tuesday
There is a \$2500 pledge from a donor to match

i. Finance Committee/Treasurer

i. August 2020

AH reports that the financials and cash flow are in good shape considering the present circumstances.
\$13,000 in gains from investment account
AH and KH working on budget
Applying for Paycheck Protection Loan forgiveness this week

j. Advocacy Committee

DN reports on the Advocacy Committee activities.
The Committee deliberated on what position (if any) to take on Ballot Proposal 1. There was an in-depth discussion of the pros and cons of the proposal. There was no consensus reached at this time.

5) NEW BUSINESS

a. Environmental Engagement Opportunities

Refer to page 11 of the board meeting packet
Corporate engagement with individualized experiences are being developed with a menu of options available. These would be integrated into Rouge Rescue opportunities and the funding matrix. The rationale for

developing the individualized experiences is that corporations are moving away from just giving money. The goal is to deepen the experience for doing Rouge Rescue every day and combining with Rouge Rescue online

b. DEIJ-IDI Group Reporting Date

The IDI survey will be sent to board members and should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Morgain McDonald would like to do a group report out and there was discussion as to when the board would like to do this.

It was the consensus of the board to have a separate meeting, or do the December board meeting depending on the length of the agenda. There are board elections and reports discussions for the December meeting.

Options for the group reporting are:

December 3, 2020 (#1 option)

November 17, 2020 (#2 option)

December 17, 2020 (#3 option)

c. Board Appointments-vacant seat

Discussion as to immediately fill or defer filling of the present vacancy on the board. The current vacant term is one year.

There is a candidate that is interested in accepting the appointment to the board. The candidate is Erma Leaphart. She is with the Sierra Club Detroit Chapter and Green Infrastructure Specialist. She is also with the Healing our Waters Coalition and she used to work for the State of Michigan in public health. Cyndi Ross and Erma created the Rain Gardens to the Rescue program.

Motion to appoint Erma Leaphart to the FOTR board to fill the one year term effective now made by EP, seconded by PD. Motion carried.

d. Employee Manual- Elections PTO

Change to the FOTR Employee Manual to allow employees Election Day paid time off every other year (midterm and Presidential elections).

Motion to approve the amendment to the FOTR Employee Manual made by EP, seconded by AVK. Motion carried.

e. Additional Issues from the Floor

PARC parking lot construction ongoing- 23 separate rain gardens for a total of approximately 25,000 feet of rain garden funded through an EPA grant and PARC private funding

KH reports that the Safeguarding Policy was revised and the revision reviewed by a pro bono attorney. The document is ready for board review and approval at the November 2020 board meeting

MMC is asking the board to identify local leaders in communities, friends and colleagues that have potential to serve on the FOTR board in the future for long term board development

AVK has several bike tour ideas including Fort Street Park to River Park West and also Jefferson Avenue to River Rouge via bike lanes. PD is doing river delta rides currently. It is uncertain when the Explore the Rouge group bike rides will be able to safely return.

6) ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by ST, seconded by AVK. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:28pm

Respectfully Submitted by:

Susan Thompson
FOTR Secretary

