

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Executive Director, Ashley Flintoff, called the meeting to order at 5:09 PM.

2. ROLL CALL

a. Directors Present:

Erma Leaphart (EL), Mike McNulty (MMN), Brandy Siedlaczek (BS), Carol Snodgrass (CS), Myra Tetteh (MT), Susan Thompson (ST), Gerry VanAcker (GVA) (7 total)

b. Directors Not Present:

Jessica Eiland Anders (JEA), Alice Bailey (AB), Paul Draus (PD), Samra'a Luqman (SL), Madelin Maher (MM), Dave Norwood (DN), Jeremiah Steen (JS) (7 total)

c. Staff Members Present:

Allison Eder (AE), Ashley Flintoff (AF), Karen Hanna (KH)

d. Guests Present:

Michael Palchesko (MP)

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

a. A quorum was not present.

4. APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES

a. A quorum was not present. The November 13, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes will be moved and voted on at the next board meeting.

5. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS/STAFF REPORTS

a. Executive Director AF Reported

i. Giving Tuesday

1. Thank you to all who participated in Giving Tuesday. We had a record breaking Giving Tuesday this year. The organization raised \$30,000 in donations. Huge thank you to the matching donors: the FOTR Board of Directors with a \$3400 match, Laraine Deutsch with a \$500 match, and Bosch with a \$10,000 match. The development team did an amazing job and received a lot of positive feedback for this campaign and their level of care and engagement.

ii. You are encouraged to check out the FOTR river tree in Kellogg Park in Downtown Plymouth now through the end of December. Thank you Sue for helping us decorate.

iii. Owner's Representative for Rouge Gateway Greenway Phase II and Fort St Bridge Park Phase II

1. Today, FOTR signed the contract for the Owner's Representative for Rouge Gateway Greenway Phase II and Fort St Bridge Park Phase II. Huge Thanks to MMN for assisting with the RFP and

interview/selection process. Mark Allan and Associates was the firm selected.

- iv. AF met with Wayne State Library Special Collections.
 - 1. They have a Rouge River Archive and they are always looking to add to their collections. They are interested in digitizing the many historical photos we have from past Rouge Rescues and other events. This would allow these photos to be publicly available. We will be looking for volunteers to help with identification and background information for this project. The goal is to have this work completed by FOTR's 40th anniversary in 2026.
- v. Board Assessment Survey Results
 - 1. There was a 71.4 percent response rate. There was overall general satisfaction with our current board structure and expectations, generally 4 out of 5 ranking or higher. Most respondents were fine with the current level of board service. Many felt a need to have more in-person connection opportunities. We will look into holding a board retreat to bring us all together in person. Some suggested missing skill sets for the board included: Elected Officials, Indigenous Views, Education, Legal, HR, and Financial skill sets.
- vi. Strategic Plan
 - 1. We will begin the Strategic Planning Process with Together Together in January.
 - 2. Together Together will be on site the week of February 10th. We will be looking to hold some in person interviews with board members, staff, community stakeholders, and partners that week.
 - 3. FOTR is looking for 1-2 board members who are willing to participate in a Working Group throughout the Strategic Plan process. This group will be meeting/working through the vision, mission, impact and theory of change. The time frame is March through May.
- vii. Technology
 - 1. Karen is doing a great job to assess current and future technology needs for the organization. FOTR is continuing to work on updating hardware and software resources.
 - 2. We are adding a volunteer management module to our CRM software solution, Bloomerang. This new volunteer management module will allow programs to better sign up volunteers for various events, manage and track volunteer participation, and provide more accurate year-end reporting.
- viii. Recognition
 - 1. Detroit News published an article about the Rouge Gateway Greenway, featuring quotes from Herman Jenkins and Ashley Flintoff.

2. Shout out to the Restoration and Monitoring Teams on a successful 2024 field season. The team worked extremely hard this season, we've all learned a lot, and are looking forward to an even more successful 2025 season!
- ix. Save the Date
 1. FOTR Holiday Party- Toast the New Year with Friends will be January 10th from 12 pm - 2 pm.
 2. Next board meeting is scheduled for January 15th.
 3. Winter Stonefly Search will be held on Saturday, January 25th.
- x. The new website is expected to launch early next year.
- b. **Board Development Committee** MMN Reported
 - i. There are five directors up for re-election: DN, PD, SL, EL, and BS. All 5 are eligible for one more 3 year term.
 - ii. There is one open seat on the board that we chose not to fill. This will allow for more time to select a strategic, high quality candidate to serve a full three year term.
 - iii. We received 67 total votes including 20 paper ballots with no write in votes.
 - iv. Official results: Everyone on the ballot was voted in: Erma Leaphart, Brandy Siedlaczek, Dave Norwood, Paul Draus, Samra'a Luqman
 - v. Executive committee will be voted on at the January Board Meeting. If you are interested let AF, MMN, or JEA know.
- c. **Financial reports** KH report
 - i. A quorum was not present. The October Financial Reports will be moved and voted on at the next board meeting.
 - ii. AF and KH are working on 2025 budget.
 - iii. EL asked about the difference for "other contractors." KH confirmed that this covered the Andrews Group hiring committee, Together Together Services, Morgain, and a small portion for the employers association for the compensation study.
 - iv. EL asked about "Other Fundraising Expenses" and the difference between budget vs actual. KH will research this budget line item and report back.
 - v. CS asked about the difference between budget and actual for "Trails Expenses." This is due to the delay in projects. The projects we had expected to start have not come through. We are either waiting for contracts or permits. We had originally expected the permits to be in place sooner, which would have allowed us to start spending money on those projects.
- d. **Grants and Funding Report** AF Reported
 - i. The Rain Catchers Collective applied for a EPA community change grant, which was denied.. They felt the application did not include enough involvement with disadvantaged communities per their definition.
 - ii. We are named on other community change grant proposals. There are still opportunities that the Rouge Watershed might be able to bring some of that funding into our communities.

- iii. The Rain Catchers Collective is still looking to find regional solutions for these issues in SE Michigan.
- iv. EL mentioned the SE Michigan Flood Risk Management Study currently being completed by the Army Corp of Engineers. Once this is complete, that may bring opportunities for funding for community change.
- v. FOTR submitted for a few opportunities with EGLE for technical updates around Johnson Creek.
- vi. We were awarded the Ducks Unlimited grant to acquire land in Westland and add to Holliday Nature Preserve. There is a lot of interest right now in land conservation, especially around wetlands.

e. Report Out Only- See Board Materials

- i. Education Program Report
- ii. Fund Development Program Report
- iii. Monitoring Program Report/ Monitoring Committee Report
- iv. PR/Marketing/Media Board Committee Reports
- v. Restoration Program Report
- vi. Water Trail Leadership Committee/Water Trail Program Reports

6. NEW BUSINESS

- a. None to Report

7. REMINDERS

a. Upcoming Board Meetings:

- i. January 15, 2025, 5 - 6:30 PM
- ii. March 12, 2025, 5 - 6:30 PM
- iii. May 14, 2025, 5 - 6:30 PM
- iv. June 11, 2025, 5 - 6:30 PM
- v. September 10, 2025, 5 - 6:30 PM
- vi. November 12, 2025, 5 - 6:30 PM
- vii. December 10, 2025, 5 - 6:30 PM

b. Upcoming Organizational Events:

- i. Ongoing thru end of 2024 - Annual Appeal
- ii. Ongoing thru end of 2024 - Plymouth Walk of Trees
- iii. January 10, 2025 - Toast the New Year with Friends (year-end/beginning celebration)
- iv. January 25, 2025 - Stonefly Search ([Register Here](#))
- v.

8. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 6:03 pm.