

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

President, Jessica Eiland-Anders, called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

a. Directors Present:

Jessica Eiland Anders (JEA), Alice Bailey (AB), Paul Draus (PD), Erma Leaphart (EL), Samra'a Luqman (SL), Mike McNulty (MMN), Dave Norwood (DN), Brandy Siedlaczek (BS), Myra Tetteh (MT), Susan Thompson (ST), Gerry VanAcker (GVA) (11 total)

b. Directors Not Present:

Carol Snodgrass (CS), Madelin Maher (MM), Jeremiah Steen (JS) (3 total)

c. Staff Members Present:

Sam Davis (SD), Allison Eder (AE), Ashley Flintoff (AF), Karen Hanna (KH), Vishnu Kusam (VK), Cyndi Ross (CR), Susan Shell (SS), Erica Zador (EZ)

d. Guests Present:

Emalee Rodriguez (ER), Evelyn Ontaneda (EO)

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

a. Agenda was moved (MT/SL) and approved.

4. APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES

a. The January 15, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes were moved (DN/GVA) and approved.

5. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Finance Committee KH Reported

- i. December 2024, January 2025, and February 2025 Financial Reports, including the Treasurer Report and Supporting Documents, were presented for discussion.
- ii. A treasurer's report is not available at the time of meeting. The board will vote to review December through March at the May board meeting.
- iii. KH confirmed that FOTR received the first payment for the Erb Family Foundation general operating support.
- iv. JEA inquired about the Alliance Insurance Policy line item. KH confirmed that FOTR pays the full amount at the start of the year and then expenses it out throughout the year. KH will confirm this figure to make sure it is the YTD.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. FOTR board voted electronically in February on the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget.
- b. The 2025 Budget was moved (SL, MMN) and approved.

7. BOARD OFFICERS ELECTION AF Reported

a. Slate for Executive Committee:

- i. President - Jessica Eiland Anders
- ii. Vice President - Myra Tetteh

- iii. Secretary - Gerry Vanacker
- iv. Treasurer - Carol Snodgrass
- v. Member at Large - Mike McNulty
- b. The slate as presented was moved (PD/DN) and approved.
- c. Thank you to Myra for stepping up to join EC and thank you to SL for serving and all who continue on to serve on the EC.
- d. AF noted that in reviewing FOTR by-laws, we will be revisiting board requirements around committees and chairs.

8. STRATEGIC PLANNING Presented by ER and EO from Together Together

- a. Review Highlights of Discovery
 - i. Discovery inputs included: review of organizational documents, board member and staff interviews, interviews with strategic partners, focus groups with foundation partners and NPO/NGO partners, surveys, on-site tour, landscape analysis of funding and advocacy opportunities, and ongoing conversations with AF and JEA.
 - ii. Core question that informs our strategic planning process: How can we reimagine and reposition FOTR as the main steward of the Rouge River watershed for decades to come?
 - iii. Discovery Themes:
 - 1. Mission and Identity
 - 2. Structure and Capacity
 - 3. Funding and Fundraising
 - iv. Core questions to explore to be answered through the strategic planning process
 - 1. What are the core needs of the Rouge River? And, which of these needs are we committed to meeting?
 - 2. In what ways should we be a connector to other organizations, and what ways are we the driver and owner of the work?
 - 3. What is the best way to restructure our programs to maximize collaboration, efficiency, and resources?
 - 4. What is the structure that supports the centralization of our funding and fundraising strategy across programs and unrestricted funding? What is a holistic approach to fundraising?
 - 5. How can we strengthen, centralize, and formalize community engagement across all program areas?
 - 6. How do we measure success?
 - v. Discussion
 - 1. PD asked about the wording of “main steward.”
 - 2. EO noted that this isn’t meant to be competitive, but that FOTR is already in that informal position. This is intended to formalize this and focus the work we take on.
 - 3. MT asked about the wording of “formalize.” PD suggested “solidify.”
 - 4. EL asked about the term “steward.” She really likes “restore and protect.”
 - 5. EO confirmed that the core question would not take the place of FOTR’s mission or vision. It is intended to provide clarity for what we will explore on the strategic plan.

6. AF thanked everyone for their intentionality in reviewing and discussing the questions that will be used in the strategic planning process.

b. What's Next: Visioning Phase

- i. A working group will be formed to focus on higher level strategic questions.
- ii. Then we will get deeper in different topic areas including: fundraising and funding, community engagement
- iii. Lastly will be implementation. We will think about an operational plan, the goals for the ED, the goals for each team, and the goals for the board in order to implement this strategy.
- iv. AF confirmed that there will be three working groups with a mixture of staff and board. AF and JEA will be bringing big questions and ideas from the visioning questions to the board to give everyone opportunities to weigh in. Please reach out to AF or JEA if you have any questions or if you want to be part of a working group.
- v. ER confirmed they are hoping to wrap the strategic planning process up by end of summer

9. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS/STAFF REPORTS

a. Executive Director AF Reported

- i. Great Lakes Day: AF joined the Michigan delegation from Healing Our Waters Great Lakes Coalition (HOW) to advocate for legislation and funding to support work in the Great Lakes. She met with Congressional staff from the offices of: Rep Dingell, Rep McDonald-Rivet, Rep Haley Stevens, Rep Thanedar, Rep Tlaib, Sen Peters, and Sen Slotkin.
- ii. Federal Funding Uncertainty: FOTR is working on a letter to be sent to all members and donors. The goal is to pair the letter with a fundraising campaign to help build capacity around action planning for how we can adapt and adjust to any potential changes from the reaction to federal funding.
- iii. FOTR by-laws are being reviewed. This will be brought to the board for discussion and review once a draft has been prepared.
- iv. Staffing Updates: Offers have been extended to two trails assistants. One will be focused on events and marketing for the trails program. The other will work on developing an interactive audio guide to go with trips on the Rouge.
- v. Recognition
 1. Congratulations to Paul on his new book and book launch event.
 2. FOTR was featured on Fox2 on single use plastic.
 3. The Frog and Toad survey was featured in multiple media outlets.
 4. Shinola hotel has a River Rouge cocktail and portions of the proceeds will be donated to FOTR.
- vi. Advocacy committee wrote a letter asking EGLE to deny a permit for a proposed Top golf in Canton. EGLE did deny this permit.
- vii. AF highlighted upcoming events.

b. Report Out Only- See Board Materials

- i. Advocacy Committee
- ii. Board Development Committee
- iii. Education Program/Committee Report

- iv. Fund Development Program Report
- v. Grants and Funding Report
- vi. Monitoring Program Report/ Monitoring Committee Report
- vii. PR/Marketing/Media Board Committee Reports
- viii. Restoration Program Report
- ix. Water Trail Leadership Committee/Water Trail Program Reports

10. NEW BUSINESS

- a. PD shared about an upcoming event at UM Dearborn for his new book on March 20th.

11. REMINDERS

a. Upcoming Board Meetings:

- i. May 14, 2025, 5 - 6:30 PM **[Virtual]**
- ii. June 11, 2025, **5:30 - 7:00 PM [In Person]**
- iii. September 10, 2025, 5 - 6:30 PM **[Virtual]**
- iv. November 12, 2025, 5 - 6:30 PM **[Virtual]**
- v. December 10, 2025, 5 - 6:30 PM **[Virtual]**

b. Upcoming Organizational Events:

- i. Habitat Reforestation: Tree Tube Pick Up, Weekly on Tuesdays, 10am - 1pm - Lower Rouge River, Inkster area (sign up to volunteer [here](#))
- ii. April 5 - Spring Bug Hunt Team Leader Training (sign up [here](#))
- iii. April 12 - Spring Bug Hunt (more information [here](#))
- iv. April 27 - Earth Day at PARC
- v. May 17 - Spring Plant and Rain Barrel Sale

12. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at (DN/SL) and approved at 6:17 PM.