

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice President, Myra Tetteh, called the meeting to order at 5:06 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

a. Directors Present:

Alice Bailey (AB), Erma Leaphart (EL), Mike McNulty (MM), Dave Norwood (DN), Brandy Siedlaczek (BS), Myra Tetteh (MT), Susan Thompson (ST), (7 Total)

b. Directors Not Present:

Jessica Eiland Anders (JEA), Paul Draus (PD), Samra'a Luqman (SL), Carol Snodgrass (CS), Gerry VanAcker (GVA) (5 total)

c. Staff Members Present:

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

d. Guests Present:

William Stone (WS), Tom Leonard (TL)

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- a. AF proposed moving the Plunkett Cooney presentation prior to items for voting on the agenda.
- b. Agenda was moved (EL/DN) and approved with the change.

4. APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES

- a. The November 12, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes were moved (DN/ST) and approved.

5. PLUNKETT COONEY PRESENTATION

- a. WS and TL from Plunkett Cooney presented a year end report and lobbying update.
- b. The advocacy committee will be meeting to discuss policy and set expectations in how we want to think about advocacy in the next year.
- c. AF thanks Plunkett Cooney for their time and services for FOTR.

6. ITEMS FOR VOTING

a. Ratification of FY2024 Audit electronic vote KH Reported

- i. The FY 2024 Audit went out for electronic vote and received 11 responses to approve the audit. The 990 was also shared with the board. The 990 and final audit document have been posted to the website.

b. Board Elections - Proposed Slate MM Reported

- i. There will be an electronic vote on Friday to approve the slate for board candidates.
- ii. There may only be one new candidate in addition to GVA and JEA who have agreed to stay on the board for another term. Another individual plans to attend future board meetings and will consider joining in the future when they have more time to commit to FOTR.

c. FY 2025 Budget Amendment KH Reported

- i. KH explained the proposed budget amendments for Quarter 4 of 2025 and the formatting of the document.
 - ii. The amendments are based on revenue projections, actual expenses to date and other operation needs. Each item has a brief explanation in the notes column.
 - iii. MT asked about budget amendments for grants that were denied or reduced. KH confirmed that there will be quarterly budget amendments presented to the board moving forward.
 - iv. The FY 2025 Budget Amendment was moved (DN/EL) and approved.
- d. FY 2026 Budget** KH Reported
- i. KH shared a presentation about the 2026 Fiscal Year Budget. She gave a big picture breakdown of revenue and expenses.
 - ii. AF noted that the budget is organized a bit differently than how we have organized it in the past. This is to make it easier for reporting and understanding the mix of funding.
 - iii. EL asked about line item amounts. KH offered to share the line by line budget with the board.
 - iv. There was a discussion about the changes in fundraising expenses, program services revenue, and program expenses from 2025 to 2026.
 - v. KH explained restricted revenue and how it appears on the reports.
 - vi. The budget positions us to advance our mission responsibly, invest in key initiatives, and maintain financial health.
 - vii. The FY 2026 Budget was moved (MM/BS) and approved.

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

a. Strategic Plan

 AF Reported

- i. AF working to develop a dashboard to show the goals of the strategic plan and the progress towards those goals. This is in progress, but there will hopefully be a draft ready to present in January.
- ii. FOTR has started to rework the way we format the budget to have a better handle on the overall funding picture to assist with fundraising planning and development. Karen and Erin are working on aligning grants administration with the way we are presenting the budget.
- iii. There have been workshop training sessions with the FOTR team to dig into the ways we work and the ways we make decisions. FOTR is also planning a staff retreat in Quarter 1 of 2026 to further this work and training.

b. Finance Committee

 KH reported

- i. October and November 2025 Financials Reports were reviewed and discussed.
- ii. KH explained any notable variances in the budget to actual report.
- iii. AF confirmed that there will be a presentation in January board meeting to discuss the endowment fund. KH and AF working on other informational topics to bring to future board meetings.

c. Executive Director Report

 AF Reported

- i. FOTR raised \$26,300 for Giving Tuesday. The goal was \$40,000 for a new van. Thank you to the board who contributed to the match and helped to make thank you calls.
- ii. 40th Anniversary Updates
 - 1. Heart of the Rouge: Our Ruby Anniversary event will be presented by Ford

through a \$40,000 sponsorship. DTE will also be a sponsor at \$10,000. The event will be at Rouge Park on August 13th. A team has been hired to help plan and run this event. Ashley will send the board a copy of the sponsorship packet for this event.

2. The Speaker Series with Ford Fair Lane Estate will kick off on January 18th with a presentation on “Building a Fish Expressway” presented by Bob Muller
 3. Science on Screen in partnership with Plymouth’s Penn Theatre is confirmed for March 25, 2026.
- iii. Recent Funding
1. Ralph C. Wilson Jr Foundation - \$1,600,000 in gap funding for Rouge Gateway Greenway Phase II
 2. Community Foundation of SE Michigan - \$75,000 in gap funding for Fort Street Bridge Park Phase II
 3. Mercedes Benz Financial Services - \$60,000 for Frog & Toad Survey, Stonefly Search, Monitoring Data Sharing Strategy, and Field Equipment
- iv. FOTR’s holiday party is set for Friday, January 9 at the Bearded Lamb in Plymouth.

8. BOARD COMMITTEE/STAFF REPORTS - Report out only

- a. See Board Materials for updates on the: Board Development Committee, Fund Development Program, Grants and Funding Report, Monitoring Program, PR/Marketing/Media Board Committee Reports, Restoration Program, Water Trail Leadership Program

9. NEW BUSINESS

- a. None to Report

10. REMINDERS

a. Upcoming Board Meetings:

- i. January 14, 2026 - 5:00-6:30pm **[Virtual]**
- ii. March 11, 2026 - 5:00-6:30pm**[Virtual]**
- iii. May 13, 2026 - 5:30-7:00pm **[In Person]**
- iv. June 10, 2026 - 5:00-6:30pm **[Virtual]**
- v. September 9, 2026 - 5:00-6:30pm **[Virtual]**
- vi. November 11, 2026 - 5:30-7:00pm **[In Person]**
- vii. December 9, 2026 - 5:00-6:30pm **[Virtual]**

b. Upcoming Organizational Events:

- i. December 14, 2025 - January 14, 2026 - Board Election (Virtual/Mail)
- ii. January 9, 2026 - Celebrate the New Year with Friends
- iii. January 14, 2026 - January Board Meeting
- iv. January 18, 2026 - A River of Knowledge Speaker Series: “Creating a Fish Expressway”
- v. January 24, 2026 - Stonefly Search

11. ADJOURNMENT Motion to adjourn moved (DN/ST) and approved. Meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm.