

**Fox River Study Group Draft Minutes
Board of Directors Meeting via Conference Call
9:30 AM February 22, 2024**

In Attendance:

Board Members: Alyse Olson, FREP, Art Malm, Friends of the Fox River, Brian Witkowski, City of Aurora, Cindy Skrukud, Sierra Club, Debra Ness, City of Elgin, Karen Clementi, Fox Metro, Rob Linke, Kane County, Tim Wilson, City of St Charles

Others: Geoff Penman, City of Sandwich, Steven Polaskey, Fox Metro WRD, Leonard Dane, Fehr Graham, Sarah Cowley, EEI, Phil Cotter, Village of East Dundee, Caitlin Foster, FMWRD, Cyrus McMains, YBSD, Holly Hudson, CMAP, Karolina Cho, Gewalt Hamilton Associates, Lindsay Muth, Trotter and Associates, Naren Patel, Fehr Graham, Mike Pubentz, City of Elgin

The meeting began at 9:32 am with. This was followed by self-introductions.

Minutes – Approval of the minutes of the November 2023 and January 2024 board meetings with suggested minor edits was moved by Cindy and seconded by Tim. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Karen presented the Treasurer's report. As of 1/31/23 our balances were as follows:

Old Second National Bank \$448,399.46
BMO Harris checking \$2,487.09
BMO Harris savings \$88,831.20

Withdrawals not shown include the Porte Brown remaining 2022 audit balance of \$500 and Hoag Communications' 2024 website invoice for \$400.

Brian moved, Cindy seconded acceptance of the Treasurer's Report and approval for reimbursing FRWRD for the quarterly USGS billing. The motion was approved unanimously.

Karen again requested recommendations for an alternative auditor. We appear to be too small to attract any interest. Karen will provide Art the Google doc link to our financials for review by Motl Accounting. Cindy will also investigate options.

Modelling and Monitoring –

Rob indicated obtaining the BMP tracking data from communities has been slow but progresses. The new draft notice of intent for future MS4 permit conditions suggests there will be an increase in the County BMP program interest.

Rob stated IEPA has declined the 604b grant request for microbial source tracking at Indian Creek. Brian stated the reason for the denial was Aurora, the grant submitter, did not have in its City Charter water quality goals and hence was grant ineligible. IEPA said they liked project and that additional funds were available if the sponsorship issue can be resolved.

CMAP or a Soil and Water Conservation District would be allowable sponsor according to the IEPA. Holly will assist in looking into CMAP participation and costs. Rob suggested FRSG could apply for "data certification." Cindy will check with the Hackmatack treasurer. Rob will check with Kane

County and DuPage Soil and Water for their “data certifications” and possible interest in project support.

Communications Committee – Brian noted the second presentation on the IWS Trends Report “Lunch and Learn” February 29th. Cindy advised Atticus manages our database and turns it over to the Great Lakes to Gulf Observatory. Ellias is our lead on trends analysis. Brian will attempt to get Chris Davis to present on the proposed MS4 changes.

Dam Communications Subcommittee – Art spoke of the committee’s meeting discussing the appropriate FRSG outreach efforts as we await the ArmyCorps FAQ responses. Various challenges to the TSP include addressing misinformation and the potential for public dam removal referendums. The EPA first draft FAQ responses was short, limited and had no surprises. The program remains on track for spring 2025 binding agreements and first deconstruction contract awards in 2027. The program funds for design and construction have yet to be allocated.

The committee needs to meet with Aileron to scope service outline for the remainder of the year.

Mike Pubentz briefed the committee on his efforts to quantify the local costs of dam removal at Elgin and the probable cost of continued ownership including repairs, maintenance and ultimately replacement. This information should be available by the early summer. Mike stated they are working to clear up misinformation and intend to continue to try to use the best available information and modelling in making their dam removal decisions, especially when it comes to the certainty of assuring a reliable water supply to the city.

Rob briefly reviewed the important difference between the Army Corps’ habitat interests and the FRSG’s findings in the water quality implications of dams. He believes both need to be considered in any local decision. He stated our interest is in getting good information out to the public for their consideration and use. Mike believed it would be appropriate for the FRSG to generate for public release the water quality implications of both keeping and removing the dams. Mike is looking for additional funding of the associated necessary river intake improvement. He expects to have substantial new information available to the public in June.

Cindy agreed the FRSG has spent well over a million dollars in its efforts over the last 20 years to reach the 2022 FRIP conclusions. She suggested and asked of Mike whether Elgin had created a post dam removal rendering of the new riverfront. To date there have been no renderings available to any dam hosting community.

Rob recalled concerns expressed about State support for the repairs of structures damaged or otherwise rendered inoperable because of dam removal. This is a concern because of the possibility of significant unforeseen costs being incurred by local communities during the project’s design, construction and operation stages following the signing of binding agreements.

Cindy suggested we develop a response to the Corps’ FAQ release. A call was to be set up for the Board and the Dam Communications Subcommittee to review the Corps’ FAQ responses received February 21 and immediately return our comments to the Corps.

Sierra Club is meeting on a continuing basis with members of Congress who keep asking how can they help. Cindy spoke with Cody Johnson and Rebecca Costello, the Rock Island District money person overseeing this program. The FY 2024/25 Durbin funding will be sufficient to complete the 519 study

and final plan. That funding is in place at Rock Island. The FY26 Budget of \$20 million will fund the start of the implementation phase, including money for design and letting the first removal contracts. The FY27 budget would fund additional, or the remaining, dams for deconstruction.

Rob pointed out communities should be able to negotiate a dam removal date to coordinate with other related projects. He asked if anyone knew of funding that might support Elgin's water intake issue to contact Mike.

NPDES Special Conditions Committee

Tim said the committee will be consolidating the various emails with IEPA outlining standardized special conditions for FRSG members into one packet for an overall approval. Very specific issues and procedures are being addressed and adopted in this effort that should benefit all interests.

Chair's Report –

Rob will coordinate with Cindy the completion of the annual IEPA report and update of the original 10 year financial plan. A committee to review the financial plan will be reformed.

Rob reported an update on the Carpentersville dam removal. Approvals have been received from various agencies and the bid package will be put out "very soon". The project is said to be on track with everything in place and ready for actual demolition to begin, conditions allowing, as early as mid-June.

Rob will contact the Forest Preserve District to remind them of our interest in a mussel rescue program coordinated with the INHM during water level drawdown..

Upcoming events/other updates

- Feb. 29- FRSG Lunch & Learn- Illinois State Water Survey's latest Fox River Water Quality Trends report presented by Elias Getahun and Atticus Zavelle at Noon, Thurs. Feb. 29 [RSVP for webinar link](#) and reminder email. Webinar will be on our usual GoToMeeting line.
- Mar. 13- Fox Waterway Agency presentation of Watershed-Based Plan for the Chain O'Lakes Region- Presentations at 2 pm and 7 pm. In person at Fox Waterway Agency, 45 S Pistakee Lake Road, Fox Lake or via Zoom. [Agenda & Registration](#)
- Mar. 14- Fox River Summit is Thursday, March 14, 2024. Registration is now open at Southeast Fox River Partnership at <https://www.southeastfoxriver.org/> [See agenda here.](#)
- Virtual One Earth Film Festival- Date will be week of April 17-21. [Film is Common Ground.](#)

Links to videos/slides of past events

- FRSG Lunch & Learn Sessions:
 - Great Lakes to Gulf Observatory webinar at https://lewisclark.zoom.us/rec/share/JmJV_4gPWLxFFc2UteSqjMo5Up6p6f9egCTfLn10MOzUn2hOmaSsTR2MlfiBi3Ws.2Ygo-7xWakkYcbYg. Passcode: 89S=e#f7
- "Total Maximum Daily Loads for Total Phosphorus and Total Suspended Solids in the Fox Illinois River Basin" (FOXIL TMDL). Project website: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/TMDLs/FOXIL> Includes Informational Webinar - Oct. 31, 2023 & Project Introduction Webinar - Feb. 15, 2023
- Fox River Summit 2023 presentations on [YouTube](#). Past summit presentations are at drop-down menu at <https://www.southeastfoxriver.org/foxriversummit>
- Fox Waterway Agency's [Watershed Planning for the Chain O'Lakes Region](#)

Next regular meeting: Thursday, March 28, 2024 9:30 am. The 2024 meeting schedule remains the 4th Thursday Jan-Sept and the 3rd Thursdays Oct-Dec.

Art moved and Cindy seconded the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:08 am .

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Malm, Secretary, FRSG