

Healthy Pine River

May 9, 2024

7:00pm

Call to Order: Brittany Sommerville

Approval of Minutes: Doug/Justin

Financial: Opening Balance: \$34294.17

Closing Balance: \$23,310.80

Anticipate \$4,600 to be reimbursed from grant monies

Bills: \$3,750 Triterra for testing \$3,000 to Alma College interns for Dam study

Updates: Earth Day Recycling held in St Louis this year. Successful

Summer Plans: Water testing by Alma College students

Reaching out to townships for their input on where to water test

Develop a permanent rotation for testing –historical database

Speaker: Erika Kemler, Director- Forest Hill Nature Area

The nature area is part of the Isabella Gratiot RESD (Regional Education Service District). Devoted to providing service to students, schools and community. Objective- getting kids invested in nature, in their own backyard. The nature area is located in Seville township near the Brady Cemetery, between Alma and Shephard. Documentation goes back to 1856. Over the years the farm lot was used for crops, sheep, turkeys and other animals. The Gratiot County Conservation district acquired an abandoned farm. In 1993 it turned over the farm to the RESD to develop an educational center. Wetlands have been restored. There are pollinator meadows and woodlots as well to explore. All areas for nature based education available to schools and the public. An old barn that once housed pigs is now a classroom. The area covers 90 acres. Open to schools, from Beal City to Fulton, it provides an outdoor space for play and education, at no cost to the schools. Provisions are taken for special needs children so they may enjoy and learn about nature. Grounds are open to the public for walks, photography. A guided bird walk takes place Saturday mornings. Funding comes from RESD, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, grants, different entities and groups and of course personal donations. The Community Foundation helps finance projects and equipment. Other groups provide sweat and volunteer hours. Currently there are 32 activities for children, many in conjunction with what they are learning in the classroom. In addition to classroom education, the nature area provides space for events, meetings- such as beekeeping. About 25 volunteers, many retired teachers, help with mentoring and programs development. They are reaching out to college students, especially those in environmental studies, to provide opportunities for hands on work and internships. Opportunities are available if one would like to guide a nature walk. Forest Hill is open every day for walking and exploring. Staff is there Mon-Fri generally 8-3pm during the school year. Other times – call for staff availability.

Volunteers needed for Highland Festival Saturday May 25th. HPR will have the pontoon in parade, need walkers to handout stickers and magnets, starts 10:30am. HPR will additionally have an information booth in the art and craft section.

Meeting adjourned

Next Meeting

June 13, 2024

Alma Public Library