

## Meeting Minutes

Lake Superior State University  
Center for Freshwater Research and Education  
100 Salmon Way  
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan 49783  
October 3-4, 2023



### In Attendance

Brian Egen – River Raisin AOC, SPAC Chair  
Mary Bednar – Clinton River AOC  
Mikela Dean – Clinton River AOC  
Jennifer Hill – Clinton River AOC  
Bob Burns – Detroit River AOC  
Erica Clites – Detroit River AOC  
Doug McLaughlin – Kalamazoo AOC  
Bill Craig – Rouge River AOC  
Paulette Duhaime – St. Clair River AOC  
Patty Troy – St. Clair River AOC  
Jim Dukes – St. Marys River AOC  
Mike Langendorf – St. Marys River AOC  
Aubrey Maccoux-LeDuc – St. Marys River AOC  
Mike Ripley – St. Marys River AOC  
Mary Rossiter – St. Marys River AOC  
Horst Schmidt – Torch Lake AOC  
Dr. Ashley Moerke - Center for Freshwater Research and Education  
Melanie Foose – Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)  
Kimberly Passick – EGLE  
John Riley – EGLE  
Stephanie Swart – EGLE  
Jen Tewkesbury – EGLE

### In attendance via Teams:

Eric Diesing – Clinton River AOC, SPAC Co-chair  
Corey Barr – Manistique River AOC  
Richard Micka – River Raisin AOC  
Amber Faulkner – United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)  
Amy Pelka – USEPA  
Andrea Schaller – USEPA

**Tuesday, October 3**

**Welcome from Lake Superior State University – Dr. Ashley Moerke, CFRE Director**

Dr. Moerke gave a short welcoming presentation on the history of the Center for Freshwater Research and their work.

**Welcome and Roll Call – Brian Egen, Chair**

Brian expressed his appreciation for everyone that was present and involved in AOC work and noted the beautiful weather. There were several new faces and the group went around the room with a round of introductions. Those who attended online also introduced themselves.

**Review of Agenda – Brian Egen, Chair**

Motion to accept the agenda made by Horst Schmidt; motion seconded by Bill Craig – approved unanimously.

**Review and Approve May SPAC meeting Minutes – Brian Egen, Chair**

Motion to approve the May minutes made by Bill Craig; motion seconded by Doug McLaughlin – approved unanimously

**Review of Action Items – John Riley**

All but one item was completed and the Incomplete item is on the agenda for discussion on Wednesday.

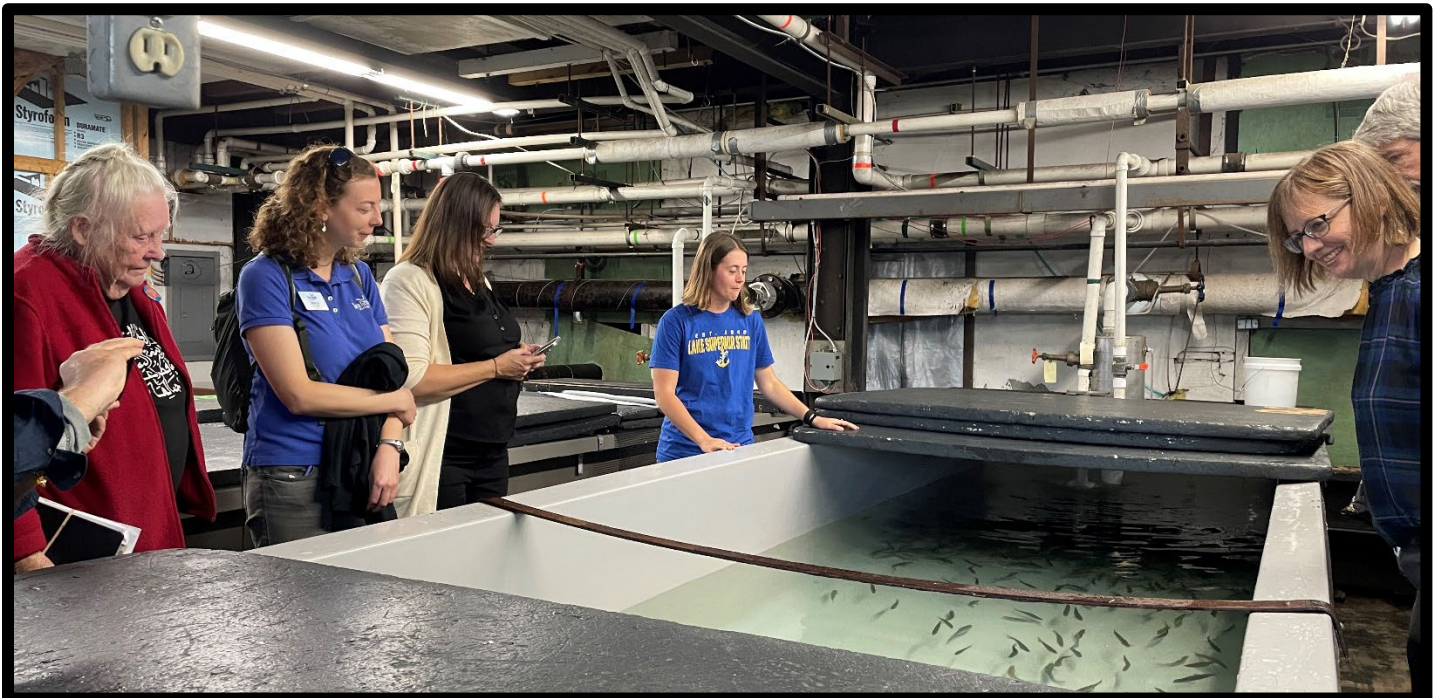
**Presentation: Little Rapids Project – Dr. Ashley Moerke, CFRE Director**

Dr. Moerke discussed the importance of the St. Marys River, its economic importance, and its history as an Area of Concern. The Little Rapids Project is a habitat restoration project that was implemented to assist in the removal of the Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations and Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Beneficial Use Impairments. The Little Rapids were historical fishing grounds that were dredged to make for a more navigable channel. Because rapids are important habitats, this area was a focus for habitat improvement. The goal of this project was to restore flow to the Little Rapids area to improve fish, wildlife, and benthic habitat. Flow was restricted by a roadway with only two undersized culverts. During project design, optimal flows were calculated and post-project data shows that flow targets were met in the downstream and there have been increases in good taxa. The new roadway is open underneath and has a protected walkway for pedestrians. Anglers frequently fish for and catch salmon in this area now. It was a highly successful project with a large number of stakeholders. There are a number of resources available online for more information. Article: [MSU Extension – Putting Back the \(Little\) Rapids: River restoration in the Saint Marys Area of Concern](#). Videos: [NOAA Fisheries - Little Rapids Habitat Restoration Project](#), and [Great Lakes Commission – St. Marys River, Little Rapids: Post Restoration](#).



## CFRE Fish Hatchery Tour – Hatchery staff

Students who work in the hatchery provided a tour of the facility. CFRE also maintains a live [FishCam](#).





## Ferry to Little Rapids Project and Group Photo – All

The weather was unseasonably warm at 81° with sunny skies. Multiple large salmon were spotted in the very clear waters. It was a wonderful day to visit the site.



L to R – Jim Dukes, Mary Rossiter, Bill Craig, Mikela Dean, Mary Bednar, Jennifer Hill, Bob Burns, Doug McLaughlin, Patty Troy, Paulette Duhaime, Erica Clites, and Brian Egen.

## **Wednesday, October 4**

### **In Attendance:**

Brian Egen – River Raisin AOC, SPAC Chair  
Mary Bednar – Clinton River AOC  
Mikela Dean – Clinton River AOC  
Jennifer Hill – Clinton River AOC  
Bob Burns – Detroit River AOC  
Erica Clites – Detroit River AOC  
Doug McLaughlin – Kalamazoo AOC  
Bill Craig, Rouge River AOC  
Paulette Duhaime – St. Clair River AOC  
Patty Troy – St. Clair River AOC  
Jim Dukes – St. Marys River AOC  
Mike Langendorf – St. Marys River AOC  
Mary Rossiter – St. Marys River AOC  
Horst Schmidt – Torch Lake AOC  
Melanie Foose – Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)  
Kimberly Passick – EGLE  
John Riley – EGLE  
Stephanie Swart – EGLE

### **In attendance via Teams:**

Eric Diesing – Clinton River AOC, SPAC Co-chair  
Fallon Chabala – Muskegon AOC  
Lisa Derickx – St. Marys River AOC  
Richard Micka – River Raisin AOC  
Amy Pelka – United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)  
Andrea Schaller – USEPA

### **Welcome – Brian Egen, Chair**

Called the meeting to order

### **Roll Call – Brian Egen, Chair**

Kimberly recorded the attendees both in person and online.

## EGLE Update – Melanie Foose

- Staffing – the unit has two vacancies, two AOC coordinators. Jen has taken on Kalamazoo in addition to the Rouge, Clinton, and Saginaw. John is still the AOC coordinator for Manistique and St. Marys. The two new positions will cover St. Clair, St. Marys, Detroit, Raisin, Saginaw, and Manistique. These positions will be posted both internally and externally. If anyone knows of a person, let them know.
- Funding/Budget – everyone who applied for a PAC support grant has received one. It is now the end of the year so reporting estimates are due October 10. We are one year into a 5 year grant from EPA. As part of our grant funding, EGLE is conducting monitoring regarding the Fish Tumors BUI and fish were collected in the St. Marys AOC this past spring. Fish collections are planned for the Rouge and Detroit in Spring 2024.
- Other – there is a new EGLE director, [Phillip D. Roos](#). Some present personally knew Phil and feel he will bring some good guidance to the agency. There was a question regarding the current status of the Office of the Great Lakes. It is an office under the executive office. Its place in EGLE can be seen in the [organization charts](#). The Great Lakes Management unit is part of the Surface Water Assessment Unit in the [Water Resources Division](#) (page 3 of organization chart).
- Targeted Monitoring Requests are currently being accepted until October 31, 2023 for the 2024 field season. More information can be found at EGLE's [Monitoring Request Form site](#).
- If anyone has ideas for other SPAC subcommittees that they would like to see or be involved with, please pass that along to Melanie.

## EPA Update – Andrea Schaller

Andrea has been selected to fill Marc Tuchman's position as he retired last year. She gave a brief overview of her professional background. She began working in GLNPO in May and was in her new position permanently the week of the AOC conference, which she attended. She wants to foster relationships as she grows into this new role, learning what PACs want in restoration, developing management action lists, projects, etc. AOCs are currently working under GLRI Action Plan III until 2024 and Action Plan IV, which will encompass 2025-2029 is currently being drafted. Part of the process for drafting Action Plan IV is understanding what drives planning efforts to address and remove BUIs to lead to delisting. She shared a slide deck which is attached at the end of these minutes.

Since GLRI began in 2010, USEPA has spent over \$1 billion in AOCs. To date, over \$117 million in projects have been funded with Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds. In the very near future, there will be some large-scales projects beginning and it's an exciting time to be working in the program. Under the GLRI 110 BUIs have been removed, 6 AOCs have been delisted (most recent Ashtabula in 2021) and 10 AOCs have management actions completed. On the U.S. side, this leaves 15 AOCs that have management actions remaining. Under the Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA), 32 sediment remediation projects have been completed. Currently there are six sediment projects underway with



over six million cubic yards remediated. Much of GLLA's success has been attributed to cost share with non-federal partners.

GLRI Action Plan III lists a goal to remove 128 BUIs end of 2024. There are eight BUIs removals needed to meet that goal. and are two in review right now which gives some time to complete the remaining six.

She discussed some key consideration for projects including coordination, cost share, and environmental justice along with keys to continued progress which includes local engagement, communication, and sustained commitment. These keys will help GLRI reach the "moonshot" goal of completion of management actions in 22 of the 25 remaining AOCs by 2030.

GLNPO, broadly is expanding work in environmental justice. Recently there was a Request for Proposals for \$30 million in EJ grants in the Great Lakes basin. Details can be found at the [GLRI news website](#). You can also sign up to receive announcements from this site.

GLRI Action Plan IV – where we're going in the future. Plan to be released publicly in January 2024 with public feedback open until March. (60 days). Details and updates can be found on the Development on the [GLRI Action Plan website](#). PACs and individuals are encouraged to comment on the plan. The new plan will include number of AOCs delisted as a new measure. Many AOCs have management actions complete and it is hoped that they continue to recover so they can be delisted. Also, there are plans to include a commitment to measure ways to increase diversity and engagement with the local community and EPA is listening to what works best to improve outreach and engagement with the community broadly.

### **Special Presentation – All**

Bill Craig and Patty Troy will be stepping down from the SPAC as representatives after many years. They were presented with a group photo from last year's SPAC meeting in Monroe and a card of thanks. Their hours and hours of service over the years is greatly appreciated.

### **AOC Conference – All**

Feedback is still being sought on the conference as the planning committee uses this to inform the next conference. There was a question about the availability of posters that were presented. They cannot be posted online due to accessibility requirements; however, a list of the posters and contacts is listed at the end of these minutes. The conference agenda is also attached. There was discussion on challenges faced by people who hold other jobs to attend a two-day event. Possible topic for future: how to mesh AOC priorities with the priorities of other programs and how they may overlap in the same geographic area.

### **SPAC DEIJ Subcommittee Update – Melanie Foosse**

At the beginning of 2023 the group set three goals:

- Create a PAC welcome / recruitment package
- Ask each PAC what work they are currently doing in the area of DEIJ, take responses, and discuss to learn from each other
- Keep in mind Justice 40 funding - looking at life after delisting.

Some PACs have been working on a welcome package, revising, or drafting letters or other materials and PAC leadership has been asked about the work they are doing.

In other areas, Kalamazoo received a Watershed Council grant for youth outreach and St. Clair is trying to bring in authors for public meetings and book signings as a way to reach out to the community. The DEIJ SPAC subcommittee meets once a month and anyone is welcome to join the conversation. The next meeting is Monday, November 13 at 1 pm. If you would like the link to the meeting, please contact Kimberly Passick at [PassickK@Michigan.gov](mailto:PassickK@Michigan.gov).

### **SPAC Habitat Subcommittee Update – Bill Craig**

The last meeting was June 28, and the group meets every 8 weeks on Wednesdays from 11-Noon. There has been discussion about CISMAs (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas) which was introduced by Eric Diesing, the use of [MiCorps](#) for monitoring, and maintenance of projects. There was an idea proposed for an O&M manual for project maintenance as a deliverable. Paulette mentioned some good webinars that are presented through the Interagency Ecological Restoration Quality Committee. New webinars are announced periodically. Anyone interested in these webinars can contact Melanie

There were some scheduling issues over the summer and the next meeting is set for October 18, 2023 at 11 am. Bill will chair this meeting as his final one. Anyone is welcome to attend, not just SPAC members or representatives. If anyone would like the meeting link, please contact Kimberly Passick at [PassickK@Michigan.gov](mailto:PassickK@Michigan.gov).

### **SPAC By-Laws – All**

Melanie had sent out a poll to set up a meeting for the bylaws workgroup to meet but was unable to find consensus at that time. She will be sending out a new poll to schedule a meeting. If you would like to view the [bylaws](#) and provide comments, they can be found on the [SPAC website](#). The Roles and Responsibilities can also be commented on. They are in continuous draft form and as such, are not posted online. They are attached at the end of these minutes.

### **PAC Report Outs – All**

#### **St Marys AOC – Mike Langendorf**

The BPAC's last meeting was in June and they will hold the next one at the end of this month. Activities taken have been to redesignate remaining BUIs and summer field work on the fish tumors BUI. Fish sampling is scheduled on the Canadian side, also for the fish tumors BUI. The same metrics will be used for both sides as Michigan recently revised their criteria to match those of the Canadians.



Another area of work on the Canadian side will be for the degradation of fish and wildlife populations. Fish, tern, and gull results after sampling were favorable. The BPAC voted to support the Canadian criteria redesignation. They are currently waiting to hear back from USEPA to see if they have any concerns. Michigan is in support and has no concerns. On the Canadian side for the restrictions on fish and wildlife consumption the [survey](#) for Canadian waters is still up and active which will be used to develop the least restrictive criteria on their side. However, October 31 will be the final date to submit information to the survey after two years. Once concluded, they will present results to the BPAC.

### **Torch Lake – Horst Schmidt**

The GLLA funding is being handled by USEPA in Partnership with Honeywell. Work will be done at two sites on the north side of the lake. Work on Lake Linden site will be in 2026 with removal and disposal of sediment and then a cap. This project is not in design yet. Honeywell is still testing Lake Linden and at Hubble where the drums and drum fragments are located. Stephanie added that the drums at the bottom of the lake likely contain PCBs. Honeywell is doing an assessment on how to remove them without doing harm. There are approximately 750+ that are buried, broken, and falling apart. EGLE's Remediation and Redevelopment Division has details on the [abandoned mining waste on their website](#). There was a benthic study to improve habitat and the final results should be available in January with a summit to follow to make decisions on funding and work. Michigan Technological University is using some grant funding to look at mercury sources in the lake as it remains a problem within fish and it is a concern to the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community who use the lake for subsistence fishing.

### **St. Clair River – Paulette Duhaime**

Their last BPAC meeting was held virtually on August 2, 2023. The Canadian side is asking for approval for drinking water BUI removal, however there are some details that need to be worked out. A spill notification flow chart is being created in cooperation with Canada for public understanding in the event of a spill. They reviewed the BPAC by-laws and included a DEIJ statement and language for virtual meetings. The remedial action plan committee plan in Canada hosted a public outreach meeting on September 28 to update the community on restoration progress. The Sturgeon Festival was held on June 3. Attendance was approximately 2,000 persons. This is their biggest annual educational outreach activity. On the Canadian side, a water festival was held last month for community outreach so similar activities are taking place on both sides of the river. The Friends of the St. Clair River have hired their first executive director, Sheri Faust, who comes from the St. Clair Health Department. Sheri was previously the President of Friends. Some of their future goals include securing sustainable funding for after delisting and working with the Canadians to get funding on the that side as well. BPAC are starting Indigenous Environmental Prospective modules this month which is a DEIJ goal. They are working with tribes to rewrite their land acknowledgement statement into a single statement that the BPAC will use. They are also looking to secure a coastal zone management grant for post habitat restoration review.

### **Kalamazoo – Doug McLaughlin**

They are hosting a reception on Saturday as outreach and to discuss progress made in the area and work currently underway. A combination of Superfund and NRDAR activities are being done and they are hoping to create a scorecard of sorts to help people keep track of projects. The PAC is celebrating 30 years this year. Doug participates in a superfund community advisory group and the corresponding technical committee. This allows the watershed council to communicate information about what projects are being done more clearly to the community. He continues to refine his understanding of how all the different pieces come together with Superfund, NRDAR, and AOC work. The history of the area is well known by the community and it leads to the belief that river should be avoided. There is a priority to start overcoming that misconception and bringing the community back to the water.

### **Clinton – Mikela Dean**

Last meetings they have been digging into BUI criteria to see what has been done, what data is needed, and what projects are complete. They are also looking to update PAC bylaws update to help meet DEIJ goals. They have printed a PAC restoration booklet that communicate the projects that have been done which will be distributed soon. On the technical side, they just wrapped up their P51 monitoring for their habitat sites for the season. They are working on eutrophication monitoring to inform the progress of that BUI. On Saturday they will be hosting an “adopt a stream” program which involves monitoring 53 sites within the watershed to assess water quality data. Jennifer Hill added that her first meeting was in March, after which she and Mary worked to identify themes that concerned PAC members. After identifying some areas for work, they will be focusing on increasing voices in the PAC, understanding BUIs as a group, and communication – how to get the public to care and remain engaged. Their meetings are framed around those themes including group activities for engagement. Mary Bednar added that turnover has been scary but is exciting as people retire and new faces come in with ideas and perspectives.

### **Detroit – Bob Burns**

Hennepin Marsh construction was completed in the spring and was monitored throughout the summer. They are working to finish the Sugar Island project to restore and protect the south end of the island. The shoals (over a mile’s worth) were built last year and can be seen in the photo below. This is their largest project coming in at \$19 million. The island is situated at the mouth of the Detroit River and faces the full force of Lake Erie which resulted in the loss of roughly 200 feet of shoreline. The shoals now protect the shoreline and provide habitat. Their last PAC meeting was held in September and USEPA indicated that the city of Detroit and the U.S. Army Corps may be closer to approving a plan to address flooding in the Jefferson Chalmers neighborhood adjacent to the future Upper Riverfront Parks habitat restoration site. Once this last project is done, then they will be management actions complete for their Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Population BUIs. The PAC is working with EGLE and USEPA to drive input and public outreach on several sediment remediation projects that are in various stages of implementation including Wilson Park, Upper Trenton Channel,

Monguagon Creek, and the McLouth Steel Superfund site. Four PAC staff were able to attend the AOC conference in Green Bay. Erica Clites is the new MSU extension educator for southeast Michigan and representative for the SPAC.



### Rouge River – Bill Craig

Sediment projects are moving forward but there is still a challenge in finding match for the GLLA projects. Their last meeting was July 18, held virtually. The [minutes](#) are posted on the [Alliance of Rouge Communities website](#). They approved their updated bylaws and determined that some policies would be useful so that bylaw revisions would not need to be so frequent. The draft policies will be voted on at their next meeting. They have continued participation with the Southeast Michigan Region Watershed Report Card through the University of Maryland. The draft report card has the Rouge River and watershed rated as poor. All voting members completed the Intercultural Development Inventory and a training schedule is being developed. There is a lot of work being done on habitat projects as they wait for sediment issues to be addressed with 21 projects in progress: 4 to be completed this year, 6 in maintenance phase, and 3 to start late this year. The PAC submitted a letter of support with the Michigan Environment Council to the Michigan Health Endowment Fund for a grant called *Growing Community Engagement in AOC Remediation Processes*. Other watershed groups who are partners include Clinton, Rouge, Kalamazoo, Torch, and others. Friends of the Rouge are continuing their fish monitoring work. They also participated in an event at The Henry Ford on September 2, 2023 celebrating the future of southeast Michigan.



## **River Raisin – Brian Egen**

They are still in monitoring phase and they should receive results soon. On August 12 they held their annual cleanup with record attendance of over 250 persons of all ages. One of the fish passages is beginning to degrade so they are working with USACE to work on design and are looking for ways to fund the repair. They received a PAC support grant which includes numerous outreach elements including a large event they hope to hold in May to feature the River Raisin full-length documentary and speakers. They are working on educational outreach by trying to get lesson plans into the county school system. They are working in partnerships to address an issue with flowering rush, an invasive plant species. Through permitting they have been able to treat in the city, however there is a roughly 3 acre patch outside the city limits that they are working to address and remove. They are working to revise their bylaws as part of their DEIJ work and beginning to draft a master plan for life after delisting which will include outreach, accessibility, educational activities and more.

## **SPAC Travel Reimbursement – Kimberly Passick**

Forms were passed out – an electronic version will also be sent out to the representatives so they can submit their reimbursement requests. Receipts for food are no longer required. When possible, please provide receipts for parking, tolls, ferries, etc. A receipt for your hotel stay is required. Please send your receipts and requests to Kimberly at [PassickK@Michigan.gov](mailto:PassickK@Michigan.gov). You may also mail in your request, to the address is provided on the form.

## **2024 SPAC Meetings – All**

- Call for Topics/Agenda Items – UM graduate students group project – advisor is retired. Look back at products. Tool based topic – dashboards, hybrid meetings, etc. Mental Health first aid, hybrid training offered 1-2 hour session. DEIJ topics. Chemicals of emerging concern (PFAS).
- Clinton is interested in hosting for the in-person meeting next fall.

## **Review of Action Items – Kimberly Passick**

Kimberly read through the action items from the meeting, making changes and adding items as needed.

## **Adjourn Meeting**

Motion to adjourn made by Bill Craig; seconded by Patty Troy. Unanimously approved.  
Meeting concluded at 12:10 PM

## **Action Items**

- Melanie will invite Director Roos to speak at a future SPAC meeting.
- Kimberly will include links to EGLE's Organizational Charts in the minutes.

- Kimberly will attach Andrea's presentation to the minutes.
- Kimberly will attach the AOC agenda and list of posters to the minutes.
- Kimberly will email out the travel reimbursement form to the SPAC representatives/alternates.
- Melanie will provide link to monthly USEPA habitat webinars for anyone who would like to attend.
- Stephanie will provide a link to the abandoned mining wastes site for Kimberly to include in the minutes.
- Kimberly will get a list of MSU Extension courses from Erica that are available for the public to access.
- Melanie will set up a poll to set up a date for the SPAC bylaws subcommittee.
- A poll will be set up to set the date for the Winter SPAC meeting.