



## **RIVER RAISIN WATERSHED COUNCIL**

804 N. Evans Street  
Tecumseh, MI 49286  
517-662-8755  
admin@riverraisin.org  
www.riverraisin.org

**River Raisin Watershed Council  
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes  
February 17, 2026 - 10:00 a.m.  
RRWC Tecumseh Office - AJ Smith House  
804 North Evans Street, Tecumseh MI 49286  
In Person/Google Meet/Conference Call**

### **Roll Call**

Vice Chair Stella Kirby called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

Executive Committee members present: Stella Kirby, Phil Kittredge, Matt Knoblauch, Robert Clark

Executive Committee members absent: Mike Ayre, Harry Sheehan, Dave Hoffman.

Others present: Sean Dennis - RRWC Executive Director , Benny Woith - RRWC Administrative Coordinator (Virtual), Blake Mehlhose - RRWC Intern, Sybil Kolon - Manchester Township, John Calhoun - Columbia Township (Virtual).

#### **1. Approval of Agenda - February 17, 2026**

- a. Motion by Kittredge, second by Clark to approve the February 17, 2026 Agenda as presented.  
**MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

#### **2. Approval of Minutes - January 20, 2026**

- a. Motion by Clark, second by Knoblauch, to approve the January 20, 2026 Minutes as presented.  
**MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

#### **3. Treasurer's Report**

- a. The Treasurer's Report for the period January 1 - January 31, 2026 was reviewed by Dennis in Ayre's absence. At County National, Revenue - **\$2252.60**; Disbursements - **\$1720.74**; balance: **\$33,340.77**. At Wesbanco Bank: Revenue – **\$1258.68**; Disbursements - **\$20.63**; balance: **\$4753.82**. It was also noted that signatures authorities reflecting the new officers have been updated at County National Bank and that donations received through Givebutter are now deposited at County National Bank. The Treasurer's report was received and filed.
- b. Approve Disbursements for Outstanding Bills - Dennis reviewed the January check detail/ bills totalling **\$65,500.32** (Including \$56,186.65 to Lenawee County for staff salary). Additionally Payment of up to \$800 to the City of Tecumseh for building rental and up to \$50 for the Verizon phone bill. Motion by Kittredge, second by Kirby, to pay these invoices. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.** Also included was discussion regarding the Farmer Led Group and MACD payments to support this initiative and the need for clear leadership.

#### **4. Public Comment**

- a. Sybil Kolon provided updated information regarding the Norvell Township Gravel mining operation. The application to the township is still not complete, so publicly available information is still limited. It appears there has not been a land impact study conducted, surprising since the proposed operation is adjacent to a State Park (Watkins Lake.) Kolon distributed the business card for the newly formed group, Irish Hills Concerned Citizens, and indicated the group would be sending a formal request of support to RRWC.

#### **5. Business -**

- a. Reserve Fund Policy Draft Review – Erb Family Foundation Funded
  - i. Dennis presented the proposed policy including all suggested updates, and indicated that per a recent meeting with the ERB foundation, they were ready to transfer funding to the Fund once the policy was approved and a bank account provided. Motion by Kittredge, second by Clark, to approve this Reserve Fund Policy. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE**
- b. Brooklyn Dam Removal – Niswander Design/Build proposal
  - i. Dennis reported that Niswander had submitted a formal design and build proposal for the Brooklyn Dam. The technical content of the proposal was acceptable to board members, but the proposal included Niswander contract terms. RRWC would prefer RRWC terms for the contract. Dennis to evaluate and develop alternate terms with Sheehan Dennis requested approval from the board to update the contract with the RRWC developed terms and return to Niswander. Motion by Clark, second by Kittredge, to approve the Dennis request. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE**

#### **6. Executive Director Updates**

- a. Municipal Update -
  - i. At the end of January RRWC was above 54% in receiving our dues from municipalities.
- b. Donor Update -
  - i. Individual Contribution just totaling under \$300 for January but the majority are monthly donations.
- c. River Raisin Institute Discussion -
  - i. Dennis discussed an exploratory discussion with RRI about better collaboration or combining functions given the RRI current leadership changes. Dennis prepared a four option talking points document to frame a discussion with RRI, and seeks approval from the board to engage in discussion with RRI (Dennis document included below). Kirby questioned the time commitment that might be required from Dennis should a collaboration/affiliation occur. Clark discussed the RRI affiliation with the IHM sisters of Monroe. Motion by Clark, second by Knoblauch to approve Dennis to meet with RRI. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE**

#### **Water Stewardship Coordinator - Updates**

- i. Lopez gave a presentation in the AJ Smith facility, so absent from the board meeting.

#### **7. Administrative - Update**

- a. Woith still creating posts on social media for upcoming events and created special graphics for Valentine's.

- b. Woith assisting in registration, flyer creation and website updates for monthly Volunteer Meeting and monthly book club.
- c. Woith to start on our Spring Newsletter next month.
- d. Woith is still currently working on the 2025 Annual Report, with finishing edits from Lopez and Dennis.

8. **Committee Reports** - None.

9. **Public Comment - 3 Minutes** - None.

10. **Adjournment**

Motion by Kirby, second by Kittredge, to adjourn at 10:55 a.m. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

**Next Meeting**

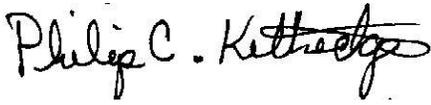
Executive Committee - March 17, 2026 - 10:00 a.m. - 804 N. Evans Street; Tecumseh MI 49286

**Action Items for Next Meeting**

Respectfully submitted by Phil Kittredge - Secretary  
with support of Benny Woith and Lydia Lopez

Date: February 25, 2026

APPROVED:

Secretary: 

Date: March 17, 2026

**Exploratory Alignment Discussion**

RRWC & RRI

**Presented To:** RRWC Executive Committee

**Purpose:** Requesting approval to initiate an exploratory conversation with the River Raisin Institute regarding potential alignment opportunities during their current leadership transition.

This is not a merger proposal, structural change request, or a financial commitment.

This is a request for permission to explore options and report back.

**Context:** The RRI is facing a leadership transition with the impending departure of their executive

director. They are also in search of a new board president. Given the close alignment between watershed education and RRWC's mission, this presents an opportunity to consider whether closer collaboration could strengthen regional impact.

**Why This Matters to RRWC:**

- Education supports long-term watershed outcomes.
- Coordinated programming strengthens grant competitiveness.
- Unified regional messaging benefits municipal members.
- Proactive engagement reduces the risk of mission fragmentation.

Exploring alignment and opportunities does not commit RRWC to expansion; it simply ensures we are informed and strategic.

**Potential Alignment Models:**

**Option 1: Strategic Partnership**

- Formal MOU
- Coordinated programming and messaging
- Collaborative grant strategy

Separate governance, no structural changes.

**Option 2: Shared Leadership Model**

- Shared Executive Director (Dual Role or Interim)
- Shared administrative services agreement
- Clear written cost allocation

Separate boards and finances, provides operational stability through transition.

**Option 3: Affiliate Structure**

- RRI remains an independent 501(c)(3)
- Defined governance alignment (e.g. limited board appointments or approval rights)
- Formalized long-term collaboration framework

Requires by-law amendments and further committee review.

**Option 4: Controlled Subsidiary Model**

- RRI becomes a legally controlled subsidiary of RRWC
- Separate EIN and finances maintained
- Formal governance oversight by RRWC

Requires board involvement and review.

**Guardrails:**

If approved to discuss with RRI,

- No financial commitments will be made.
- No governance changes will occur without formal approval.
- No commingling of funds.
- Full transparency will be maintained with the executive committee.

**Specific Request:**

Approval to,

- Initiate exploratory discussions with RRI leadership.
- Assess their interest in potential alignment.
- Return to this committee with findings and, if appropriate, a defined proposal for consideration.

**Closing:**

This is an opportunity to evaluate whether closer coordination could strengthen watershed education in our region. If alignment is not appropriate, no action will be taken. If there is mutual interest, I will return with a detailed recommendation for further review.

Prepared By: Sean Dennis, Executive Director, RRWC