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RDA Board Welcomes New Chairman, Members

Board welcomes Fesko, Dabertin and Palmateer while honoring departing members Morris, Martinez and Novak.

Crown Point, IN (May 21, 2013) – Don Fesko, CEO of Munster-based Community Hospital and Gov. Mike Pence’s new appointee to the Board of Directors of the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA), was elected Chairman of the Board at today’s spring meeting. The unanimous vote also re-elected Harley Snyder to the position of Vice Chairman and Bill Joiner to the position of Secretary/Treasurer.

Fesko’s first actions were to call for votes on three resolutions honoring departing Chairman Leigh Morris and departing board members Lou Martinez and Pete Novak. “You three have set the bar very high and we appreciate all of your service,” he said. Martinez was replaced as Lake County’s appointee to the board by Randy Palmateer, Business Manager for the Northwestern Indiana Building Trades Council. Tom Dabertin, former Chief of Staff to Hammond Mayor Tom McDermott, Jr. becomes Hammond’s appointee to the board in place of Novak.

The board also heard a report from attorney Dave Hollenbeck on new responsibilities given to the RDA during the recently concluded session of the Indiana General Assembly. The legislature has directed the RDA to conduct studies on the feasibility of building a trauma center and an academic medical center in Northwest Indiana. Both studies have a deadline of November 2014. The board plans to begin addressing the scope of the studies immediately so as to hit the ground running when the new statute becomes effective on July 1.

Four grants under the RDA’s Community Challenge grant program were approved at today’s meeting. These grants total \$525,000. The four awardees are:

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- Sheraton Hotel Demolition (Gary) – RDA’s \$200,000 would leverage \$1,070,000 in federal funds
- Valparaiso Sewer Lift Station – RDA’s \$200,000 would match about \$90,000 in local funds and over \$80 million in capital investment around the Valparaiso area where the lift station would attract new jobs and private investment along the 49 corridor.
- Indiana Dunes Shifting Sands Documentary – RDA’s \$50,000 would leverage \$200,000 in state and federal dollars. This documentary highlights regional partnerships that have contributed to the progress underway with the restoration of the Lake Michigan shoreline.
- Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Transportation – RDA’s \$75,000 match would leverage about \$200,000 in federal funds. It would fund purchase of one of four alternative-fuel shuttle buses with a small portion going towards a marketing effort. Goals of project are the increased use of South Shore Line and spurring economic development in the region.

The RDA Community Challenge Fund provides matching grants to leverage funds from the private sector and/or public entities for public initiatives or projects of regional significance. The Fund has an annual authorization of \$1 million per year and a maximum of \$200,000 per grant.

The board also authorized the potential use of its Deal Closing Fund on a project currently under negotiation by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC). “This would be a significant project with a credible employer,” said RDA President and CEO Bill Hanna. “If completed, it could be the largest project we have been involved in.” Further details are not available as IEDC negotiations are ongoing.

The RDA created its Deal Closing Fund in 2011 to support job creation in Northwest Indiana. It has previously employed the fund to help bring Modern Forge’s new facility to Merrillville, the Land O’Frost headquarters to Munster and improvements by CN to the Kirk Yard in Gary.

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About the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority

Established in 2005 through a bipartisan effort including Governor Mitchell E. Daniels, Congressman Peter J. Visclosky, key state legislators, and local elected officials, the RDA is quasi-governmental development entity entrusted to make public investment decisions within a regional framework for supporting catalytic infrastructure projects and inducing private sector investment. Its mission is to be a catalyst for transforming the economy and quality of life for Northwest Indiana. For more information, visit www.in.gov/rda and www.rdatransformation.com.

