

Environmental Management Policy Committee

Lake Michigan Room

November 2, 2023

[Environmental Management Policy Committee Meeting 11-2-23 \(youtube.com\)](#)

Minutes

Bill Emerson called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

In attendance were Bill Emerson (Lake County), Reggie Korthals (MS4), Robert Forester (Kouts), Jan Bapst, Joe Exl (DNR), Susan MiHalo (Nature Conservancy) Bonnnie Hawksworth (Dune Acres), Tim Kingsland, Daniel Goldfarb, Danielle Hayes (DCI) and George Topoll (Union Township).

NIRPC staff present were Kathy Luther, Jennifer Birchfield, Tom Vander Woude, Kevin Polette, and Flor Baum.

The meeting minutes of August 3, 2023 were approved on motion by Tim Kingsland and second by Susan MiHalo.

Public Comments

No public comments were submitted.

NIRPC 2023 Grant Applications Updates

Kathy Luther and Jen Birchfield spoke on the 2023 grant application updates. NIRPC's environmental department has submitted, and has partnered on other, grant applications throughout 2023. Getting a response from federal agencies has been a slow process. NIRPC staff applied for the Inflation Reduction Act through the US Forest Service for Urban Community Forestry. The focus is on disadvantaged communities. The application was submitted through the Communitree program with the intent to fund professional arborist services at a 0% match for Gary, Hammond, East Chicago, Whiting, and New Chicago. This selection process took Census track information and the fact that these communities do not have a municipal arborist/forester on staff. NIRPC did not get funded for this round as the approval process was geared to directly award municipalities. NIRPC will strongly consider as a takeaway from this round for competitive grants, obtaining letters of support from congress. Several communities shared their experiences with grant applications. The committee had an open discussion about various grant application experiences and outcomes. The EMPC discussed having a workshop, within NIRPC's capacity, to assist communities with the grant application processes. However, granting categories vary and will need to be considered as not all communities would be applying for the same type of grant.

NIRPC Projects Status Update

NIRPC staff are starting the Climate Pollution Reduction Planning Grant with the Chicago Mayor's Caucus (CMC) and CMAQ. Lake and Porter County, part of the Chiago Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), received \$1M with zero match to do a carbon pollution reduction plan, with the first year focusing on doing a priority action plan, followed by long-term action plan. This will be built off the CMC that already has a regional climate plan. \$25K has been received to date. Jen Birchfield spoke on the Coastal Watershed Hazards Resiliency Needs Assessment Update. NIRPC has been contracted by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Coastal Program (DNR) to develop a Coastal Natural Hazards Resiliency Assessment Tool that is live on the NIRPC website. NIRPC has reached out to the watershed communities to complete the Hazards Assessment. Listening sessions and in-person guidance have been conducted. Assessments are being accepted by coastal and watershed communities. Kathy spoke on the Air Quality Conformity update. The state has requested a change in the implementation plan budget for Air Quality Conformity. For NIRPC's transportation

plan to meet conformity standards, the state has adjusted the safety margins. An approved plan is slated for the spring of 2024. Jen spoke on Communitree updates. The last round of funding is completed. Final reporting will be submitted to the US Forest Service. Participating communities are asked to inventory trees. NIRPC has submitted a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative US Forest Service Grant to continue the Communitree passthrough grants program with a proposal to plan 1,500 trees.

Announcements

Announcements were made.

Reports from Planning Partners

For more information on events and programs with Drive Clean Indiana, please visit <https://drivecleanindiana.org/>.

The next EMPC meeting is slated for February 2, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. in the NIRPC offices.

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.