

**Land Use Committee**  
NIRPC – Virtual Meeting  
February 23, 2022  
Minutes

This meeting was convened as an electronic meeting, pursuant to Governor Holcomb’s extended Executive Order 22-01. All persons were meeting remotely on a Zoom platform that allowed for real time interaction and supported the public’s ability to observe and record the proceedings. When the agenda item was provided for public comment, this was supported as well. A roll call was taken to motion and approve the agenda items. The recorded meeting can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKE-J9X99z4>.

George Topoll called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call.

In attendance were Bryan Blazak (St. John), David Wright (GPTC), Deb Backhus, Douglas Powers, Gregory Jenkins, Joe Exl (LMCP), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), Kevin Breitzke, Kristina Kuzma, Nick Bellar (Winfield), Wende Burbridge, Michael Barry, Richard Morrisroe, and George Topoll.

Staff present were Lucas Ecklund-Baker, Candice Ecklund, Kevin Polette, Thomas Dow, Eman Ibrahim, Scott Weber, Jen Birchfield, and Flor Baum.

On motion by Kevin Breitzke and second by David Wright, the committee voted to approve the November 4, 2021 meeting minutes.

Eman Ibrahim spoke on the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for Land Use and Housing. NIRPC has already released RFP for four elements of the plan: trails, land use, transit, and freight. NIRPC is in the process of selecting a consultant. The selected consultant will begin working with NIRPC in the first week of April. Deadline to complete the MTP is by the end of May 2023. The Land Use element to the *NWI 2050 Plan* proposes smart land uses, quality of place, e-commerce landscape, green infrastructure, and open spaces. The plan also proposes asset vulnerability to climate change. MTP focuses on the needed infrastructure to support walking, biking, and transit of historic downtowns and older retail corridors. There will be a plan for the “15-minute” city. The MTP identifies key arterial roadways that can be reimaged to enhance livability. The MTP will identify regional approaches that address shared economic and social resilience and preparedness challenges, environmental protection and restoration, workforce development, and housing markets. The MTP will also consider the Transit-Oriented Development plans (TOD) by Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) and the Regional Development Authority (RDA) and how those plans fit with regional transportation and land use planning at NIRPC. Please contact Eman at [eibrahim@nirpc.org](mailto:eibrahim@nirpc.org) for more information.

Jennifer Birchfield gave an update on the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Coastal Resiliency (CR) Project. One of DNR’s major priorities is to look at coastal hazards such as Lake Michigan level changes, flooding, and shoreline erosion. NIRPC is working with DNR to develop an agreement for CR within Northwest Indiana as a self-assessment tool. Lake Michigan Coastal Program (LMCP) and NIRPC is looking to convene a working group centered around coastal resiliency and will begin by

gathering relevant background data and information from our communities. Self-assessment tools from other states will also be reviewed as starting point and refine the scope to The Region's CR needs, as well as environmental parameters. A webinar will be held to learn how to use the self-assessment tool. NIRPC would then follow-up by scheduling listening sessions with relevant communities to encourage them to complete the self-assessment and provide any additional resources. A summary report on NWI communities and their CR. The project is slated to start in April and conclude by December 2022.

Scott Weber gave an update on The City of Gary's E-Commerce Subarea Plan. NIRPC has an active request for proposals RFP 22-05.02; The City of Gary's E-Commerce Subarea Plan which is due March 3. This transformative project will apply the regional-based e-commerce in NWI Plan (2020). NIRPC is requesting an existing conditions report, a market study, a conceptual area plan, and a final recommendation section. The subarea bound for proposal is on the northern fringes of the Black Oak area in Gary. The Lake Sandy Joe site (3615 W 25<sup>th</sup> Ave) has been called out in the request for proposals. It is a larger site that can potentially accommodate an e-commerce distribution center investment. The entire project is \$50K in federal planning funds. NIRPC has requested for Gary to commit to a \$10K local match. For more information, please contact Scott at [sweber@nirpc.org](mailto:sweber@nirpc.org).

Eman presented on the current legislative updates for Indiana related to land use.

Announcements were made.

The next LUC meeting is slated for May 25, 10:00 a.m., at the NIRPC building. Hearing no further business, the LUC meeting ended at 11:05 a.m.