

NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

March 11, 2025 / NIRPC Dune Room – 8:30 a.m.

Members present

Denise Ebert, Wendy Mis, Gerald Swets

Staff and others present

George Topoll, David Hollenbeck, Ty Warner, Talaya Jones, Meredith Stilwell, Lisa Todd, Darin Sherman

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Wendy Mis called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

November 12, 2024, Leadership Committee meeting minutes were presented. On a motion by Gerald Swets, second by Denise Ebert, and with no opposition, the minutes were approved.

Approval of Minutes

December 5, 2024, Leadership Committee meeting minutes were presented. On a motion by Gerald Swets, second by Denise Ebert, and with no opposition, the minutes were approved.

Approval of Minutes

January 14, 2025, Leadership Committee meeting minutes were presented. On a motion by Gerald Swets, second by Denise Ebert, and with no opposition, the minutes were approved.

Review of Financial Status – October 2024 Budget vs Actual

Talaya Jones presented the October 2024 bank reconciliations for the NIRPC General Account, the CARES Revolving Loan Fund Account, the La Porte Revolving Loan Fund Account, and the Marquette Greenway Account.

She also provided the year-to-date financial reports for the General Fund as of October 2024, noting that the Marquette Greenway project is progressing slowly, with project management claims just beginning to be paid. Total expenditures for the period ending October 31, 2024, amounted to \$6,549,719 out of the \$17,774,554 budgeted. Total General Fund revenue for the period was \$2,421,991 out of the \$4,333,880 budgeted. Talaya reminded the Committee that NIRPC is reimbursed quarterly and noted that the RAISE project is still in the planning stage, with funds not expected to be collected by December 31, 2024.

Talaya then presented the year-to-date financial reports for the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act as of October 2024. Total NIRPC CARES fund expenditures for the period ending October 31, 2024, were \$62,847 out of the \$644,000 budgeted. Total CARES revenue collected for the period was \$66,658 out of the \$78,000 budgeted.

Approval of Claims Registers – October 2024

Talaya presented the October 2024 General Fund claims totaling \$354,155.52 to the Committee. On a motion by Denise Ebert, seconded by Gerald Swets, and with no opposition, the General Fund register of claims for \$354,155.52 was approved.

Talaya then presented the October 2024 CARES claims totaling \$1,515.00 for approval. On a motion by Denise Ebert, seconded by Gerald Swets, and with no opposition, the CARES register of claims for \$1,515.00 was approved.

Finally, Talaya presented the October 2024 Marquette Greenway claims totaling \$83,250.00 for approval. On a motion by Gerald Swets, seconded by Denise Ebert, and with no opposition, the Marquette Greenway register of claims for \$83,250.00 was approved.

Review of Financial Status – November 2024 Budget vs Actual

Talaya Jones presented the November 2024 bank reconciliations for the NIRPC General Account, the CARES Revolving Loan Fund Account, the La Porte Revolving Loan Fund Account, and the Marquette

Greenway Account.

She also provided the year-to-date financial reports for the General Fund as of November 2024, noting that the Marquette Greenway project is progressing slowly, with project management claims just beginning to be paid. Total expenditures for the period ending November 30, 2024, amounted to \$8,278,556 out of the \$17,774,554 budgeted. Total General Fund revenue for the period was \$2,535,972 out of the \$4,333,880 budgeted.

Talaya then presented the year-to-date financial reports for the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act as of November 2024. Total NIRPC CARES fund expenditures for the period ending November 30, 2024, were \$62,847 out of the \$644,000 budgeted. Total CARES revenue collected for the period was \$67,741 out of the \$78,000 budgeted.

Approval of Claims Registers – November 2024

Talaya presented the November 2024 General Fund claims totaling \$1,742,877.75 to the Committee. On a motion by Gerald Swets, second by Denise Ebert, and with no opposition, the General Fund register of claims for \$1,742,877.75 was approved.

Review of Financial Status – December 2024 Budget vs Actual

Talaya Jones presented the December 2024 bank reconciliations for the NIRPC General Account, the CARES Revolving Loan Fund Account, the La Porte Revolving Loan Fund Account, and the Marquette Greenway Account.

She also provided the year-to-date financial reports for the General Fund as of December 2024, noting that the Marquette Greenway project is progressing slowly, with project management claims just beginning to be paid. Total expenditures for the period ending December 31, 2024, amounted to \$8,647,181 out of the \$17,774,554 budgeted. Total General Fund revenue for the period was \$2,989,891 out of the \$4,333,880 budgeted. Ty mentioned that while NIRPC's local share is increasing from \$0.70 to \$0.86 per capita, the planning funds have been reduced due to a formula change.

Talaya then presented the year-to-date financial reports for the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act as of December 2024. Total NIRPC CARES fund expenditures for the period ending December 31, 2024, were \$63,970 out of the \$644,000 budgeted. Total CARES revenue collected for the period was \$68,130 out of the \$78,000 budgeted.

Approval of Claims Registers – December 2024

Talaya presented the December 2024 General Fund claims totaling \$335,644.98 to the Committee. On a motion by Gerald Swets, seconded by Denise Ebert, and with no opposition, the General Fund register of claims for \$335,644.98 was approved.

Talaya then presented the December 2024 CARES claims totaling \$1,122.42 for approval. On a motion by Denise Ebert, seconded by Gerald Swets, and with no opposition, the CARES register of claims for \$1,122.42 was approved.

Finally, Talaya presented the December 2024 Marquette Greenway claims totaling \$15,250.00 for approval. On a motion by Gerald Swets, seconded by Denise Ebert, and with no opposition, the Marquette Greenway register of claims for \$15,250.00 was approved.

Legislative Initiatives

Ty presented a digital version of the Federal Legislative Concerns handout on NIRPC's website, which he typically shares with legislators during his visits to Washington, D.C., for the National Association for Regional Councils (NARC) conference. The ongoing issues of concern include:

- **Sustaining the Highway Trust Fund (HTF):** A sustainable funding source is needed for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which is up for renewal in the fall of 2026. The current \$0.18 per gallon gas tax, unchanged since 1993, only replenishes 30% of the fund. The HTF is a five-year bill, and the last renewal did not address the replenishment issue, instead using funds from other sources. A long-term solution is required, either by raising the federal gas tax or implementing road user charges or mileage-based user fees. NIRPC has not yet taken a position on this issue.

- **Clearing Blocked Railroad Crossings**
- **Designating the Calumet National Heritage Area:** NIRPC passed a resolution of support in September 2021.

New issues of concern include:

- **Appropriating Funding for the EDA:** Currently, \$70,000 in funding for the EDD requires a 60/40 match. There is a push to increase the funding to \$200,000 with no match required.
- **Protecting Existing Discretionary Funding:** This involves grants that have already been awarded and significant amounts of money already spent on planning and implementing these projects. This funding must be protected until the conclusion of these awarded projects.

In addition to the meeting packet, two handouts were provided: a list of the 2025 Legislative Session Bills of interest to NIRPC and NARC's Surface Transportation Reauthorization Priorities document. Ty noted that the Legislative Committee has been absorbed into the newly formed Leadership Committee, which now oversees legislative items.

NARC is urging Congress to incorporate the following principles in the next surface transportation bill:

1. Increase and enhance Metropolitan Planning (PL) funding.
2. Promote non-metropolitan transportation planning.
3. Support local decision-making through formula programs. NIRPC is primarily funded by formula grants.
4. Preserve discretionary grant funding.

Ty highlighted SB 103 regarding vehicle emissions, authored by Senator Niemeyer. If passed, this bill would direct the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) to (1) study the environmental impact of exempting vehicles wholly owned by individuals aged 65 and older from motor vehicle testing and (2) determine whether the environmental rules board could exempt these vehicles from emissions testing while still meeting the national ambient air quality standards set forth under the federal Clean Air Act. NIRPC is required to calculate and demonstrate conformity, and so far, there has been no method found to correlate vehicle emissions with the age of the owner. If this requirement cannot be met, it could jeopardize transportation funding.

Personnel updates

Ty reported that NIRPC currently has a vacancy for the Traffic Counting Planner position. NIRPC holds a three-year contract with INDOT to conduct traffic counting. He noted that due to recent staff increases and the rehiring of Scott Weber, the budget for this position has been reduced.

Other Business

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is being brought to the May Full Commission meeting for approval. There will not be an Executive Board meeting in April, and the next Leadership Committee meeting will be on May 13. The Full Commission meeting will be on May 15.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 am.