

Environmental Management Policy Committee

NIRPC – Virtual Meeting

February 3, 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.

Bill Emerson called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call.

In attendance were Bill Emerson (Lake County), Andrew Hart, Brenda Scott Henry (Gary), Cathy Csatari (IDEM), Deborah Chubb (IWAM), Dorreen Carey (GARD), George Topoll (Union Township), Jennifer Gadzala (Chesterton), Jenny Orsburn (LMCP), Joe Exl (LMCP), Kathy Sipple (Earth Charter), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County), Lauri Keagle (LES), Susan MiHalo (NC), Tim Kingsland (Hobart), Nancy Moldenhauer (Michigan City Sustainability Commission), and Victoria Wittig (Save the Dunes).

NIRPC staff present were Kathy Luther, Jennifer Birchfield, Thomas Dow, Candice Eklund, Kevin Polette, and Flor Baum.

New-hire Jennifer Birchfield was introduced as NIRPC's Natural Resources Planner. Jennifer can be reached at Jbirchfield@nirpc.org.

The meeting minutes of October 7, 2021 were approved on motion by Kevin Breitzke and second by Brenda Scott-Henry. A roll call was taken, and the committee voted unanimously to approve.

Public Comments

Dorreen Carey (GARD) requested that NIRPC proposes to assess the plan to construct a fuel plant on Gary's western lakefront, from the environmental and EJ perspective. Constructing a biorefinery on Gary's shoreline closes off opportunities to reclaim and restore the Region's lakefront community.

2022 NIRPC Environmental Projects and Programs

Kathy Luther spoke on the 2021 and 2022 NIRPC environmental projects and programs. The 2021, Air Quality (AQ) public education supported Porter and LaPorte County "Household Hazardous Waste Collections," via radio ads and supported 960 gas-can exchanges. The Region People, "It All Adds Up," was placed on billboards to promote the Cleaner Air Campaign. Additionally, the AQ program continues to grow on social media. The Green Fleets program continues to expand. The technical support provided through the VW settlement fund replacement. 18 garbage trucks in the Region have been exchanged for CNG, and 21 propane school buses were funded through the VW settlement. The Greenways and Blueways bike map mobile phone application is nearly completed. NIRPC staff is currently working with Illinois on quality assurance. The app is slated to roll out in the spring of 2022. NIRPC continues to support Partners for Clean Air which has begun a scholarship program. Three scholarships have been awarded in 2021. NIRPC gave continued support of social media presence as well.

Plans for 2022 continue to support AQ public education, as well as complete the regional AQ website hub. For Green Fleets, Clean Drive Indiana, on behalf of NIRPC, will continue technical support to keep progress going on cleaner vehicle fleets in the Region. Partners for Clean Air plans to revitalize memberships and AQ Action Day pledges. NIRPC plans to explore EPA community air pollution

monitoring grants. There are grant categories to fund projects that will help local community engagement for AQ monitoring in their area. Applications are due by March 25. Please contact Kathy at Kluther@nirpc.org for more information.

In 2021, the Brownfields program completed four Ph I assessments, four Ph II assessments, and one corridor inventory (on US 6, between The City of Portage and US 49). Two asbestos abatement plannings are in progress. Brownfield Coalition plans and projects for 2022 include completing The City of Hammond's former Clark High School athletic field area assessment. The property will be redeveloped into a mixed-use development for housing and commercial use. There are plans to continue helping NWI communities and developers access Indiana Brownfield Program resources. The Coalition will review community self-assessments for training opportunities and possibly work with communities with ongoing training on how to handle Brownfield redevelopments. The Coalition plans to support the completion of the Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund Project at the Lakeshore Manor Housing Project in The City of East Chicago. Kathy will apply for the next round of EPA Brownfield funds. NIRPC, NWI Forum, and the RDA is available to present to your redevelopment commission on Brownfield Readiness.

Climate and Energy successes in 2021 include the completion of the Green House Gas Emission Inventories (GHGEI) for 16 communities. All three NWI counties completed their GHGEI. NIRPC has been selected for the 2022 Environmental Resilience Institute (ERI) Climate Action Planning Cohort and will adopt the GHGEI report. The goal is to produce a Regional Climate Action Plan (CAP) framework that consists of regional science-based reduction targets, a regional transportation emission reduction action plan, and a recommended Action Menus for different community profiles. NIRPC is looking to form a CAP advisory task force between that will meet three times throughout the year. The task force will consist of multiple NIRPC committees and stakeholder groups. If interested, please contact Kathy Luther.

In 2021 NIRC worked on conservation planning and green infrastructure. The Communitree program planted 345 trees, less than in prior years. COVID was a major factor in the decline of tree distribution. NIRPC participated in the CLCP Bi-State Calumet Conservation Action Plans (95% complete). The plan was expanded with coastal program funds where applicable. Implementation steps will be discussed in 2022. NIRPC procured GeoSyntec for NIRPC's *Living Streets Policy*; Green Infrastructure Guidelines (GIG).

The 2022 Communitree spring tree application will be announced soon. Communitree has a new three-year GLRI grant from US Forest Service. In 2022, GIG adoption will require transportation projects to incorporate green infrastructure into their project. A workshop for performance data items will be slated for the spring.

For 2022 Planning and environmental linkages, the new *Sensible Tools Handbook* will be completed and adopted. The GIG for the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFA) will be completed and adopted into Environmental. Local transportation project funding applications will be solicited and scored in the *Air Quality* and Environmental categories. NIRPC will be working on *The Long Range Transportation Plan* update that is due in 2023. NIRPC will continue to support the LMCP Coastal Resiliency Community Self-Assessment project.

In 2021, NIRPC supported the Chicago Area Waterway System Aquatic Invasives Stakeholder Advisory Group (CAWS). The state of Illinois, Michigan, and the US Army Corps of Engineering signed the Planning, Engineering, and Design Agreement to start work on the Brandon Road Lock Asian Carp Barrier. In 2022, NIRPC will continue to provide staff support to CAWS by facilitating

information sharing and coordination of this multi-state, multi-disciplinary group. NIRPC will continue to participate and support active regional watershed partnerships and initiatives for 2022.

2022 Partner Sharing and Projects

Susan MiHalo spoke on The Nature Conservancy (NC). The NC is focusing on developing conservation action plans and will be heavily vested in watershed management planning efforts. Lauri Keagle spoke on Drive Clean Indiana. The DCI will continue to support the various programs for Air Quality. Joe Exl spoke on the Lake Michigan Coastal Program (LMCP). NIRPC will partner with LMCP to build out a Coastal Hazards Resiliency program. The first step in 2022 will be to conduct a community needs assessment. The program is slated to conclude in 2027. Victoria Wittig spoke on Save the Dunes. They are collaborating with other entities to roll out a Coastal Perceptions project. A survey is slated to launch in the spring, followed by a series of five workshops.

Reports from Planning Partners

Lauri Keagle (DCI) presented on the Drive Clean Indiana NIRPC EMPC Report. Please go to <https://files.constantcontact.com/b4f049b7201/5ca5d410-5d8c-4695-b474-27b6a3182d84.pdf?rdr=true> to view the full report. For more information, please visit <https://drivecleanindiana.org/> or contact Lauri at lkeagle@drivecleanindiana.org

Announcements were made.

The next EMPC meeting is slated for May 5, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. in the NIRPC offices.

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:23 a.m.