

**NIRPC Full Commission Meeting**  
Hybrid meeting held In-Person and via Zoom  
January 20, 2022 Minutes

**Call to Order**

Chairman, George Topoll, called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

This meeting was convened as both an in-person and electronic meeting, which was in accordance and made possible with House Enrolled Act (HEA) 1437 as incorporated into Governor Holcomb's Executive Order 21-13. This format allowed for real time interaction and supported the public's ability to observe and record the proceedings.

Ty Warner began the meeting by thanking the Commissioners in attendance, both in-person and virtually. This is the first in-person meeting since Covid-19 began in 2020 and NIRPC's first attempt at holding a hybrid meeting, which was at the request of the NIRPC officers.

**New Appointments to the Commission**

Dave Hollenbeck announced the appointments to the Commission of Mike Jessen (Porter County Council), Scott Kingan (Ogden Dunes), and Angie Scott (Burns Harbor).

**Roll call** - Taken by Candice Eklund.

**Present**

A total of 32 Commissioners were present at the meeting, with an attendance of nine in-person and 23 attending virtually. The nine Commissioners attending in person were Kyle Allen (Lake County Commissioner), Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Michael Griffin (Highland), Richard Hardaway (Merrillville), Justin Kiel (La Crosse), Sue Lynch (Portage), Greg Stinson (Porter), Jim Ton (Chesterton), and George Topoll (Union Township). The 23 Commissioners attending virtually were Geof Benson (Beverly Shores), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Charlie Brown (Lake County Council), Robert Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Joshleen Denham (Trail Creek), Tom Dermody (La Porte), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Robert Forster (Kouts), Mike Jessen (Porter County Council), Scott Kingan (Ogden Dunes), Andrew Kyres (Crown Point), Robert Lemay (Long Beach), Lori Mercer (Westville), Wendy Mis (Munster), Mike Mollenhauer (LaPorte County Council), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), Duane Parry (Michigan City), David Peeler (Hebron), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Gerald Swets (St. John), and Mary Tanis (Dyer). Also present was Adam Parkhouse representing INDOT.

The 19 Commissioners absent included Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Jeanette Bapst (Dune Acres), Janet Beck (Pottawattomie Park), Jim Biggs (Porter County Commissioner), Bill Carroll (Lake Station), Anthony Copeland (East Chicago), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Tony Hendricks (LaPorte County Surveyor), Jack Jeralds (Schneider), Sheila Matias (LaPorte County Commissioner), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Edward Morales (Porter Township), Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee), Jerome Prince (Gary), Angie Scott (Burns Harbor), Brian Snedecor (Hobart), Steve Spebar (Whiting), Sharon Szewedo (New Chicago), and John Yelkich (Lowell).

Kingsbury and The Pines have appointed no representatives to NIRPC.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Thomas Dow, Kathy Luther, Talaya Jones, Meredith Stilwell, Flor Baum, Mitch Barloga, Lisa Todd, Charles Bradsky, Denarie Kane, Kevin Polette, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the November 18, 2021 Full Commission meeting were approved on motion by Michael Griffin and seconded by Jim Ton. With Kyle Allen, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Charlie Brown, Robert Carnahan, Joshleen Denham, Tom Dermody, Jon Derwinski, Denise Ebert, Bill Emerson, Robert Forster, Michael Griffin, Richard Hardaway, Mike Jessen, Justin Kiel, Scott Kingan, Andrew Kyres, Robert Lemay, Sue Lynch, Lori Mercer, Wendy Mis, Mike Mollenhauer, Duane Parry, David Peeler, Rick Ryfa, Tom Schmitt, Greg Stinson, Gerald Swets, Mary Tanis, Jim Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.

**Presentation of Norman E. Tufford Award – Ty Warner**

Steve Strains received NIRPC's Norman Tufford Award, given for "exceptional dedication and service to NIRPC". Former NIRPC Executive Director, John Swanson, introduced Mr. Strains during the presentation of the award. Steve is the most tenured staff person in the history of NIRPC, serving the agency for over 40 years until his retirement in 2016. He served as both Director of Planning and Deputy Director under Mr. Swanson, roles that

continued under Ty Warner when John retired in 2012. “Steve felt strongly about making this region a better place for all of us to live, work and play”, said Swanson.

### **2020 NIRPC Annual Report– Ty Warner**

Ty Warner provided an overview of the annual report for 2021 and stated it will be available online at [www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org) and sent to the Commissioners. Each one of NIRPC’s focus areas, as well as their activities over the past year, are captured in this report. Mr. Warner extended his gratitude to staff for their continued work efforts and to the Commissioners for their service and dedication to make everything work last year, despite the challenges being different for each community.

Ty recognized Lisa Todd for her five years of service with NIRPC.

### **Officers and Executive Board for 2022 – George Topoll**

George Topoll heartfully said that having the Commissioners trust as Chair at NIRPC was an incredible honor and privilege, and thanked Ty Warner and NIRPC staff for their contributions.

Mr. Topoll presented the recommendations of the Nominating Committee for 2022. No additional nominations were made.

Elected as Chair for 2022 was Justin Kiel, Town of La Crosse. Richard Hardaway, Councilman from Merrillville was elected as Vice Chair. Greg Stinson, Councilman from Porter was elected as Secretary, and Tom Dermody, Mayor of the City of La Porte, was elected Treasurer.

Members elected to the Executive Board included Clerk-Treasurer Wendy Mis (Munster) and Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), representing Lake County; County Commissioner Sheila Matias and Clerk-Treasurer Lori Mercer (Westville), representing LaPorte County; and Mayor Sue Lynch (Portage) and Councilman James Ton (Chesterton), representing Porter County. George Topoll, Union Township Trustee, now serves as Immediate Past Chair. The continued appointment of Representative Jim Pressel as the Governor’s appointee to the Executive Board is assumed.

Hearing no objections to taking a roll call after each of the recommendations of the Executive Board nominations were announced, a roll call was taken by Candice Eklund. On motion by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by Geof Benson, the Full Commission voted to adopt the 2022 slate as presented. With Kyle Allen, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Robert Carnahan, Joshleen Denham, Tom Dermody, Jon Derwinski, Denise Ebert, Bill Emerson, Robert Forster, Michael Griffin, Richard Hardaway, Mike Jessen, Justin Kiel, Scott Kingan, Andrew Kyres, Robert Lemay, Sue Lynch, Lori Mercer, Wendy Mis, Duane Parry, David Peeler, Rick Ryfa, Tom Schmitt, Greg Stinson, Gerald Swets, Mary Tanis, Jim Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the report of the nominating committee was approved and the members listed were elected.

Ty Warner presented George Topoll with a gavel plaque and thanked him for his efforts and commitment over the past year. With the absence of an in-person meeting January 2021, Michael Griffin formally passed the gavel to George Topoll, who then passed the gavel to new Chair, Justin Kiel. Kiel recognized George Topoll and Michael Griffin for their unenviable task of guiding this body through the pandemic and they deserve our appreciation for rising to that challenge. Justin said that among his goals for 2022 were to “strengthen the networking and collaborative opportunities that NIRPC has to offer its members” and to “build new revenue streams to support NIRPC’s existing mission and to make possible new objectives.” Committee assignments will remain the same until the committee structure can be reviewed more thoroughly.

### **NIRPC MPO Certification Review Update – FHWA and FTA**

Erica Tait began their presentation by commending NIRPC for navigating virtually the last two years and being so flexible in working with them. The federal legislation requires a certification review every four years for transportation planning areas that have more than 200,000 people. The certification was conducted virtually by the federal review team in September 2021. The USDOT certified NIRPC’s transportation planning process on December 17, 2021, resulting in no corrective actions, three commendations, and 17 recommendations. Erica Tait and Kari Carmany-George, FHWA, and Cecilia Crenshaw-Godfrey, FTA, presented the results of the certification review. There were no questions after the presentation. Ty thanked the presenters for the partnering experience to advance transportation here in the region.

### **Finance & Personnel Committee (F & P) - Greg Stinson**

Greg Stinson reported the F & P Committee met this morning to review the financial reports, bank reconciliations, and claims registers for November 2021. The F&P Committee brought the three action items below to the Full Commission for consideration and approval.

1. Resolution #22-01: Calendar Year 2022 Budget. Talaya Jones presented the proposed budget based on the CARES Act funding being expended. The total budget for 2022 is \$14,299,770 in available funding to the agency to meet their financial obligations. It was noted there was a change to Attachment D in the budget. The Contractual line item should read 'RLF Services' and not 'La Porte RLF Services'.
2. New Three-Year Executive Director Employment Agreement. Dave Hollenbeck presented the new contract for the Executive Director. This contract reflects a recommendation of the Chair and the favorable recommendation of the F&P Committee. Mr. Warner will receive a salary increase of 5% in calendar year 2022, with a self-evaluation to determine his salary increase in 2023 and 2024.
3. RDG Planning & Design Contract for 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan-Active Transportation Element. Thomas Dow presented on this contract stating NIRPC selected RDG Planning & Design to assist with developing the active transportation element of our Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), which is required to be updated by May 2023. The contract is not to exceed \$98,000. NIRPC is seeking approval of this contract, which is subject to future legal review and approval.

### **Technical Planning Committee (TPC) - Kevin Breitzke**

Kevin Breitzke reported the TPC met on January 11, 2022 and heard presentations on the RAISE and READI grant awards for the Marquette Greenway. The TPC Committee brought the four actions below to the Full Commission. The next TPC meeting is scheduled for March 1, 2022. It was noted the TPC Committee meetings will now be held the first Tuesday of the month when scheduled.

1. Resolution #22-02: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NIRPC and The Village of Sauk Village. Mitch Barloga presented the MOU regarding payment of the old Plank Road Trail study. Cook County received a grant for \$300,000, with the understanding that NIRPC would invest \$50,000 to bring this trail study into Dyer and Schererville. This resolution is to determine payment for the consultant to cover only the services for the feasibility study.
2. Resolution #22-03: FY 2020-2024 & FY 2022-2026 TIP Amendment 22-03. Charles Bradsky stated no public comments were received for Resolution #22-03, Amendment 22-03 and Resolution #22-04, Amendment 22-03.5. The Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) inquired if the four large legacy projects were incorporated in the amendment, which Charles confirmed they are included in NIRPC's long range plan. The ICG approved the plan on December 17, 2021. This resolution includes 12 municipality projects and nine new INDOT projects.
3. Resolution #22-04: FY 2020-2024 & FY 2022-2026 TIP Amendment 22-03.5. Charles Bradsky stated this amendment includes six projects for NICTD.
4. Resolution #22-05: 2021-2022 UPWP Amendment #5, FY 2022 Update. Thomas Dow presented this resolution stating it relates to the RDG Planning and Design contract. Funding of \$400,000 will be reallocated in NIRPC's UPWP plan from FY 2021 to FY 2022 to hire consultants to assist with updating the MTP. Michael Griffin raised concerns for organizational capacity planning to add staff or consultants, given this funding scenario. Mr. Warner stated NIRPC is currently hiring the outstanding positions of a Public Transit and Engagement Planner and a Programming Grant Assistant.

### **Legislative Committee – Justin Kiel**

Resolution #22-06: American Discovery Trail. Mitch Barloga presented this resolution noting NIRPC's Full Commission signed a similar resolution 10 years ago. The American Discovery Trail (ADT) is a coast-to-coast network from Delaware to California that runs through our region from LaPorte County through Indiana. The ADT Society wants to persuade congress to adopt H.R. 4878 (the National Discoveries Trail Act), which would add discovery trails and allow for signage on the route.

By virtue of the Full Commission of General Consent to allow all items to be Consent Agenda matters, Justin Kiel asked for a vote on the eight matters below:

- Approval of Resolution #22-01, NIRPC's Calendar Year 2022 Budget
- Approval of the New Three-Year Executive Director Employment Agreement

- Approval of the RDG Planning & Design Contract for 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan
- Approval of Resolution #22-02, MOU Approval Between NIRPC and Village of Sauk Village
- Approval of Resolution #22-03, FY 2020-2024 & FY 2022-2026 TIP Amendment 22-03
- Approval of Resolution #22-04, FY 2020-2024 & FY 2022-2026 TIP Amendment 22-03.5
- Approval of Resolution #22-05, 2021-2022 UPWP Amendment #5
- Approval of Resolution #22-06, American Discovery Trail

Hearing no objections, a motion was received by Greg Stinson and seconded by Jim Ton to adopt the matters of the consent agenda. Roll call was taken by Candice Eklund for these eight matters. With Kyle Allen, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Charlie Brown, Robert Carnahan, Joshleen Denham, Tom Dermody, Denise Ebert, Bill Emerson, Robert Forster, Michael Griffin, Richard Hardaway, Mike Jessen, Justin Kiel, Scott Kingan, Andrew Kyres, Robert Lemay, Sue Lynch, Lori Mercer, Wendy Mis, Duane Parry, David Peeler, Rick Ryfa, Tom Schmitt, Greg Stinson, Jim Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed. Michael Griffin requested for the record to reflect that “they were advised of the Commissioner’s agreement that the Executive Director’s contract was on the consent agenda, and that the details were explained to them.” With that, “they would like to leave it in to have the vote be affirmative. This is important in the event the public looks at the minutes in the future, so they know there was transparency about the contract.” There were no objections.

#### **Economic Development District Report – Denarie Kane**

Denarie Kane reported there has been a lot of activity with the Economic Resiliency and Recovery plan. The RLF program closed on one *Recover NWI* loan and one loan in the Laporte County program. NIRPC has worked with the TIP consulting group to identify 21 members for the steering committee. During their first meeting held last month, they discussed the planning process and their role. A second meeting is scheduled for January 22, 2022, to discuss a future survey and identify stake holders for future discussions. Denarie noted it was not too late to respond to NIRPC’s request for planning data and to contact her at [dkane@nirpc.org](mailto:dkane@nirpc.org) with any questions.

#### **INDOT – Adam Parkhouse**

Adam Parkhouse discussed the features on INDOT’s Trafficwise Site. To locate where snowplows are in real time, visit, <https://511.in.org/@-88.5498,40.53398,6?show=roadReports,weatherWarningsAreaEvents,flooding>.

The applications for the Community Crossings program are due by January 28, 2022.

#### **Other Business**

There were no other business discussions.

#### **Announcements**

Bob Carnahan requested prayers for the people who are suffering with Covid and informed the group there were 44 Covid related deaths in Lake County over the past two days.

Hearing no other business, Justin Kiel adjourned the meeting at 10:55 a.m. The next meeting on March 17 will be an Executive Board meeting.

*The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC’s YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01v4cf6204s>*