

# NIRPC Full Commission Meeting

Electronic Meeting via Zoom

November 18, 2021 Minutes

## Call to Order

Chairman, George Topoll, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

This meeting was convened as an *electronic meeting*, in accordance with House Enrolled Act (HEA) 1437 as incorporated into Governor Holcomb's Executive Order 21-13. 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 provided for public comment, this was supported as well.

## New Appointments to the Commission

Dave Hollenbeck announced there were no new appointments to the Commission.

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

## Present

The 28 Commissioners present at the meeting included Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Jeanette Bapst (Dune Acres), Janet Beck (Pottawattomie Park), Geof Benson (Beverly Shores), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Charlie Brown (Lake County Council), Tom Dermody (LaPorte), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Robert Forster (Kouts), Michael Griffin (Highland), Richard Hardaway (Merrillville), Eric Hull (Burns Harbor), Justin Kiel (La Crosse), Andrew Kyres (Crown Point), Robert Lemay (Long Beach), Lori Mercer (Westville), Wendy Mis (Munster), Duane Parry (Michigan City), David Peeler (Hebron), Jerome Prince (Gary), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Brian Snedecor (Hobart), Greg Stinson (Porter), Mary Tanis (Dyer), James Ton (Chesterton), and George Topoll (Union Township).

The 22 Commissioners absent included Kyle Allen (Lake County Commissioner), Jim Biggs (Porter County Commissioner), Robert Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Bill Carroll (Lake Station), Anthony Copeland (East Chicago), Joshleen Denham (Trail Creek), Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Tony Hendricks (LaPorte County Surveyor), Jack Jeralds (Schneider), Sue Lynch (Portage), Sheila Matias (LaPorte County Commissioner), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Mike Mollenhauer (LaPorte County Council), Edward Morales (Porter Township), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), Bob Poparad (Porter County Council), Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Steve Spebar (Whiting), Gerald Swets (St. John), Sharon Szwedo (New Chicago), and John Yelkich (Lowell).

Kingsbury, Ogden Dunes, and The Pines have appointed no representatives to NIRPC.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Kathy Luther, Talaya Jones, Meredith Stilwell, Flor Baum, Lisa Todd, Scott Weber, Charles Bradsky, Denarie Kane, Matthew Paskash, Kevin Polette, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

## Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the September 16, 2021 Executive Board meeting were approved on motion by Greg Stinson and seconded by Kevin Breitzke. With Duane Arndt, Jeanette Bapst, Janet Beck, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Charlie Brown, Tom Dermody, Jon Derwinski, Daina Dumbrys, Denise Ebert, Robert Forster, Michael Griffin, Richard Hardaway, Eric Hull, Justin Kiel, Andrew Kyres, Robert Lemay, Lori Mercer, Wendy Mis, Duane Parry, David Peeler, Jerome Prince, Tom Schmitt, Brian Snedecor, Greg Stinson, Mary Tanis, Jim Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.

**Public Comment** - There were no public comments.

## Report of the Chair – George Topoll

George Topoll stated the Finance and Personnel Committee will meet in December to continue discussions on NIRPC's budget for 2022.

## **Report of the Executive Director - Ty Warner**

Ty Warner thanked all the Commissioners who have joined the Zoom meetings since the Spring of 2020 and stated there's a good chance the next meeting in January will be in person.

NIRPC received notification from the US Department of Transportation that the Marquette Greenway project was awarded \$17.8 million from the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant. This grant will be applied to the funding needed to complete the Marquette Greenway trail connection between Chicago and New Buffalo, Michigan. Ty thanked Mitch Barloga for his ongoing efforts in this endeavor and to all of the Commissioners who helped bring this to a reality. Mitch added it is anticipated the project will be completed in five years. Mitch extended gratitude to Scott Weber for his efforts in creating the cost analysis report to submit with the application. To view the details of the RAISE grant application, click [here](#).

With NIRPC becoming an Economic Development District (EDD) in the Spring of 2019, it created prime opportunities for additional funding for the region. Under the American Rescue Plan Act, NIRPC has another funding opportunity through the EDA to apply for the Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant. This is a two-phase grant, with \$500,000 being awarded to those in the first phase and if successful, phase-two could provide up to \$100 million. Ty thanked Denarie Kane, Matthew Paskash, and Peter Kimball for creating and submitting this grant application. Those awarded will be announced in December and if NIRPC is a recipient of the grant, the funding will be used to activate the fiber core between the toll way and the South Shore right of way.

Ty reported on two other funding opportunities for the EDD.

- *Recover NWI* is the Revolving Loan Fund program that is a result of the funding received as an EDD. There is \$530,000 available for small loans, and the Commissioners were encouraged to share this information with small businesses that were affected by the pandemic. For additional information on the Recover NWI Loan Program, please click [here](#).
- NIRPC contracted with TIP Strategies, Inc. to assist in developing an economy recovery resiliency plan for Northwest Indiana. Ty noted a notification was sent out to the Commissioners to help NIRPC acquire data the contractors will need. Denarie Kane is collecting the information for the consultants.

Thomas Dow, NIRPC's Transportation Director, presented an initial projection of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) that was recently approved by congress and signed by President Biden.

- IIJA is a \$1.2 trillion Act and of that, \$550 billion is new spending and \$275 billion is for transportation. A significant increase in funding will create policy changes to each of the existing programs and several new programs will be created.
- It is anticipated there will be a 32% increase in funding from the FHWA and the FTA to support transportation planning.
- With the additional \$500,000 in federal funding, there will be an impact on NIRPC's budget, as \$501,125 in non-federal match will be needed yearly.
- On two different occasions, NIRPC has submitted a resolution to request the State Legislative to increase the \$0.70 per capita to the current value of \$1.00. There is currently not enough local match to access the full funds available to NIRPC and the assistance of the Commission will be needed to accomplish this. Discussions were had on the challenges of the TIP participation fee. Thomas will investigate how many MPO's are instituting a TIP participation fee.

## **Environmental Management Policy Committee (EMPC) – Kathy Luther**

Kathy Luther stated the EMPC did not meet this month.

## **NIRPC Full Commission / Executive Board meeting calendar for 2022.**

Ty informed the Commissioners of the change to the meeting calendar for 2022, stating there would not be a meeting in November next year, but rather the second Thursday in December, to allow the finance team sufficient time to prepare the 2023 budget.

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

Greg Stinson reported the F & P Committee met on three different occasions to discuss the 2022 budget, in addition to meeting this morning to approve the general fund and CARES Act fund claims registers for October. The F&P Committee brought the items below to the Full Commission for consideration and approval.

1. Lisa Todd presented on procurement recommendations 22-01.01, 22-01.02 and 22-01.03. These procurements include one vehicle replacement for Opportunity Enterprises for \$82,000, two replacement vehicles for Porter County Aging and Community Services (PCACS) for \$130,000, and two additional vehicles for PCACS for \$140,000.
2. Resolution #21-21: Authorizing the submittal of the Economic Development Administration FY 2022 Partnership Planning Grant Application to Administer the Economic Development District. Matthew Paskash presented and stated this resolution is a continuation of a past resolution authorizing NIRPC's Executive Director to seek a grant opportunity with the EDA to be applied to NIRPC's work efforts with the EDD. The planning partnership grant will be to match the \$70,000 from the EDA to be applied toward staffing, administrative costs, and anything related to the EDD. Ty Warner noted this will be a yearly occurrence for NIRPC's operating funds.
3. Geosyntec Consultant Contract – Kathy Luther presented on this contract and stated it was competitively procured. The purpose of the contract is to create technical guidelines for the new green infrastructure initiative that NIRPC added to Complete Streets in 2020. The amount of the contract is \$58,000 and will need to be completed by June 2022.
4. Cambridge Systematics Contract – Scott Weber presented this contract stating the total amount of the contract is \$149,862. This contract will improve NIRPC's travel demand model, which is used for all NIRPC's planning activities and will also assist communities with traffic forecasts.

Mr. Stinson reported the F&P committee will meet on December 16, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. to continue discussions on NIRPC's 2022 budget.

Commissioner Charlie Brown requested Resolution #21-22, Executive Director Employment Agreement Extension, be removed from the Consent Agenda and taken up as a separate matter. George Topoll approved this item to be taken as a separate vote after the consent agenda vote (see below).

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

Kevin Breitzke reported the TPC met on November 9, 2021. Thomas Dow presented an update on the next regional transportation planning process that will be brought before the Commission for approval at the May meeting in 2023. Applications for the Next Level Trails program funding opportunities are due to the DNR by December 1, 2021. The TPC recommended for consideration the adoption of Resolution #21-19. The next TPC meeting is scheduled for January 11, 2022.

Scott Weber presented on Resolution #21-19, Safety Performance Measure Targets for 2022. NIRPC was given 180 days to support INDOT's safety performance measure targets or set their own. NIRPC chose to support INDOT's statewide targets.

By virtue of the Full Commission of General Consent to allow all items to be Consent Agenda matters, George Topoll asked for a vote on the six matters below:

- Approval of NIRPC's Full Commission/Executive Board Meeting Calendar for 2022
- Approval of Procurement Recommendations 22-01.01, 22-01.02 and 22-01.03
- Approval of Resolution #21-21, Authorizing the submittal of the Economic Development Administration FY 2022 Partnership Planning Grant Application to Administer the Economic Development District
- Approval of Geosyntec Consultants Inc. Contract for Technical Green Infrastructure Guidelines for Transportation Projects
- Approval of Cambridge Systematics, Inc. Contract for Travel Demand Model Project
- Approval of Resolution #21-19, Safety Performance Measure Targets for 2022

Hearing no objections, a motion was received by Geof Benson and seconded by Jim Ton to adopt the matters of the consent agenda, with the exclusion of item 8.2.4, which will require a separate vote. Roll call was taken by Candice Eklund for these six matters. With Duane Arndt, Jeanette Bapst, Janet Beck, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Charlie Brown, Tom Dermody, Jon Derwinski, Daina Dumbrys, Denise Ebert, Robert Forster, Michael Griffin, Richard Hardaway, Eric Hull, Justin Kiel, Andrew Kyles, Robert Lemay, Lori Mercer, Wendy Mis, Duane Parry, David Peeler, Tom Schmitt, Brian Snedecor, Greg Stinson, Mary Tanis, Jim Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.

Resolution #21-22: Executive Director Employment Agreement Extension. Dave Hollenbeck stated Ty Warner's current three-year employment agreement will expire on December 31, 2021. George Topoll, Justin Kiel, and Mr. Hollenbeck met to evaluate Mr. Warner's performance so a recommendation could be made to the F&P Committee and to the Full Commission regarding continued employment. More information is required on the income that NIRPC receives before recommending compensation of a contract renewal agreement. It was agreed the best approach would be to extend the Executive Director's employment current contract with NIRPC until 2022, when the budget has been finalized and the income and expenditures have been approved. Hearing no objections, a motion was received by Jim Ton and seconded by Charlie Brown to adopt the Executive Director Employment Agreement Extension. With Duane Arndt, Jeanette Bapst, Janet Beck, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Charlie Brown, Tom Dermody, Jon Derwinski, Daina Dumbrys, Denise Ebert, Robert Forster, Michael Griffin, Richard Hardaway, Eric Hull, Justin Kiel, Andrew Kyres, Robert Lemay, Lori Mercer, Wendy Mis, Duane Parry, David Peeler, Tom Schmitt, Brian Snedecor, Greg Stinson, Mary Tanis, Jim Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.

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

Denarie Kane stated the EDA is promoting their Revolving Loan Fund Week and NIRPC staff has been sending out various social media blasts to also help make the public aware of the loan program. NIRPC has been working with communities to provide compliance and support letters for grant applications to the EDA. For assistance on project ideas and to facilitate conversations to James Winters with the EDA, please contact Denarie Kane at [dkane@nirpc.org](mailto:dkane@nirpc.org). NIRPC is formulating the Steering Committee that is needed for the Economic Development Resiliency Plan. There are 17 who will serve on this committee; their first meeting is scheduled early December.

#### **INDOT - Matt Deitchley**

Matt Deitchley discussed the FlexRoad project, Indiana's PEL study for the Borman Expressway congestion issues. The consultant has provided four alternative packages to relieve the congestion, and INDOT will select a plan by the first quarter in 2022. For additional information on this initiative, click [here](#).

INDOT is in the process of hiring winter drivers. For new features on how snow plows will be tracked, visit <https://511in.org/@-88.5498,40.53398,6?show=roadReports,weatherWarningsAreaEvents,flooding>.

The Community Crossings program announced in January that \$100 million was awarded statewide.

#### **Other Business**

Mary Tanis requested a crosswalk across Route 30 to connect Schererville and Munster and would also like assistance with a pedestrian bike crossing around Kahler Middle School on Route 30. Mary Tanis also requested extending Calumet Avenue to four lanes, South of Route 30 to 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue, to provide a four-lane crosswalk.

#### **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

Hearing no other business, George Topoll adjourned the meeting at 10:29 a.m.

*The livestream video recording of this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWQAh6wRO6k>*