

# NIRPC Executive Board Meeting

6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN

December 8, 2022 Minutes

## **Call to Order**

Awaiting arrival of additional Commissioners, Chairman Justin Kiel called the meeting to order at 9:13 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was streamed live on YouTube.

## **New Appointments to the Commission**

Executive Director Warner announced the appointment to the Commission of Thomas Black (Town of Highland). Warner also recognized Barb Regnitz who will be the representative from the Porter County Commission next year, and Trent McCain from the City of Gary attending on behalf of Mayor Jerome Prince.

**Roll call** - Taken by Candice Eklund. Though the meeting was intended as a Full Commission meeting, attendance was one Commissioner short of a quorum. A quorum of the Executive Board was present, and the meeting reverted to a meeting of the Executive Board. Only one action out of the three actions on the agenda today could be taken up by the Executive Board.

## **Present**

The 8 Executive Board members present at the meeting included Tom Dermody (LaPorte), Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Richard Hardaway (Merrillville), Justin Kiel (La Crosse), Sue Lynch (Portage), Lori Mercer (Westville), Wendy Mis (Munster), and Jim Ton (Chesterton).

The 18 Commissioners present at the meeting included Jeannette Bapst (Dune Acres), Janet Beck (Pottawattomie Park), Geof Benson (Beverly Shores), Thomas Black (Highland), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Robert Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Don Craft (Porter), Joshleen Denham (Trail Creek), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Robert Forster (Kouts), Jack Jeralds (Schneider), Andrew Kyres (Crown Point), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Sharon Szvedo (New Chicago), Mary Tanis (Dyer), and George Topoll (Union Township). Also present was Matt Deitchley representing INDOT.

## **Absent**

The 2 Executive Board members absent from the meeting included Sheila Matias (LaPorte County Commissioner) and Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee).

The 23 Commissioners absent included Kyle Allen (Lake County Commissioner), Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Jim Biggs (Porter County Commissioner), Charlie Brown (Lake County Council), Bill Carroll (Lake Station), Anthony Copeland (East Chicago), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), Tony Hendricks (LaPorte County), Mike Jessen (Porter County Council), Scott Kingan (Ogden Dunes), Robert Lemay (Long Beach), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Mike Mollenhauer (LaPorte County Council), Edward Morales (Porter Township), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), Duane Parry (Michigan City), David Peeler (Hebron), Jerome Prince (Gary), Angie Scott (Burns Harbor), Brian Snedecor (Hobart), Gerald Swets (St. John), Steve Spebar (Whiting), and John Yelkich (Lowell).

Kingsbury and The Pines have appointed no representatives to NIRPC.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Kathy Luther, Talaya Jones, Scott Weber, Charles Bradsky, Denarie Kane, Kevin Polette, and Candice Eklund.

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

## **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the October 20, 2022, Executive Board meeting were approved on motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Richard Hardaway.

### **Report of the Chair – Justin Kiel**

Justin Kiel discussed the meeting calendar for 2023 that was included in the meeting materials. Ty Warner added Commission meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month, except for December when they are held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday. The dates in bold font represent a Full Commission meeting, but all Commissioners are always welcome and encouraged to attend all meetings. By NIRPC's State Statute, there are four items that can only be voted on by the Full Commission: Slate of Officers, NIRPC's budget, Executive Director's contract and changes to NIRPC's by-laws.

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

Mr. Warner discussed the [Indiana Broadband - NEW FCC MAP](#) handout from Indiana's Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA). There is a broader focus on infrastructure in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed by Congress that includes resources for greater broadband deployment. The map will dictate what level of broadband funding will be available to Indiana, so it is very important the map accurately reflect the connectivity available in each community to meet their actual need for internet Connectivity. OCRA is strongly encouraging residents to verify the availability of broadband shown at the locations on the map. Challenges to the map may be made until January 13, 2023. The New FCC Map handout will be posted on NIRPC's website and emailed to the Commissioners after the meeting.

### **Environmental Management Policy Committee (EMPC) – Bill Emerson**

Bill Emerson stated Kathy Luther delivered a presentation on Land Emissions and Removal Navigators program at the meeting held on November 2, 2022. This program allows communities and any land area to see how topography and wetlands have changed, and how it impacts the emissions removal of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in those areas. Also during that meeting, Jen Birchfield presented on the Natural Hazards Resiliency Needs Assessment, which is a program that collects an analysis and inventory of how ready and resilient communities are for various emergencies. EMPC also approved the scoring of environmental and air quality applications that were submitted for the NOFA. The next meeting is scheduled on January 5, 2023.

### **Finance & Personnel Committee (F & P) – Thomas Dermody**

The two agenda items to be presented by the F&P Committee; Resolution #22-23, NIRPC's 2023 Budget and the addendum to the 2023 Executive Director's Employment Agreement Contract, could not be voted on today since a quorum of the Full Commission was not met. These two items will be added to the agenda for the January 19, 2023, Full Commission meeting.

Thomas Dermody stated the F&P Committee passed Juneteenth as a federal holiday for NIRPC staff, which will also be updated in their handbook.

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

Kevin Breitzke reported the TPC met on November 15, 2022. The TPC brought the one action item below for consideration and approval. NIRPC staff also provided information on an emergency transit amendment. The next TPC meeting is scheduled for January 10, 2023.

1. Resolution #22-22, Adoption of Updated Transportation Performance Measure Targets: Scott Weber stated this resolution comes with a favorable recommendation from the Surface Transportation Committee (STC) and TPC. These targets are federally required to be included in NIRPC's core planning documents; *NWI 2050* and the 2022-2026 TIP. NIRPC staff consulted with INDOT staff to update the proposed targets. On motion by Thomas Dermody and seconded by Sue Lynch, the Executive Board approved Resolution #22-22.
2. Charles Bradsky provided information on Emergency Transit Amendment #22-07.5 to the 2022-2026 TIP. On November 28, 2022, NIRPC Executive Director Ty Warner approved an emergency amendment to the TIP. Per NIRPC's adopted policies, an emergency amendment may be made when life-safety issues are involved and when there is risk of a lapse of funding. NICTD installed a crossing at their Ogden Dunes train station for modernization, which involves pedestrians and motor vehicles at the crossing for this safety project. The funds on this project are railroad safety funds and are INDOT controlled funds. For NICTD to access these funds, they are required to be in NIRPC's TIP.

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

Denarie Kane reported on the final *Economic Recovery and Resilience Plan* document. The document was distributed at the meeting and a link to the document was included on the agenda in the meeting packet. Denarie encouraged the Commissioners contact her with questions about the Plan. TIP Strategies, the consultants of this project, created this plan using a 3-step planning process of data gathering, transforming the data into a strategic recommendation, and developing an action plan. A summary of the plan acknowledges slow population growth since 1990 and low education levels, which translates to lower median household incomes and reveals employment gains have not kept pace with population growth since 2001. The occupational risk tool, which are jobs likely to be affected by public health and economic crises, shows NIRPC's region has 44.4% of workers that are in the high risk to earnings and personal health quadrant, while 74.1% are earning low wages. In conclusion, there is an urgent need for a more diversified economy plus re-skilling and up-skilling so there are more jobs choices for workers. An employer's survey was conducted as part of the plan's development. There were 101 responses to the survey, which showed the most important concern was attracting and educating a skilled work force. On motion by Richard Hardaway and seconded by Jim Ton, the Commission accepted the Economic recovery and Resiliency Plan.

### **INDOT - Matt Deitchley**

Matt Deitchley, La Porte District Deputy Commissioner, said INDOT announced there was a distribution of \$120 million in Community Crossings awarded this week. The next call for projects will go live from January 2 through January 27, 2023.

The construction work on I-94 and U.S. 65 has been completed for the year, but there will be additional work scheduled for next year. INDOT held a public hearing for the PEL study on U.S. 30 last week, with 100 people attending. Contact Matt with questions.

### **Other Business**

No other business was reported.

### **Announcements**

Bob Carnahan announced the Cedar Lake Chamber of Commerce put up 150 decorated Christmas trees for their festive week.

Mary Tanis informed the commissioners that the Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (AIM) organization produced a video on the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) cities district and is available on a thumb drive through the Redevelopment Association of Indiana. Mary also stated something needs to be done regarding the Westlake Corridor project in Dyer on account of all the people moving in from Illinois, saying a traffic pattern will need to be setup.

Justin Kiel announced that because the attendance was one Commissioner short of obtaining a quorum of the Full Commission, the two items noted under the F&P section above will need to be carried over into the January meeting for a vote.

Warner thanked the Commissioners who took the time and effort to attend today's meeting. Because the scheduled Full Commission meeting was one Commissioner short of a quorum, NIRPC will be entering 2023 without a budget. There were 30 Commissioners who had responded they would attend the meeting today, but only 26 were present. Warner wished everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

### **Adjournment**

Hearing no other business, Justin Kiel adjourned the meeting at 9:52 a.m. The next meeting on January 19, 2023, will be a Full Commission meeting and attendance is needed from all NRPC Commissioners

*The livestream video recording of this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at [Commission Meeting 12-8-22 - YouTube](#)*