

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting

6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN

March 16, 2023 Minutes

Call to Order

Chairman Richard Hardaway called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was streamed live on YouTube.

New Appointments to the Commission

Dave Hollenbeck announced the appointments to the Commission of Tim Clayton (Winfield), Randall Niemeyer (Lake County Council), and Lisa Rosenkranz (LaCrosse).

Roll call - Taken by Candice Eklund.

Present

The 10 Executive Board members present at the meeting included Kyle Allen (Lake County Commissioner), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Tom Dermody (La Porte), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Richard Hardaway (Merrillville), Justin Kiel (LaPorte County Council), Sue Lynch (Portage), Wendy Mis (Munster), and Jim Ton (Chesterton).

The 14 other Commissioners present at the meeting included Robert Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Don Craft (Porter), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Ellen Hundt (Beverly Shores), Jane Jordan (Burns Harbor), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), Randall Niemeyer (Lake County Council), Lisa Rosenkranz (LaCrosse), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Brian Snedecor (Hobart), Steve Spebar (Whiting), Red Stone (Porter County Council), Mary Tanis (Dyer), and George Topoll (Union Township).

Absent

Executive Board member, Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee) was not in attendance.

Kingsbury and The Pines have appointed no representatives to NIRPC.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Lisa Todd, Scott Weber, Kevin Polette, Charles Bradsky, Flor Baum, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

Public Comment – David Wright announced that Denise Dillard has been appointed the interim General Manager at Gary Public Transit Corporation (GPTC) since December and is helping to accelerate some of their ambitious plans.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March 16, 2023 Executive Board meeting minutes were approved on motion by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by Sue Lynch.

Report of the Chair – Richard Hardaway

Richard Hardaway reported he would Chair the meeting until 9:45, at which time Tom Dermody Chaired the remainder of the meeting.

Report of the Executive Director - Ty Warner

As a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), NIRPC is responsible for the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Metropolitan Transportation Plan (*NWI 2050*), and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Staff have been very busy working on these three major federal projects as they are all due around the same time this year.

Mr. Warner attended the 2023 Purdue Road School this week and one of the takeaways he shared was regarding the solar eclipse in 2017. The Department of Homeland Security presented on how they are already preparing for the next solar eclipse on April 8, 2024, which will be going through Bloomington and Indianapolis.

They recounted the lessons learned from 2017, and encouraged all Indiana to be prepared for an influx of tourists and observers. The next solar eclipse will be in 2044.

Environmental Management Policy Committee (EMPC) – Bill Emerson

Bill Emerson reported the EMPC met on February 2, 2023 where the committee reviewed the air quality environmental projects that were recommended to the TPC. Jen Birchfield, NIRPC, is leading an effort to capture the Natural Hazards Resiliency Needs Assessments for emergency response and environmental concerns. The next EMPC meeting is scheduled for May 4 at 9:00 a.m.

Finance & Personnel Committee (F&P) – Wendy Mis

Wendy Mis reported the F&P Committee met this morning to review the financial reports and bank reconciliations for January 2023 and the claims registers for January and February 2023. The F&P Committee brought the action item below to the Executive Board with a favorable recommendation.

Lisa Todd presented on the Procurements below. On motion by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by Jim Ton, the Executive Board approved the six procurements.

- 23-07.01: Two replacement vehicles for Porter County Aging Community Services. Not to exceed \$163,485.
- 23-07.02: One replacement motorcoach vehicle for City of Valparaiso-ChicaGo Dash. Not to exceed \$548,179.
- 23-07.03: One 35-foot vehicle for East Chicago Transit. Not to exceed \$457,992.
- 23-07.04: Three replacement vehicles for Opportunity Enterprises. Not to exceed \$308,160.
- 23-07.05: Seven replacement vehicles for Lake County Community Services. Not to exceed \$423,360.
- 22-15: One replacement motorcoach vehicle for the City of Valparaiso-ChicaGo Dash. Not to exceed \$628,000.

Technical Planning Committee (TPC) – Kevin Breitzke

Kevin Breitzke reported the TPC met on February 28, 2023. The TPC favorably recommended the two action items below to the Executive Board for consideration and approval. The next TPC meeting is scheduled for April 11, 2023, at 10:00 a.m.

- Resolution #23-04: Scott Weber presented, stating this resolution was created as verification that NIRPC will update the Transportation Air Quality Conformity Protocol and Interagency Consultation procedures. These procedures are required because the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated Lake and Porter Counties as non-attainment for ozone. The protocol document goes before the board (comprised of NIRPC, INDOT, IDEM, FHWA, FTA, and U.S. EPA) of each MPO in Indiana for approval. These documents were last approved in 2007. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Tom Dermody, the Executive Board approved Resolution #23-04.
- Metropolitan Planning Agreement (MPA) with Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT): Kevin Polette presented, stating this agreement was written by INDOT, and reviewed by NIRPC, GPTC and NICTD. At the TPC meeting on February 28, GPTC requested a modification to better describe GPTC's service to the surrounding area. NICTD did not submit comments or changes. On motion by Kyle Allen and seconded by Sue Lynch, the Executive Board approved the MPA agreement.
- Charles Bradsky presented on the draft 2024-2028 TIP: NIRPC receives federal funding for infrastructure and transit projects for Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties. Due to the cost of inflation, many communities have been requesting additional funding for their projects currently in the TIP. It was proposed and accepted at TROC last fall to fully fund the projects currently programmed by moving select projects out one fiscal year to balance the budget. This proposal would cause a trickle-down effect and left only \$5.6 million in available funding in 2027 (out of \$26 million). 2028 was still left fully available. Charles discussed the different funding categories and the various types of projects that were awarded to the communities.

Mayor Snedecor thanked Charles and staff for the wonderful job they do when communicating with the many Local Public Agency's (LPA's) and trying to get full funding for some of the communities. He also expressed concern noting some communities scored high on their Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)

application, was not awarded funding. It was felt there has been a good faith effort in trying to score projects as fair as possible, but stated more work has to be done on targeting what various funds should be prioritized, evaluated, and allocated. Kevin Breitzke agreed and added that the LPA's and Mayors need to be present at the NIRPC meetings to provide their input at NIRPC's NOFA discussion meetings. Brietzke added the TPC meetings are well attended but the other topical committee meetings, which also have an impact on this evaluation, also need active participation. Jim Ton asked that the record reflect that the Commission supports the observation of Mayor Snedecor of Hobart and shares his concerns in the process, and that the process go through some readjustments. Charles responded that the next NOFA would be reworked and asked all communities to participate in the rework. This rework will start later this year or early next year. The next NOFA will take place in the fall of 2024 for the 2026-2030 TIP.

Other Business

Bob Carnahan shared the Cedar Lake Planning Committee requested to know how many municipalities permit chickens in their communities. The communities of Valparaiso, Lowell, and Chesterton currently permit chickens and Mayor Lynch stated Portage is going through the process now.

Announcements

Mary Tanis said the Town of Dyer appreciates the support they receive, but feels that as being the border community, they are the welcome mat to Indiana and to please not forget about them. INDOT reduced the lanes on Route 30 to one lane in Dyer, which is out of the town's control, and they need help. With NICTD's Double Track project going through Dyer in a couple of years, they want it to be a great place for all and feels that can be done with continued support.

Bob Carnahan relayed announcements of various events in Cedar Lake.

Adjournment

Hearing no other business, Tom Dermody adjourned the meeting at 10:06 a.m. The next meeting on April 20 will be a Full Commission meeting.

The livestream video recording of this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4uzvN2dIPQ>