

# NIRPC Executive Board Meeting

6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN

March 17, 2022 Minutes

## **Call to Order**

Chairman, Justin Kiel, called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was streamed live on YouTube.

## **New Appointments to the Commission**

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

**Roll call was** taken by Candice Eklund.

## **Present**

The 6 Executive Board members present at the meeting included Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Richard Hardaway (Merrillville), Justin Kiel (La Crosse), Sue Lynch (Portage), Greg Stinson (Porter), and Jim Ton (Chesterton).

The 7 other Commissioners present included George Topoll (Union Township), Geof Benson (Beverly Shores), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Robert Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Jack Jeralds (Schneider), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), and Brian Snedecor (Hobart).

## **Absent**

The 5 Executive Board Members absent at the meeting included Tom Dermody (La Porte), Sheila Matias (La Porte County Commissioner), Lori Mercer (Westville), Wendy Mis (Munster), and Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee).

The 32 other Commissioners not present for the Executive Board meeting included Kyle Allen (Lake County Commissioner), Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Jeannette Bapst (Dune Acres), Janet Beck (Pottawattomie Park), Jim Biggs (Porter County Commissioner), Charlie Brown (Lake County Council), Bill Carroll (Lake Station), Anthony Copeland (East Chicago), Joshleen Denham (Trail Creek), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Robert Forster (Kouts), Tony Hendricks (La Porte County Surveyor), Mike Jessen (Porter County Council), Scott Kingan (Ogden Dunes), Andrew Kyres (Crown Point), Robert LeMay (Long Beach), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Mike Mollenhauer (La Porte County Council), Edward Morales (Porter Township), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), Duane Parry (Michigan City), David Peeler (Hebron), Jerome Prince (Gary), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Angie Scott (Burns Harbor), Steve Spebar (Whiting), Gerald Swets (St. John), Sharon Szwedo (New Chicago), Mary Tanis (Dyer), and John Yelkich (Lowell).

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

Staff present included Ty Warner, Thomas Dow, Kathy Luther, Jenn Birchfield, Scott Weber, Charles Bradsky, Denarie Kane, Kevin Polette, Mitch Barloga, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

## **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the January 20, 2022 Full Commission meeting were approved on motion by Richard Hardaway and seconded by Jim Ton.

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

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

Justin Kiel stated a commissioner contact list will be sent out to the Commissioners soon. This will help facilitate Justin's goal of making it easier to network and keep in touch with colleagues. An updated listing of the committee appointments will also be sent out.

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

Ty Warner welcomed the Commissioners to the first fully in-person meeting in two years. Ty also thanked Michael Griffin, now Senator Griffin, for purchasing and donating a gavel to replace the previous one that was missing.

Mr. Warner discussed some highlights and current events that have happened at NIRPC over the last two years.

- Jenn Birchfield was hired as NIRPC's new Natural Resources Planner this year.
- Thomas Dow, NIRPC's Director of Transportation, was hired in 2021.
- Transportation and Economic Development update – The first of four contracts for the Active Transportation Element of the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) was approved at the Full Commission meeting in January. The remaining three contracts are on today's agenda for a vote.
- Discussed the *Recover NWI* flyer for the Revolving Loan Fund. The funding for this program is from the CARES Act fund for Lake, La Porte, and Porter counties. NIRPC received this funding from the Economic Development Administration for small business loans to help in pandemic recovery. To help in extending these funds, Commissioners were encouraged to post the flyer at their Town Hall.
- TIP Strategies, the contractor creating NIRPC's Economic Resiliency Plan, will present at the Full Commission meeting on April 21, 2022. The purpose of the plan is to setup Northwest Indiana to be better equipped in the event of a future crisis.

Thomas Dow introduced Marty Schukert, Principal with RDG Planning & Design, who will be updating the Active Transportation element of the 2050 MTP and who has experience with transportation plans throughout the Midwest. Mr. Schukert discussed transportation having an enormous role in uniting the region in their diverse environments.

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

Bill Emerson discussed the EMPC meeting held on February 2, stating a workshop was held to discuss Green Infrastructure. Round table discussions were also held to discuss content for future meetings. Bill noted that every community for which it applies should be updating their MS4 permits due to the permits being updated statewide. The CommuniTree program had 12 applications for 500 new trees.

#### **Finance & Personnel Committee (F & P) – Richard Hardaway**

Richard Hardaway presented in the absence of Treasurer, Thomas Dermody, who was not present for the F&P meeting earlier that morning. The F & P Committee reviewed the financial statements and claims registers for January 2022, and the bank reconciliations for December 2021 and January 2022. The F&P Committee brought the four action items below to the Executive Board for consideration and approval.

1. Thomas Dow presented on the RDG Planning & Design Contract for the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) – Land Use Element. The contract is not to exceed \$99,170 and the services must be completed by May 1, 2023. On motion by Greg Stinson and seconded by Sue Lynch, the Executive Board approved the RDG Planning & Design contract.
2. Thomas Dow presented on the CPCS Team Contract for the 2050 MTP – Freight Element. The contract is not to exceed \$99,962 and the services must be completed by May 1, 2023. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Sue Lynch, the Executive Board approved the CPCS Team Contract.
3. Thomas Dow presented on the TranSystems Contract for the 2050 MTP – Public Transit Element. The contract is not to exceed \$99,320 and the services must be completed by May 1, 2023. On motion by Bill Emerson and seconded by Richard Hardaway, the Executive Board approved the TranSystems contract.
4. Denarie Kane presented the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Porter County Redevelopment Commission (PCRC) regarding *Recover NWI*. The MOU provides \$10,000 from PCRDC that can be used to pay for the \$1,000 loan application and closing fees for up to ten businesses who want to apply for a *Recover NWI* loan. The targeted geographic area is unincorporated South Haven in Porter County and is being funded to offset a financial burden for potential loan applicants and increase interest in the program. The PCRC is also willing to expand the area eligible for an application fee grant to other unincorporated areas of Porter County after 30 days if there is no or little interest in the initially targeted area. Ms. Kane will hand deliver the flyer to businesses tomorrow. On motion by Richard Hardaway and seconded by Greg Stinson, the Executive Board approved the MOU with the Porter County Redevelopment Commission.

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

Kevin Breitzke reported the TPC met on March 1, 2022 and discussed the RDG Active Transportation portion of the 2050 MTP. The next TPC meeting will be held on April 5 at 10:00 a.m. at the NIRPC office. The TPC brought the three action items below to the Executive Board for consideration and approval.

1. Resolution #22-08: Roadway Functional Classification Changes. Scott Weber stated this resolution was seeking to make two roadway functional classification changes. The first classification change would be in

St. John at a planned extension of Cline Avenue between 93<sup>rd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Avenues and the second change would be at CR 250 W in Porter County bordering between SR 130 and US 30. Both are seeking to classify the roadways as a minor arterials. On motion by Greg Stinson and seconded by Sue Lynch, the Executive Board approved Resolution #22-08.

2. Resolution #22-09: FY 2020-2024 TIP Amendment #20-22.01 & #20-22.02. Charles Bradsky stated these amendments were approved by the Commission in 2021, but the original resolution reflected the 2022-2026 TIP, which had not been approved and is still pending approval by INDOT and FHWA. To show transparency, NIRPC made the decision to correct the error by creating a new resolution for approval. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Richard Hardaway, the Executive Board approved Resolution #22-09.
3. Resolution #22-10: FY 2020-2024 & FY 2022-2026 TIP Amendment #4. Charles Bradsky stated the public comment period was held between February 8 to March 1, with no public comments received. One comment was received from the Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) regarding construction dates of a project in the TIP. The explanation Charles provided was accepted and approved by the ICG on February 15, 2022. Charles provided a brief summary of Amendment #4. On motion by Sue Lynch and seconded by Greg Stinson, the Executive Board approved Resolution #22-10.

#### **INDOT – Matt Deitchley**

Matt Deitchley informed the Commissioners that INDOT will have record setting construction seasons from 2021 to 2023. There will be lane closures at night on I-94 at the Cline Avenue exits in April. There will be a concrete pavement restoration project at US 30 and Route 53, resulting in lane closures for two weeks. Updates will be available on Twitter and the Northwest Facebook page. A public hearing was held in St. John to discuss the roundabout at US 231 and Cline Ave and was met with some opposition from the public. A final decision will be made after reviewing the public comments.

For updates on the Flex Road project on the Borman Expressway, go to [www.indianaflexroad.com](http://www.indianaflexroad.com)  
For INDOT live traffic coverage, go to <https://511in.org/list/cameras>

#### **Other Business**

There were no other business discussions.

#### **Announcements**

Bob Carnahan announced that the Cedar Lake Planning Commission approved Taco Bell and Domino's Pizza to come into their town. A concept plan for the east side of Cedar Lake has 519 houses. The Crown Point School system will invest \$23 million in development at the Douglas MacArthur Elementary School, where the children from these homes will attend.

Hearing no other business, Justin Kiel adjourned the meeting at 9:47 a.m. The next meeting on April 21 will be a Full Commission meeting.

*The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiYDZTmn3Dg>*