

Minutes of the April 19, 2012, NIRPC Full Commission Meeting
(As Amended)

Chairman Geof Benson called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Self-introductions were made.

Commissioners present were: Nancy Adams, George Adey, Roosevelt Allen, John Bayler, Geof Benson, Matt Bernacchi, Kevin Breitzke, Bob Carnahan, Tom Clouser, Anthony Copeland, Stan Dobosz, Don Ensign, Jeff Freeze, Ken Layton, Richard Ludlow, Tom McDermott, Edward Morales, Diane Noll, Brian Novak, Anthony Pampalone, Donald Parker, Jim Polarek, Bob Schaefer, David Shafer, Brian Snedecor, Greg Stinson, John Sullivan, Jim Ton, David Uran, and George Van Til. Staff present included John Swanson, David Hollenbeck, Kathy Luther, Kevin Garcia, Jody Melton, Stephen Sostaric, Steve Strains, Bob Niezgodski, Allen Hammond, Kelly Wenger, Mitch Barloga, Gabrielle Biciunas, Bill Brown, and Kathy Dubie.

Chairman Benson explained that NIRPC recently created the Norman E. Tufford Award to recognize commissioners and staff of the agency who demonstrated outstanding leadership and service to NIRPC and the region. The first award was presented posthumously in January to Norman E. Tufford. Chairman Benson announced that the award was being presented today to former Michigan City Mayor and Commissioner, Charles Oberlie, for his substantial commitment of time and leadership skills during his eight-year term on the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission. Chairman Benson then announced that Stan Dobosz has resigned from the Northwest Indiana Economic Development District and Karen Freeman-Wilson, Mayor of Gary, has been appointed to fill the vacancy.

David Capp, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana, spoke on crime. It is a regional problem and does not stop at individual municipal boundaries. He stressed that law enforcement information must be shared between individual communities. He provided an overview of his office's role, including law enforcement training and coordination. A question & answer session followed.

On a motion by Kevin Breitzke, second by Dave Shafer, the minutes of the March meeting were approved.

On a motion by Tom McDermott, second by Dave Uran, the consent agenda was approved.

Finance and Personnel Committee: Chairman Brian Snedecor said the State Board of Accounts is conducting its yearly audit. Also, the Employee Handbook is being updated.

Environmental Management Policy Committee: Kevin Breitzke reported on current activity. He asked Kevin Garcia to discuss the Northwest Indiana Local Food Study. Mr. Garcia thanked those involved with its creation. On a motion by Jim Ton, second by Ken Layton, the study was approved.

Transportation Policy Committee: Chairman Stan Dobosz asked Bill Brown to explain Resolution 12-09, which would add a bridge inspection project for La Porte County and the right of way phase for the Singing Sands Trail in Michigan City to the 2012-15 Transportation Improvement Program. On a motion by Stan Dobosz, second by Jim Ton, the resolution was adopted.

2040 Pathways Committee: Chairman Nancy Adams reported that the committee met yesterday. She asked that all commissioners complete the questionnaire. She added that the brochure given out shows NIRPC's recommendations to all communities. The committee will meet again on July 12.

Legislative Committee: Chairman David Shafer provided a brief update on pending federal legislation.

INDOT: Bob Alderman gave an overview of his professional history. In response to questions from Tom McDermott regarding the Cline Avenue situation, Mr. Alderman said he will try to get the latest update. Mayor McDermott added that the situation would have been handled differently if we were in a different area of the state.

Angie Fegaras added that, for the third time, INDOT will attempt to obtain bids for the work needed at highways 12/20 in Gary.

Presentation on Illiana Expressway: Representatives from IDOT and INDOT, as well as their consultant, provided a history of the project, which started in June, 2010. Q & A followed. Bill Brown added that NIRPC has four steps regarding the route chosen for the Illiana. The congestion management process, Environmental Justice, Financial Constraints, and air quality conformity must be considered.

David Hollenbeck reviewed the Certificate of Appointment from the Town of Kingsbury. With all requirements met, Mark Ritter will serve as the representative from the Town of Kingsbury on the NIRPC board.

Northwest Indiana Economic Development District: Vice-Chairman Roosevelt Allen reported that they met on March 23 and issued a call for CEDS. Also, it was agreed that the District will provide a website in the near future.

Executive Director Search Committee: Chairman Ken Layton reported that the committee met on March 30. It was agreed that the process will be transparent. Minutes will be posted on NIRPC's website. Also, 14 responses were received to the RFQ for firms to conduct the search. The goal is to hire the new executive director at NIRPC's October commission meeting.

Public Comment: Gary resident, Jim Nowicki, thanked the commission for an interesting meeting and addressed the commission on matters of concern regarding Old Hobart Road.

Report of the Executive Director: John Swanson introduced Cal Bellamy, who provided an update on the Shared Ethics Advisory Commission. Its by-laws have been amended to allow for membership from Porter and La Porte Counties. Its purpose is to conduct ethics training. Anyone interested should contact Mr. Bellamy.

John Swanson introduced three former and current NIRPC interns.

On a motion by Tom McDermott, second by Stan Dobosz, the meeting was adjourned.