

NIRPC Full Commission Meeting

6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN

April 21, 2022 Minutes

Call to Order

Chairman, Justin Kiel, 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 there were no new appointments to the Commission.

Roll call taken by Candice Eklund.

Present

A total of 27 Commissioners present at the meeting included Kyle Allen (Lake County Commissioner), Jeannette Bapst (Dune Acres), Janet Beck (Pottawattomie Park), Jim Biggs (Porter County Commissioner), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Bob Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Bill Carroll (Laker Station), Joshleen Denham (Trail Creek), Tom Dermody (La Porte), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Robert Forster (Kouts), Richard Hardaway (Merrillville), Justin Kiel (La Crosse), Sue Lynch (Portage), Sheila Matias (LaPorte County Commissioner), Lori Mercer (Westville), Wendy Mis (Munster), Edward Morales (Porter Township), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Brian Snedecor (Hobart), Greg Stinson (Porter), Sharon Szwed (New Chicago), Mary Tanis (Dyer), Jim Ton (Chesterton), and George Topoll (Union Township). Also present was Matt Deitchley representing INDOT.

The 23 Commissioners absent at the meeting included Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Geof Benson (Beverly Shores), Charlie Brown (Lake County Council), Anthony Copeland (East Chicago), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), Tony Hendricks (LaPorte County Surveyor), Jack Jeralds (Schneider), Mike Jessen (Porter County Council), Scott Kingan (Ogden Dunes), Andrew Kyres (Crown Point), Robert LeMay (Long Beach), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Mike Mollenhauer (LaPorte County Council), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), Duane Parry (Michigan City), David Peeler (Hebron), Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee), Jerome Prince (Gary), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Angie Scott (Burns Harbor), Steve Spebar (Whiting), Gerald Swets (St. John), and John Yelkich (Lowell).

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

Staff present included Ty Warner, Thomas Dow, Kathy Luther, Meredith Stilwell, Kevin Polette, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March 17, 2022 Executive Board meeting were approved on motion by Sue Lynch and seconded by Richard Hardaway.

Report of the Chair – Justin Kiel

Justin Kiel informed the Commissioners that the updated committee assignments report was available in the lobby. The assignments are the same as 2021, with the exception of the newly appointed commissioners, who will absorb the assignments of their predecessor.

Report of the Executive Director – Ty Warner

Ty Warner stated that with the Economic Development District (EDD) designation prior to the pandemic, Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds are being used to create the Economic Development and Resiliency Plan for the region.

Jeff Marcell, Senior Partner and Luke Sheffield, Associate Consultant, with TIP Strategies, provided a status update on the progress that has been made on the plan and thanked NIRPC for being an exceptional partner. Actionable strategies are being developed to serve as a path for Northwestern Indiana's recovery and a guide to prepare for and sustain future high impact events. The number one opportunity facing NWI is attracting work. The next steps are to draft the plan, provide a final presentation, and hold an implementation workshop before completing the plan by July 2022. Ty thanked TIP Strategies for the updates and said not only will the plan offer

implementable steps to make the region more resilient but will offer a lot of collected data that can be used in everyone's own community.

Mr. Warner presented perfect attendance awards for the commissioners who attended all the Executive Board and Full Commission meetings in 2020 and 2021 and thanked them for their perseverance through the difficult years of the pandemic.

Environmental Management Policy Committee (EMPC) – Bill Emerson

At the March meeting, Bill Emerson reported that IDEM was updating the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) program throughout Indiana and added the official letters are now being received and need to be filed by July 5, 2022. Bill introduced Reggie Korthals, the Executive Director for the Indiana MS4 Partnership, to provide an overview of the new MS4 permit requirements. Reggie reported that permits now allow for regulatory agencies to go back and change the permits more often to meet their needs. To help aid in this process, a new permitter's workshop has been added to the MS4 Annual Meeting being held on May 10 in Indianapolis. The Northwest Indiana Stormwater Group (NISWAG) is also holding monthly meetings to discuss MS4 related topics. For additional information, contact Bill Emerson, Reggie Korthals, or Kathy Luther.

Kathy Luther presented Resolution #22-07, Regional Inventory of Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions. There were 13 cities and towns that participated in this initiative and the data collected will be used as a baseline against future climate emissions planning and reduction. A task force is being formed for climate action planning and the first meeting will be held virtually on May 5, 2022, from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Tom Dermody, the Full Commission approved Resolution #22-07.

Finance & Personnel Committee (F&P) – Tom Dermody

Tom Dermody reported the F&P Committee met this morning to review the financial reports, bank reconciliations, and claims registers for February and March 2022. The F&P committee favorably recommended to amend the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the NWI Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program. Ty Warner reported this MOU was previously approved with the Porter County Redevelopment Commission (PCRC) for the region wide RLF program. The PCRC recognized a potential barrier to applicants with the application fee and agreed to allocate \$10,000 to assist with fees and amend the original agreement to expand the opportunity throughout unincorporated Porter County. On motion by Bob Carnahan and seconded by Richard Hardaway, the Full Commission approved the MOU Amendment with the Porter County Redevelopment Commission.

Technical Planning Committee (TPC) - Kevin Breitzke

Kevin Breitzke reported the TPC met on April 5, 2022. An update was given on the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) where the areas of active transportation, land use, freight, and transit are being reviewed. The plan is scheduled to be approved May 2023. Kevin noted the Community Crossings grant was received by 17 communities in our area totaling over \$11 million. The TPC is bringing the two actions below to the Full Commission for consideration and approval. The next TPC meeting is scheduled for May 3, 2022, at 10:00 a.m.

1. Resolution #22-11: FY 2020-2024 & FY 2022-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) #20-22.45. Thomas Dow stated there were no public comments received during the 21-day public comment period or from the Interagency Consultation Group. This resolution is for an INDOT project for the construction phase of eight railroad crossings throughout the region, totaling \$4.9 million. On motion by Sheila Matias and seconded by Jim Ton, the Full Commission approved Resolution #22-11.
2. Resolution #22-12: 2021-2022 UPWP Amendment #5B – Thomas Dow stated the funds that remain on this Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) are from FY 2020 and need to be spent by June 30 this year. The funds will be spent on staff salaries and contracts. On motion by George Topoll and seconded By Bill Emerson, the Full Commission approved Resolution #22-12.

INDOT – Matt Deitchley

Matt Deitchley echoed the great news that INDOT awarded \$107.8 million in Community Crossings grants to a total of 224 communities across Indiana. The next Community Crossings call is July 2022. Matt shared there will be significant construction on I-94 and I-65 this year. There will be concrete patching from the Illinois state line to Cline Ave thru November, and concrete pavement restoration projects on U.S. 30 to just north of I-94.

Other Business

There were no other business discussions.

Announcements

Bob Carnahan reported the Lake County Solid Waste Management District is no longer accepting the larger tires for recycling. It was also reported that LaPorte County does accept the larger tires, but on an irregular schedule, and Porter County occasionally accepts them.

The three projects Mary Tanis discussed for Dyer were to extend St. John Road to the North by Elzinga Farm, Extend Calumet Avenue to the South into Dyer, and widen 77th Avenue due to new home construction.

Sheila Matias reported LaPorte County received \$7 million in funding from the Next Level Connection grant for rural broadband fiber installation.

In addition to the MS4 presentation, Bill Emerson noted that non-compliance to the MS4 clean water permits could jeopardize federal funding to those communities.

Justin Kiel welcomed Blair Milo to the Full Commission meeting and thanked her for attending. Blair Milo is running for Congress and is the former mayor of LaPorte and former Indiana Secretary of Career Connection and Talent.

Adjournment

Hearing no other business, Justin Kiel adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m. The next meeting on May 19 will be an Executive Board meeting.

The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWlaoMw7hVo>