

NIRPC Full Commission Meeting
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN
Minutes of the December 5, 2024 Full Commission Meeting

Call to Order

Chair Tom Dermody 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 re-appointment to the Commission of Mayor Eddie Melton (Gary).

Roll Call - Taken by Candice Eklund

Present

The 27 Commissioners present at the meeting included Jenny Beier (Schneider), Thomas Black (Highland), Austin Bonta (Portage), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), James Burge (Porter), Bob Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Tom Dermody (La Porte), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Keesha Hardaway (Merrillville), Bonnie Hawksworth (Dune Acres), Josh Huddlestun (Hobart), Lori Hunt (Westville), Scott Kingan (Ogden Dunes), Peter Land (Crown Point), Jack McGraw (Burns Harbor), Wendy Mis (Munster), Edward Morales (Porter Township), David Phelps (Beverly Shores), Linda Pompeii (Pottawattomie Park), Lisa Rosenkranz (LaCrosse), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Warren Schacht (Trail Creek), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Mary Tanis (Dyer), Jim Ton (Chesterton), George Topoll (Union Township), and John Yelkich (Lowell). As a note, there were 25 Commissioners present during the roll call; 27 Commissioners are needed to fulfill a quorum of the Full Commission. Two additional Commissioners arrived after the roll call was taken, allowing the 2025 calendar year budget and extending the employment agreement of the Executive Director also to be voted on for approval; both required a quorum of the Full Commission.

The 23 Commissioners absent included Kyle Allen (Lake County Commission), Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Bill Carroll (Lake Station), Tim Clayton (Winfield), Jon Costas (Valparaiso), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Connie Gramarossa (La Porte County Commission), Jonathan Haley (Long Beach), Tony Hendricks (La Porte County Surveyor), Vanessa Hernandez Orange (East Chicago), Justin Kiel (La Porte County Council), Eddie Melton (Gary), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Angie Nelson Deutch (Michigan City), Randy Niemeyer (Lake County Council), Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee), Barb Regnitz (Porter County Commission), Steve Spebar (Whiting), Gerald Swets (St. John), Sharon Szwedo (New Chicago), Andy Vasquez (Porter County Council), and CJ Wittmer (Kouts).

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

Staff present included Ty Warner, Talaya Jones, Kathy Luther, Tom Vander Woude, Charles Bradsky, Grace Benninger, Denarie Kane, Flor Baum, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

Public Comment

There were no public comments. Tom Dermody introduced Joe Thallemer, former mayor of Warsaw, who was involved in his area's regional planning council before he retired. Mr. Thallemer reported that he has been focusing on the Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (AIM) organization since his retirement last year. AIM provides education for newly elected officials and legislative advocacy.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the October 17, 2024, Executive Board meeting were approved on motion by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by Jim Ton.

Leadership– Tom Dermody, Mayor of La Porte

Tom Dermody stated that a quorum of the Full Commission had not been met yet, but there was a quorum of the Executive Board, which would proceed and vote on agenda items that the Executive Board could approve.

Kathy Luther presented the Drive Clean Indiana 2025 contract, stating this contract is NIRPC's mechanism for funding Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) projects. This program was initially the Green Fleet Program, developed to significantly improve the environmental performance of business and government vehicle fleets. The overall program is to reduce air emissions so non-attainment can be obtained. On motion by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by Denise Ebert, the Executive Board approved the Drive Clean Indiana Contract.

Ty Warner discussed the meeting schedule for 2025, stating that by state statute, the Full Commission must meet four times yearly. Those dates for 2025 are January 16, May 15, September 18, and December 18. All Commissioners are expected to attend the four Full Commission meetings but are also welcome and encouraged to attend the Executive Board meetings.

Resolution #24-15: Calendar Year Budget. Ty Warner reported that the 2025 budget is final but will be amended in January due to medical insurance costs that are being finalized. This is being voted on today to prevent NIRPC from entering the new year without an approved budget. On motion by Robert Carnahan and seconded by James Burge, the Full Commission approved this resolution.

Resolution #24-14: Extending the Current Executive Director Employment Agreement. Wendy Mis reported that Ty Warner's employment contract expires on December 31, 2024. This resolution extends the contract for three months so he can receive a fair compensation package. The final numbers will be known only after all medical insurance costs for 2025 are finalized. On motion by Robert Carnahan and seconded by Jack McGraw, the Full Commission approved this resolution. Ty said it was a pleasure to work with this Commission and thanked all who were able to attend today.

Transportation – Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor

Kevin Breitzke reported the Technical Planning Committee met on November 12. The committee brought the action item below to the Full Commission with a favorable recommendation. The next meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2025.

Resolution #24-13: 2025 Safety Performance Measures. Tom Vander Woude reported these performance measures must be included in NIRPC's Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). NIRPC receives Highway Safety and Improvement Program (HSIP) funding and is required to set targets for safety performance measures. NIRPC has adopted the targets developed by INDOT. John Yelkich asked if the non-motorized metrics could be obtained. He felt it would be valuable to know these metrics with the ongoing Marquette Greenway Trail initiative to get these users off the roads and onto the trails. Tom will look into this request. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Tom Schmitt, the Full Commission approved Resolution #24-13.

Charles Bradsky provided a summary of the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) application received for 2024. The applications are being reviewed for FYs 2026 to 2030, focusing on years 2029 and 2030. There is an estimated \$108 million in available spending for 2029 and 2030, with \$36 million for infrastructure projects and \$72 million for transit projects. There is less funding available for this NOFA compared to previous years, but there is still a need to have a NOFA because there are transformative projects, NIRPC needs to show there's a need if additional funding becomes available, and projects for HSIP, CMAQ, CRP, and PROTECT funds still need to be programmed. The applications will be reviewed by NIRPC staff through January 10, 2025, and then be presented to the NIRPC Commission on May 15, 2025, for final approval.

Grace Benninger reported on the 2024 third-quarter safety, travel time reliability, freight, and congestion update. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)/Infrastructure Investment and Job Act (IIJA) requires states and MPOs to set targets in several national performance areas to help track performance and determine whether federal transportation investments improve transportation system performance. Comparing the data with the state targets for quarters 1-3 in NWI this year, we had 6% of the state target fatalities and 20.3% of the state's target for serious injuries. Cumulative collision data by county shows that 70% of the collisions occur in Lake County, 12% in La Porte County, and 18% IN Porter County.

INDOT - Matt Deitchley

Due to unforeseeable circumstances, a representative from INDOT was unable to attend.

Economic Development District Report – Denarie Kane

Ms. Kane reported two out of four community engagement sessions had been held for the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) needed for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update. The third session will be held at NIRPC tomorrow, and the fourth will be virtually on December 9. Denarie encouraged those interested in attending to register. The next Economy and Place committee working group meeting is on December 10. Purdue's Center for Regional Development consultants will discuss additional information regarding the region's industry clusters. The Economy and Place Committee will meet on January 8 at NIRPC.

ENVIRONMENT – Kathy Luther

Kathy Luther introduced Carl Lisek, Executive Director, and Ryan Lisek, Program Director, with Drive Clean Indiana (DCI). Carl Lisek was thankful for their contract's earlier approval and for continuing to work in the region. The collaboration between DCI, NIRPC, and NIPSCO began 25 years ago. NIRPC started the Clean Cities program in NWI, which expanded to 18 counties and the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) area. Now, they are a state-designated coalition in all 92 counties. Ryan Lisek said the U.S. Department of Energy has recognized the NWI Green Fleet Program for the great work being done in the region. The City of Lake Station was recognized as a NIRPC Green Fleet of the Year. The collaborative efforts of DCI and the communities in NWI allow them to work through the different private and public opportunities and work together to ensure they can collaborate on programs and projects that reduce emissions and operational and capital costs. DCI is working on several programs and projects, but its current focus is on the I-80 Midwest (IN-IL-OH) corridor for medium and heavy trucking, including hydrogen and electric trucks. In the last 18 months, regional partners have been awarded \$11.7 million, (matching of \$12.5 million of local dollars), from grants DCI helped to create, submit, and manage through Green Fleets. DCI also continues to assist local governments with projects awarded through NIRPC's Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). For example, they continue to assist NIRPC and Lake Station with implementing the \$2.9 million Lake and Porter County Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) project for 80 electric vehicles, 2 fleet chargers, and 20 public level 2 charging stations. For DCI's upcoming events, visit their website at <https://drivecleanindiana.org/>.

Other Business

Kathy Luther reported that NIRPC is working in partnership with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and the Chicago Mayor's Caucus on a metropolitan statistical area-wide climate action plan. A handout providing NIRPC's position in this 13-county region was available.

Kevin Breitzke reported that INDOT's US 30 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study from the East of Valparaiso to Fort Wayne, conducted for safety reasons, will impact some of our region's communities.

Announcements

Bob Carnahan relayed announcements of various events in Cedar Lake. David Phelps recognized the Legacy Foundation giving a 1 to 1 match, up to \$50,000, for the Marquette Greenway project. Mary Tanis said a pedway across Route 30 in Dyer would be helpful.

Ty Warner thanked FLUID Coffee Roasters for generously providing the coffee at today's meeting. He ended the meeting by saying he recognized a lot of information was provided today, adding that NIRPC does a lot of this work, so others don't have to. The information provided shows how federal funding keeps flowing so that projects can be done in our communities.

Hearing no other business, Tom Dermody adjourned the meeting at 10:23 a.m. The next meeting will be a Full Commission Board meeting on January 16, 2025.

The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at [Full Commission Meeting 12-5-24 \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12-5-24)