

Environmental Management Policy Committee

NIRPC – Virtual Meeting

November 5, 2020

Minutes

This meeting was convened as an electronic meeting, pursuant to Governor Holcomb's Executive Order 20-04 and 20-09, extended by Executive Order 20-47. All persons were meeting remotely on a Google Meet platform that allowed for real time interaction and supported the public's ability to observe and record the proceedings. When the agenda item was provided for public comment, this was supported as well. A roll call was taken to motion and approve the agenda items.

Jan Bapst called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call. In attendance were Geof Benson (Beverly Shores), Jennifer Gadzala (Chesterton), Jenny Orsburn (LMCP), Kevin Brietzke, Tim Kingsland (Hobart), Sarah Nimetz (LaPorte), Wendy Mis (Munster), Kay Nelson (Forum), Susan MiHalo (Nature Conservancy), Trisha Nugent (DLZ), George Topoll (Union Township), Carl Lisek (SSCC), Amy Blaker (Lochmueller), Robert Thompson (Porter County), Deb Backhus (City of Gary), and Amanda Vandenoever (Porter County).

NIRPC staff present were Kathy Luther, Charles Bradsky, Ty Warner, Candice Eklund, Joe Exl, Kevin Polette, and Flor Baum.

The meeting minutes of September 3 were approved on motion by Kay Nelson and second by Tim Kingsland. A roll call was taken, and the committee voted unanimously to approve.

There were no public comments.

Year-In Review

Kathy Luther presented on the Greater Northwest Indiana Brownfield Coalition (GNIBC) project. NIRPC is the Grantee to the regional project in collaboration with the RDA and The Northwest Indiana Forum. The Coalition's grant is \$600,000 with \$448,000 of that contracted out to SME for performing Environmental Assessments. By September of 2023, the grant targets are to complete 20 Phase I projects, eight (8) Phase II projects, 10 Hazardous Material Assessments (asbestos), and 10 Clean-up and Reuse Planning. To date four (4) Phase I projects have been completed, three (3) of which were done on behalf of the Gary Redevelopment Commission. The fourth Phase I and a Phase II projects are based in East Chicago for the purpose of the purchaser to acquire property and protect them from environmental liability. The property will be a parking lot and it will reduce heavy truck traffic through residential neighborhoods in East Chicago. The second Phase II has been done on behalf of a bona fide prospective purchaser for a private property in Gary. This is a job-retention project because the purchaser plans to continue to operate the business. Prioritization is divided into five (5) sections: redevelopment readiness, public need, economic benefit, community need, and leverage. Each section has two (2) questions, and a point is given to each question, totaling 10 points. Kathy shared examples of Brownfield sites, such as older housing, strip malls that may have had a dry cleaner on site, or older apartments and hotels that may have had asbestos. The Coalition has another year and half to complete projects. The Coalition is required to hire an environmental professional. A competitive procurement was completed, and SME was chosen as the contractor to perform all environmental assessments for Phase I and II. There are some cases where sampling and soil disposal is subcontracted out. For further information, contact Kathy Luther at kluther@nirpc.org.

Joe Exl presented on Lake County Parks Grassland Restoration Project. NIRPC's administrative role brings the following project partners together:

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) who has provided technical assistance.
- Lake County Parks & Recreation who are the landowners of the project.
- Porter & Lake County Soil & Water Conservation Districts who have provided technical and funding assistance.
- Urban Waters Partnership who has provided funding.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) who provided The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Funding grant of \$25,000 with no match required.

The project is located on the Deep River Portage Burns Waterway Watershed. It is anticipated to reduce the pollutant load of sediments to the river by 50 tons per year. A 73-pound reduction of phosphorus per year is also projected. Fragmented habitat will be restored along the Deep River Corridor. The project is scheduled to be completed by Spring 2021. Currently there is a contracted farmer removing soybean on the field-I property. Field-II is the largest property that will connect the fragmented habitat. Field-III and Field VI were also shown. Mix seeds will be used for pollinators and grassland birds. NRCS will have a maintenance and inspection plan in place. Please contact Joe Exl for more information at jexl@nirpc.org.

South Shore Clean Cities (SSCC) Executive Director Carl Lisek and Communications Director Lauri Keagle presented on the Green Fleet program with SSCC. In 2019 SSCC members reduced greenhouse emissions by 129,000 tons and reduced the number of gasoline gallon equivalents by 16.6 million gallons. In 2020 Crown Point Community Schools had their first electric bus. Gary Public Transportation Corporation (GPTC) will be deploying one of the first transit electric busses in The Region. Porter County Sheriff's Department rolled out with their first hybrid police squad cars in the state. The Port of Indiana-Burns Harbor has their first electric car rail mover. Updates on the Michigan to Montana I-94 Clean Fuel Corridor project (M2M94). As of June 2019, INDOT installed signs along Interstate 94 in Indiana designating the route as an Alternative Fuel Corridor because of the M2M project. In 2019 and 2020 SSCC wrote 47 grant applications. Members and partners were awarded \$13.3 million for projects involving 240 vehicles and equipment. Carl hosts "Green Fleet Radio" every Wednesday on Lake Shore Public Radio. The radio show features Carl interviewing guests on topics pertaining to SSCC's mission to broaden awareness of sustainable transportation projects. Carl has also written a guest column in the NWI Times focusing on topics of sustainable transportation and energy. SSCC launched the "Region Man" campaign in May 2020. Additional marketing includes the Air Quality Action Season billboard campaign and the "It all adds up to clean air," radio campaign. SSCC hosted 17 in-person events in the first 10 months of 2020. In 2020, Partners for Clean Air (PCA) launched a new scholarship program for high school students within The Region of two \$2500 scholarships. SSCC has worked with the Port of Indiana-Burns Harbor and its clients on emission reductions in relation to port equipment. For more information, contact Carl Lisek at clisek@southshorecleancities.org or Lauri at lkeagle@southshorecleancities.org.

NOFA Application

Kathy Luther reviewed the 2020 Notice of Funding Applications (NOFA). One application was received for Air Quality. There were no applications received for Environmental Quality. The scoring changes that were discussed and agreed on by the committee were made live by Kathy.

Air Quality submission:

- South Shore Clean Cities - Alternative fuel infrastructure, vehicle emission reduction, advanced truck stop electrification, and air quality education. Funding request of \$900,000

with Federal Funding in FY 25-26 for \$720,000, a minimum Federal share of \$180,000 and a match of \$180,000.

Pending communication to Kathy Luther by the end of today with objections on the self-scores, on motion by Geoff Benson and second by Jan Bapst, the committee approved the self-scores. SSCC attendees recused themselves from the vote.

There were no announcements.

The next EMPC meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. in the NIRPC offices.

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.