

NIRPC Full Commission Meeting
NIRPC/Forum Building, Portage, IN
October 16, 2014
Minutes

Chairman Brian Snedecor called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. At the beginning of the meeting, there was a quorum for an Executive Board meeting. During the Finance & Personnel report, a quorum of the full Commission was achieved, allowing for action on the Executive Director's contract and the 2015 budget.

Commissioners present included Nancy Adams, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Stan Dobosz, Jeff Dekker, Craig Earley, Don Ensign, Karen Freeman-Wilson, Michael Griffin, Eugene Guernsey, Richard Ludlow, Tom McDermott, Roger Miller, Blair Milo, Rich Mrozinski, Rich Murphy, Diane Noll, Lori Reno, Bob Schaefer, Tom Schmitt, Joe Simonetto, Brian Snedecor, James Snyder, Joe Stahura, Greg Stinson, Jim Ton and Dave Uran.

Others present included Robert Alderman, Kelly Dissler, Dennis Hiffman, Bob Carnahan, Deb Backhus, Heather Ennis, Kay Nelson, Don Koliboski, Karen Lauerma, Bruce Lindner, Bruce Spires, David Wright, Ron Kurmis, Jim Nowacki, Ray Dumbrys, Jennifer Alander, Julia Surber, Carole Carlson, and Keith Benman.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Steve Strains, Angie Hayes, Kathy Luther, Dave Hollenbeck, Mitch Barloga, Belinda Petroskey, Jody Melton, Jack Eskin, Sarah Geinosky, Gabrielle Biciunas and Mary Thorne.

Brian Snedecor briefly discussed the importance of members attending NIRPC's full Commission meeting, adding that it is a struggle to achieve a quorum throughout the year. Some municipalities are not committing to the effort necessary to conduct business effectively. Action required today of the full Commission includes the budget and the Executive Director's contract. Jim Ton expressed the frustration of the Finance & Personnel Committee in putting in extra time to develop the budget and Executive Director's contract and being unable to take action. Discussion followed as to the requirements of attendance. NIRPC holds four full Commission meetings per year, and NIRPC's enabling legislation defines non-attendance as missing three consecutive full Commission meetings. Brian Snedecor and Ty Warner would co-sign a letter to the community/county members whose representatives have shown inadequate attendance to either insure their representative on the Commission attends the meetings or to assign another representative. On a motion by Jim Ton and a second by Don Ensign, the Executive Board approved a letter be sent to community members about their representative's attendance.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the September 18, 2014 meeting were approved on a motion by Blair Milo and a second by Tom Schmitt.

Presentation: The Commission heard a presentation by Kelly Disser of NAI Hiffman about promoting regional economic development. While comparable in size, the Northwest Indiana region trails behind Southeast Wisconsin and the I-55 corridor in Illinois in terms of industrial development. In greater Chicagoland, there are about 17 million square feet of construction projects. Northwest Indiana has about 800,000 square feet of industrial construction available, compared to about 3 million square feet in the I-55 corridor and Southeast Wisconsin. Vacancies are about 7% in each market. Business relocation is very competitive. Northwest Indiana has a lot of business parks and needs to capitalize on them. There are many excellent sites, but the development process prevents businesses from relocating here. Time kills all deals and the better prepared Northwest Indiana is, the better the opportunity to attract more business to the region. Raw land isn't attractive. Businesses are looking for a window of 6 to 9 months to get into a site. Shovel-ready space with excellent infrastructure is needed to facilitate future growth. Space needs to be zoned and annexed, with utilities in place and build ready. Brief discussion followed. Ty Warner said the presentation will be emailed out to the Commissioners.

Report of the Chair: Brian Snedecor announced the Nominating Committee members: Blair Milo, Geof Benson and Tom McDermott. Committee preference forms will go out in January; please let Blair Milo know in advance if you wish to chair a particular committee. Blair Milo added that the Committee on Committees is still underway, although final work has been delayed. The committee endeavors to answer the interests of the members.

Report of the Executive Director: Ty Warner reported on several items:

- He and other NIRPC staff attended the annual Indiana MPO Conference in Columbus, Indiana. Jack Eskin and Eman Ibrahim presented on the Creating Livable Communities Program, Scott Weber presented on the travel demand model, and Ty Warner presented on autonomous vehicles.
- Meetings are currently being held with regard to the Wingspread Accord agreement between NIRPC, Chicago Metropolitan Area for Planning, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and Southeast Wisconsin Planning Commission.
- Ty Warner attended the NARC Executive Directors' Conference and presented on transitioning and thanked the Commission for allowing his transitioning to overlap with John Swanson.
- Public meetings on transportation services in Northwest Indiana will be held on October 29 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Wicker Park Social Center, 2215 Ridge Road in Highland. The meetings are a result of the settlement agreement with Everybody Counts. There will be a welcome by Frank Mrvan Jr. and information will be provided on transit funding.

- With regard to the building remodel, the furniture has been purchased and is being stored until the remodel is complete, which is now projected to be early spring 2015. NIRPC is already realizing the rent reductions. Comcast high-speed internet service is now in the building. Geof Benson added that download speed is about 4.6 with upload speed of 2.04.
- The recently dedicated Whiting Lakefront Park improvement is phenomenal and is good for both Whiting and the region and is a realization of the Marquette Plan.

Finance & Personnel Committee: Committee Chairman Jim Ton reported that the committee met this morning and received various information, updates and reports. There were no adverse issues. Several actions were recommended by the Committee this morning.

Jim Ton presented several procurement recommendations as follows: #14-08, purchases of two vehicle replacements for North Township Dial-a-Ride, two for Opportunity Enterprises, three for Porter County Aging & Community Services and two for the City of Valparaiso V-Line. #14-09 purchasing bus shelters for East Chicago Public Transit, 14-10 for security cameras for North Township Dial-a-Ride; #14-11 for a route match server for South Lake County Community Services; paid with 20% provided by the agencies and 80% by FTA; recommendations to purchase miscellaneous support equipment up to a total price of \$84,400; #14-12 a route study for East Chicago Public Transit on an 80-20 match up to a total price of \$100,000; #14-13 purchasing an evaluation and marketing program for the City of Valparaiso's transit system on an 80-20 match up to a total price of \$100,000. Jim Ton moved to approve the procurement recommendations; Nancy Adams seconded; motion carried.

Jim Ton reported that in lieu of raises, NIRPC will pay the entire 3% PERF staff contribution. Employees will not have that as taxable income as a result. Jim Ton moved to approve Resolution 14-25 for NIRPC to pay the member contributions to PERF; Nancy Adams seconded; motion carried.

Brian Snedecor announced that the meeting just reached a quorum for a full Commission meeting.

Jim Ton reported that the committee met several times to review the Executive Director's contract, both with and without Ty Warner. The committee supports the employment contract. Jim Ton moved to approve the Executive Director's employment agreement; Nancy Adams seconded; motion carried.

Jim Ton reported on resolution 14-26, the 2015 appropriations budgets for governmental funds and establishing salary guidelines for 2015. It is a balanced budget with a total fund increase of 5% achieved by lowering expenses and payments. Jim Ton moved to approve the 2015 appropriations budgets; Kevin Breitzke seconded; motion carried.

Environmental Management Policy Committee: Committee Chairman Geof Benson said the draft minutes were available in the packet. The committee heard a presentation by Jack

Whitman on a study on water and economic development in Indiana. The presentation is available on the NIRPC website.

Transportation Policy Committee: Vice Chairman Stan Dobosz said the committee met on October 14 and heard a presentation by Mitch Barloga on the ProWalk-ProBike Conference. Stephen Sostaric reported that the draft Public Participation Plan is out for a 45 day public comment period until October 31 with a public meeting on the draft to be held on Tuesday, October 28, 2014 at the Hammond Public Library, 654 State Street, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. Public meetings on the CRP update are also being held on various dates at locations throughout the region. Three actions were recommended for approval.

Belinda Petroskey described Resolution 14-27, Amendment 23 to the FY 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program for transit projects. No comments were received. On a motion by Jim Ton and a second by Nancy Adams, the Commission approved Resolution 14-27 Amendment 23 to the FY 2014-2017 TIP.

Belinda Petroskey described Resolution 14-28 Amendment 26 to the FY 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program amending the TIP to include a corridor management plan for the Lincoln Highway Byway through Indiana, a project sponsored by the City of Fort Wayne. No local money is involved. On a motion by Jim Ton and a second by Nancy Adams, the Commission approved Resolution 14-28 Amendment 26 to the FY 2014-2017 TIP.

Belinda Petroskey described Resolution 14-29 Amendment 27 for an INDOT project on SR 55, known as the “Nine-Mile Stretch” from SR 2 to US 231. On a motion by Joe Simonetto and a second by Don Ensign, the Commission approved Resolution 14-29 Amendment 27 to the FY 2014-2017 TIP.

Stan Dobosz said the next meeting of the Transportation Policy Committee will be at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, November 12, noting the date change is due to Veteran’s Day on November 11.

Legislative Committee: Chairman Tom McDermott reported the committee met on October 3 and recommended several items for approval by the Commission. Resolution 14-30 amending Indiana Code Title 36, Article VII, Chapter 7, Section 7.6-9 (d) on weighted voting to reflect the wording of the “2000” decennial census to the “last” decennial census, which will reflect new population changes relative to NIRPC enabling statute. Other issues regarding the NNIRPC enabling legislation were discussed but the committee took no action. Therefore, no other changes to the NINRPC code were suggested by the committee. On a motion by James Snyder and a second by Kevin Breitzke, the Commission approved Resolution 14-30.

Tom McDermott said this is the last year for the RDA under current legislation. Resolution 14-31 is a reaffirmation of a resolution adopted last year in support of the Regional Development Authority in at least its current form, with at least its current levels of support and with at least its current participants. Michael Griffin added that this language this language ensures current levels of participation without prohibiting increased participation, possibly by LaPorte County.

Stan Dobosz motioned to approve Resolution 14-31 and Joe Stahura seconded the motion. Greg Stinson requested the deletion of the additional “at” in the last sentence on page one. Stan Dobosz amended his motioned to approve Resolution 14-31 and Joe Stahura amended his second to the motion. The Commission approved Resolution 14-31 as amended.

Tom McDermott said Resolution 14-32 is a reaffirmation of a resolution adopted last year in support of increased investment in commuter rail connecting Chicago to Northwest Indiana and the expansion of the West Lake Corridor. Most people support commuter rail in general. On a motion by Joe Simonetto and a second by Richard Ludlow, the Commission approved Resolution 14-32.

Indiana Department of Transportation: Bob Alderman reflected on his almost three year tenure as INDOT’s LaPorte District Director. He said the legislature does not have a good understanding of the things of Northwest Indiana region; the story is not well-told. Bob Alderman said he will continue to have a relationship with NIRPC through the Mayors’ Roundtable, and will continue his relationship with the South Bend and Fort Wayne MPOs, too. He said NIRPC is the most significant group of elected officials he ever dealt with and he provided the best service possible. He thanked the Commission for their relationship with him. Rich Powers will replace him as District Director. Ty Warner commented that a resolution NIRPC passed in early 2013 in support of Bob Alderman’s retention as District Director was well-deserved and earned. Ty Warner and Brian Snedecor presented Bob Alderman with a plaque in appreciation of his service to NIRPC. Nancy Adams presented Bob Alderman with a cake and cupcakes were served. Bob Alderman thanked everyone for their support and kindness as he moves on to be INDOT’s Deputy Chief of Staff where he will head up the department’s legislative affairs.

Other Business: No other business was brought before the Commission.

Announcements:

- Robert Carnahan, Cedar Lake Town Councilman, commented that he lauded NIRPC’s work at the IACT conference last week. He also announced that the Cedar Lake Chamber will again host the Parade of Lights on November 22 and he asked for three volunteers to judge the parade entries.
- Ty Warner recognized and welcomed Roger Miller as the appointment to the Commission from the Town of Pottawattomie Park.

Public Comment on Agenda Items:

- Jim Nowacki, Gary, commented that projects from the RDA such as the airport and Marquette Park only served to put a burden on the taxpayers. The City of Gary has 10,000 vacant buildings and lost 25,000 people over the last 10 years. An additional \$800,000 was taken as part of CEDIT money for the next 30 years and over \$4 million was taken to sponsor the RDA. Jim Nowacki urged the commission to carefully reexamine the reauthorization RDA. The investment from Gary could be used for infrastructure and other needs.

Brian Snedecor thanked the Commissioners present for their assistance in achieving a quorum today. Also, several committees will have vacant seats. Hearing no other business, on a motion by Jim Ton and a second by Geof Benson, Brian Snedecor adjourned the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

A Digital MP3 of this meeting is filed. Contact Mary Thorne at the phone or email below should you wish to receive a copy of it. DVD recordings will be available once they are received by NIRPC from the videographer.

For requests for alternate formats, please contact Mary Thorne at NIRPC at (219) 763-6060 extension 131 or at mthorne@nirpc.org. Individuals with hearing impairments may contact us through the Indiana Relay 711 service by calling 711 or (800) 743-3333.

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