

NIRPC Full Commission Meeting
NIRPC/Forum Building, Portage, IN
July 18, 2013
Minutes

Call to Order: Chairman Dave Uran called the Executive Board meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioners present included Nancy Adams, John Bayler, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Robert Carnahan, Anthony Copeland, Jon Costas, Jeff Dekker, Don Ensign, Karen Freeman-Wilson, Jeff Freeze, Richard Ludlow, Tom McDermott, Blair Milo, Rich Mrozinski, Diane Noll, Shawn Pettit, Bob Schaefer, Tom Schmitt, Dave Shafer, Brian Snedecor, James Snyder, Ed Soliday, Joe Stahura, Greg Stinson, Jim Ton, Dave Uran and George Van Til.

Others present included Robert Alderman, Christopher Meyers, Rebecca “Sis” Williams, Chris Murphy, Val Gomez, Matt Mikus, Keith Benman, John Clark, Ryan Ordonez-Haggard, John Edington, Joe Simonetto, Rudy Velasco, Renae Jackson, Teresa Torres, Julie Roesler, Jim Nowacki, Bob Strader, Joe Crnkovich, Jim Pinkerton, James Ward.

Staff present included Ty Warner, David Hollenbeck, Angie Hayes, Kathy Luther, Eman Ibrahim, Steve Strains, Gary Evers, Jody Melton and Mary Thorne.

Commissioner Van Til made a motion that NIRPC draft a letter to the Police Chief of the City of Portage that NIRPC does not ask for and does not require the presence of a police officer at NIRPC meetings; seconded by Karen Freeman-Wilson. Discussion followed. Commissioner Van Til amended his motion that NIRPC draft an informational letter to the City of Portage that NIRPC respects the City’s decision for a police presence and that NIRPC did not request it, but once here, that is not at our volition; seconded by Karen Freeman-Wilson. A roll call vote resulted in 14 yeas, 13 nays with one abstaining. Chairman Uran then summarized the motion was to draft a letter to the City of Portage Police Chief that if there is a police presence in the building is it not at NIRPC’s request.

Report of the Chair: Chairman Uran deferred his report to Dave Shafer who reported on the National Association of Regional Councils’ 47th Conference on June 23-26 in Philadelphia. One presentation was on the nation’s economy by the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. Commissioner Shafer is now past-President of NARC. Commissioner Benson, a NARC board member, commented that the city has a good public transportation system. Also, NIRPC also needs to better publicize the work that our communities are doing together. Commissioner Ton remarked on the mural system that is used to cover up graffiti.

Presentation: Gary Chicago International Airport – John Clark gave a presentation on development opportunities for both the airport and the region. There were more contamination issues than anticipated and more agreements had to be formed with the railroads. The runway expansion is scheduled for completion in September 2014 at a cost of \$166 million. This date is still ahead of the FAA deadline. A public private partnership is also being explored. Future use of the airport would include corporate service, low to medium freight and commercial service. This project is included in the CEDS.

Approval of Minutes: On a motion by Jim Ton and a second by James Snyder, the minutes of the June 20 Executive Board meeting were approved.

Finance & Personnel Committee: Committee Chair Blair Milo reported that the committee met this morning to review proposals received from bidders on the office space leasing. The committee is still researching the information and will meet July 25 at 1:30 p.m. at NIRPC. Commissioners are invited to attend. The committee intends to make a recommendation to the Full Commission at the August meeting.

Everyone has received the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. This report is a replacement of the annual audit, and is a more thorough review of finances.

Transportation Policy Committee: Shawn Pettit reported the TPC met on July 9 and tentatively took action on three resolutions, however there is a public comment period. Pettit moved to defer action on the resolutions identified as 13-15, 13-16 and 13-17 until the August meeting; seconded by Kevin Breitzke. Motion carried. Gary Evers explained that the new TIP and the conformity determination were released for public comment on July 2 and would end August 1. FHWA said we could safely adopt those and said we needed a 2040 Plan amendment. The comment period for that would end August 9. We also must hold public meetings and prepare a comment summary document. The northern Lake County meeting will be held on a date during the week of August 19. Ty Warner proposed changing the date of the August meeting from August 15 to August 29 and make it a Full Commission meeting in order to meet those requirements. Pettit amended his motion to defer action on the resolutions identified as 13-15, 13-16 and 13-17 until the August 29 meeting at 9:00 a.m.; seconded by Breitzke; motion carried.

Ad Hoc Sub-Committee on the Public Participation Plan: Anthony Copeland reported that the committee held their second meeting yesterday and reviewed the submitted materials. The next meeting will be July 31 and another meeting may be scheduled in August. The committee hopes to submit a report to the Transportation Policy Committee by August 13. George Van Til added that the several other commissioners have attended the meetings and appreciated everyone taking the time to attend these meetings. The committee suggested adding a discussion on public participation and public access issues as a regular item on the Commission agendas.

Teresa Torres had apologized for disrupting the meeting, adding that she was having problems with her listening device.

Legislative Committee: Jon Costas anticipated having a report next month. He asked the commissioners to let him know of any legislative issues or opportunities in which they may be interested.

Northwest Indiana Economic Development District: No report.

INDOT: Robert Alderman reported that with regard to the Illiana, some lawsuits have been filed in Illinois. The Illiana addresses the issues raised in the vision of the 2040 Plan. While there is controversy surrounding the Illiana, it has great value for a lot of reasons. It will enable the Gary Airport to be used for global logistics by relieving congestion on the Borman. It is also a key part of economic development in northwest Indiana. Funding infrastructure is very important for economic development. The Hoosier Heartland project will be completed the end of next year. Communities facing hardship from storms or other natural disasters should contact INDOT for equipment assistance. Mr. Alderman presented Karen Freeman-Wilson with a poster rendition of the Gary Street Car System which is on the plaque

commemorating rail in Gary which is located at 5th and Broadway. He asked that perhaps college students can build a structure out of the original rail. Anthony Copeland thanked INDOT for the support on the Cline Avenue initiative which will also benefit the Gary Airport. Robert Carnahan said Cedar Lake supports the Illiana and thanked Ed Soliday for his report on the Transportation Committee working on infrastructure funding. Soliday added that we need \$1 billion incremental and were able to get an additional \$400 million in for paving and concrete re-do. Unfortunately, \$200 million has been set aside in a program for Major Moves 2020. Local governments get about 47% of those dollars from gas taxes, etc. We need to work this year on redefining that. Hearing will be held this year as well.

Other Business:

- Ed Soliday said a Legislative visit to northwest Indiana will take place September 13-15. The first Transportation hearing will be on September 12 and cover NICTD and the Ports. NIRPC must testify as to how the ports affect the region. The Port in Portage is one of a few in the country that has a positive cash flow. The Legislature has allowed any municipality, county or city to create their own port authority, not thinking about our waterways. Competition was not the intention. Committee members are only allowed to ask questions at the hearing.
- Blair Milo commented that respect for each other and respectful dialogue between each other is mandatory at all meetings in order to come to the best solutions.
- Geof Benson suggested Ed Soliday reach out to the Lake Michigan Marina Development Commission through either Karen Freeman-Wilson or Benson.

Public Comment:

- Julie Roesler of the Sierra Club said that the Sierra Club submitted a resolution opposing the Illiana. Commissioner Van Til commented that it would be good to address their specific concerns.
- Jim Nowacki of Gary commented that the commission has a legal obligation to provide ADA assistance and the sound system does not work effectively. Mr. Nowacki also commented on the improvements to Broadway Avenue from 10th to 4th and at the Transportation Center on 5th and Broadway. The walkways are hazardous, there is puddling. Road improvements are important but pedestrians must be provided for. Commissioner Freeman-Wilson responded that the City of Gary has been working closely with INDOT to insure that all requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and accommodations necessary for a successful project have been followed. Road projects with pedestrian improvements are not required. The City of Gary has committed to work for all citizens.
- Ryan Ordonez-Haggard of Gary spoke in favor of the Illiana. The Gary Chicago International Airport has access to the global market. He thanked Commissioner Freeman-Wilson for the new townhomes at 21st and Jefferson. He is a Purdue student, he is currently working on a project at the east entrance to Arcelor-Mittal at US 12.
- Renae Jackson announced that through involvement with Everybody Counts, East Chicago Transit, Gary Public Transportation Corp, and North Township will provide one way rides to the fair for \$1 each way on August 7.
- Rudy Velasco asked that an education-level person be put on the Gary Chicago International Airport Task Force. Commissioner Freeman-Wilson added that there are a number of individuals on the committee that have enough expertise.
- Teresa Torres commented on the presence of a police officer at the meeting. Ms. Torres said she represents a number of individuals who cannot attend the meetings due to a lack of public transportation. She added that in 1998, “we” got an injunction that stopped all federal funding to NIRPC because of violations. Ms. Torres also asked that microphones be used by speakers and that

the sound system was inadequate to afford her the opportunity to use the listening device to hear the meeting.

Chairman Uran closed the public comment section.

Announcements:

- Commissioner Schaefer lauded the joint cooperation in the rescue of the boy on Mt. Baldy.
- Commissioner Carnahan announced that NWI Symphony Orchestra will perform in Cedar Lake, Griffith, Crown Point, Hammond and Gary.

Report of the Executive Director: Ty Warner reported that NIRPC experienced a problem with the sound system and that it will be resolved. He highlighted areas of the NIRPC newsletter, including the award of an EPA grant for brownfield work in the urban core and the Marquette Plan update which will bring a cultural component to the plan. Mr. Warner completed staff interviews and will now be going out to the communities.

Adjournment: On a motion by Shawn Pettit and a second by Kevin Breitzke, Chairman Uran adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.