

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN
February 16, 2017
Minutes

Call to Order

Chairman Michael Griffin called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. Executive Board members present included Geof Benson, Karen Freeman-Wilson, Michael Griffin, Justin Kiel, and James Ton. As there was no quorum, Michael Griffin announced the meeting would be informational unless a quorum were reached.

Other Commissioners present included Christine Cid, Jeff Larson, Roger Miller, Rich Mrozinski, Brian Snedecor and George Topoll.

Guests present included Rick Powers, Randy Strasser, Don Oliphant, Bill McCall, David Wright, Jonathan Kruger and Andrew Steele. Joyce Newland participated via conference phone.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Dave Hollenbeck, Angie Hayes, Kathy Luther, Mitch Barloga, Amanda Pollard and Mary Thorne.

New Appointments to the Commission

Dave Hollenbeck announced new appointments to the Commission of Jeff Larson, President of the Porter County Council; Christian Jorgensen, Councilman for the Town of St. John Town; and Rich Mrozinski, Jr. President of the LaPorte County Board of Commissioners.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 19, 2016 meeting of the Full Commission were available and will be approved at the next meeting in March.

Report of the Chair

Michael Griffin said that the resolution supporting the expedited construction of the Cline Avenue Bridge which was requested by Tom McDermott, Jr. will go before the Full Commission at the April meeting for a vote. The resolution, if approved, will go to the Governor and INDOT. Michael Griffin briefly explained NIRPC's dual function as both a Metropolitan Planning Organization and a Council of Governments. Following the restructuring of the topical committees, Mr. Griffin said his intention was to continue with the current committee assignments with the exception of re-opening the assignments on the TPC based on earlier conversations before the Commission, and to accommodate changes in NIRPC representatives. These surveys will go out shortly.

Report of the Executive Director

Ty Warner reported on the National Association of Regional Council's Conference earlier this week. NIRPC's representation on the NARC Board include Geof Benson as Senior Vice President, Dave Shafer as past President and Blair Milo as a member of the Board. Legislative meetings were held with Congressman Pete Visclosky, Congresswoman Jackie Walorski, Senator Todd Young and Senator Joe Donnelly. Topics of discussion included the need for a sustainable transportation funding mechanism when the FAST Act expires and the desire by metropolitan planning organizations nationwide for rescission of the federal MPO rulemaking by USDOT which would effectively combine NIRPC with the Chicago MPO (CMAP) and the southeastern Wisconsin MPO (SEWRPC). This action would put projects in our TIP in stiff competition for funding. NIRPC and the other MPOs are against this rulemaking. The Trump Administration had issued a 10-page conceptual white paper on

transportation Infrastructure with significant emphasis on public-private partnerships. The Democratic Party released a spending priorities plan but no funding sources were identified.

Geof Benson added that there is support from both the Democrats and Republicans to draft a request to remove the MPO rulemaking. There were a lot of helpful seminars and speakers at the conference and it was noted that some regional councils are incorporating autonomous vehicles in their long range transportation plans, which NIRPC also plans to do in its next update.

Ty Warner said that the newest developed space in the building will house Purdue Northwest and South Shore Leadership Center. Once all remodeling is finished, an open house may be planned.

Finance & Personnel Committee

Karen Freeman-Wilson reported that the Finance & Personnel Committee met this morning and action on three items was recommended by the committee. The first is two procurement recommendations for the Deep River – Burns Waterway Watershed Initiative Cost Share Program and two vehicle replacements for LaPorte TransPorte. There is also a proposed budget amendment and a contract amendment for the Hobart Transit Feasibility Study. The procurement action is time-sensitive. As there was no quorum for the Executive Board present, Dave Hollenbeck said there is a ratification statute in Indiana and the only risk is if the action is not ratified by the appropriate body. Jim Ton motioned to recommend the procurement recommendation for approval, seconded by Geof Benson with the caveat of ratification by the quorum of the Executive Board at their next meeting. A roll call of the eleven Executive Board members showed the five members present voting unanimously to approve the procurement recommendation with the caveat of ratification by the quorum of the Executive Board at their next meeting; the other six members were not present. The remainder of the report will be presented at the next meeting, along with a report from this meeting on the procurement vote.

Environmental Management Policy Committee

Geof Benson said the Environmental Management Policy Committee heard a presentation from the EPA this month on the lead issue in East Chicago. Governor Holcomb declared a state of emergency in East Chicago. The committee will hear a presentation from the EPA at the April 6 meeting at 9 a.m. and the new head of IDEM is expected to attend.

Technical Planning Committee

Michael Griffin reported that the Technical Planning Committee met on February 14 and heard a presentation by Kathy Luther on the Thriving Economy goals from the *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*, a presentation by Joe Exl on the *Deep River, Portage-Burns Waterway Initiative*, and short video on transit benefits shown by David Wright of the Gary Public Transportation Corporation. Mitch Barloga also gave the TPC a brief update on the Greenways & Blueways 2020 Plan, which is slated for final adoption in June. One Transportation Improvement Program amendment was recommended by the Committee and will be brought to the NIRPC Board for adoption at their next meeting.

The Transportation Policy Committee will meet on March 14, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. at NIRPC.

Legislative Committee – Ty Warner said the committee has not met recently. HB 1002 is being examined by the Indiana MPOs, and while the bill meets real and important needs to raise revenue in order to keep our transportation infrastructure intact, the one caveat from the perspective of the Indiana MPOs is the exchange provision at the end of that bill that would codify a state/federal funding swap. There are several unknowns regarding this one portion of the bill and its implications for funding flexibility for the communities. There is tight coordination between US DOT, INDOT and the 14 MPOs in the state, and the MPOs are looking to ensure

that the communities are not inadvertently harmed by this one funding swap provision in what is otherwise much-needed and important legislation.

Indiana Department of Transportation

Rick Powers reported on the importance of due diligence in road projects. He said there was new wire theft between Cline and Kennedy on 80-94. Discussion is underway about deterrents. The salt barns are full. A seven-mile stretch of SR 14 disintegrated due to the freeze-thaw cycles. A private contractor assisted in repairs by opening a hot mix plant. INDOT is working to address the rumble strip paint issue.

Other Business

Ty Warner said NICTD is offering free rides westbound for a few days for Valentine's Day.

Christine Cid thanked EMPC for addressing the concerns of East Chicago. Michael Griffin said he would pen a letter of thanks to the Governor for addressing the issues in East Chicago.

There was no request for public comment.

Adjournment

Hearing no other business, Michael Griffin adjourned the meeting at 10:00 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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