

**STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING  
NIRPC AUDITORIUM  
JANUARY 29, 2009**

**Members**

Joe Stahura, Keith Kirkpatrick, Jerry Halperin, Leslie Dorworth, Ken Dallmeyer, Sylvia Planer, Roosevelt Allen, Jr., Mary Stewart-Pellegrini, George Malis, Sandy O'Brien, Carolyn Saxton, Mark Reshkin, Tim Stoner, Kay Nelson, George T. Janiec, Dave Ellis, Gary Traynham, Dan Gardner, Rich Herr, Joe Crnkovich, Michael Aylesworth, Kathy Chrobak, Chuck Oberlie, Barb Sloan, Sergio Mendoza, Perry Ferrini, Betty Lou Nault, Carl Lisek, Don Abraham, Christopher Meyers, Dale Engquist, Martin Jaffe, Bob Nickovich, Chris Livingston, Cassandra Cannon, Marie Hoggs, Dennis Wichelns, Earl Jones, Beth Downes, AJ Bytner, Debbie Thomas, Joan Bliss, David Blumenthal, Don Babcock, Jim Jessup, John Kennedy, Bob McCormick, Bob Thompson, Robert Boklund

**Consultants**

Phil Hanagraaf, Ron Thomas, Daniel Clark

**Staff**

Gabrielle Biciunas, Kathy Luther, Steve Strains, Mary Thorne, Tom Vander Woude, Belinda Petroskey, Mary Kaufman, Lauren Rhein, Kyle Nelson, Ryan Hicks, Gabrielle Biciunas, Bill Brown, Eman Ibrahim

Joe Stahura called the meeting to order at 10:20 a.m. with self-introductions. He remarked that the new chair would be Jon Costas.

Steve Strains said this is the beginning of a two year comprehensive regional planning process. Perry Ferrini remarked that sometimes there is a lack of communications in the regional planning process. Roosevelt Allen expressed his commitment for involvement of Lake County in the planning process. Mary Stewart-Pellegrini said she feels it is part of her civic engagement and she expects the process to be smooth and efficient and expects a good amount of public engagement.

Roles and Responsibilities. Steve referred to the Comprehensive Regional Plan Steering Committee Guide, highlighting sections of page 4, the roles and responsibilities of both the steering committee and the staff and consultants. Steve welcomed all agencies, groups and individuals as members of the committee and welcomed suggestions. Ron Thomas added that this committee is the last stop for things going to NIRPC's commission and the working groups will be the creators of the tasks of the plan with varying durations. Keith Kirkpatrick questioned how to guarantee the appropriate diversity on the committee. Sylvia Planer said there is a need for more representation. Dave Blumenthal said policy committees were established by NIRPC to engage

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municipalities and coordinate planning at the local level on a regional scale. Steve agreed, saying that the committees consist of NIRPC commissioners, stakeholders in the different NIRPC elements and interested parties and they help develop and create Recommendations for policies and plans. Membership is open and the board requests assignments on the various committees. With respect to the Steering Committee, those who could make the meeting are here and the committee may decide to have an executive board which would meet more often than the Steering Committee and develop appropriate agendas. Mark Reshkin added that the EMPC had a good sub-committee, the Air Quality Study Committee, which determined the criteria for Lake and Porter Counties to meet air quality requirements as set by the EPA. Keith said this guide is a good document which will be helpful to the committee. Included should be a "What is the plan used for?" section as well as a "who's involved" piece and a section on expectations of the committee. Don Babcock said the committee needs to look at the best available high quality information and it is critical that decisions are based on knowledge and research. Kay Nelson said diversity is important, but the SC shouldn't get tied up in who will sit on the committee. There are a lot of areas along the way for people to get involved. The NIRPC committees' structures would all benefit from increased participation from all three counties in every background and group to bring in other aspects. The focus should not be on the committee makeup but in finding people who want to be a part of the work that needs to be done. The true input to the plan will come into play in the working groups. The steering committee will react to those recommendations from the working groups and keep everyone on track to get the work done in the time in which it needs to be done. Additionally, everyone's time is important and no one wants to revisit all the dialogue from previous meetings, so if a person wants to be a part of either the Steering Committee or a Working Group, NIRPC should have a calendar of events for the process so that people can plan their involvement. NIRPC should also keep an accountability log of their involvement as well. Cassandra Cannon asked about the role of non-profits saying that many people feel NIRPC is not accessible to them. Steve suggested non-profits, as well as anyone else who can, should get the word out as there will be ample opportunity for participation not only in the working groups but also in the sub-regional workshops and public forums. Marie Hoggs suggested that the people involved in creating the plan be listeners and also try to empathize with the grass roots citizens of the region. Public transportation is needed for citizens to go to work, to school and to retail areas.

Steve briefly discussed the concept of *consensus* as defined in the guide. It is expected that people involved in the process listen, understand and reach the best decision possible in a timely and consistent manner. The planning process is a partnership between NIRPC, the Steering Committee and the public.

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Tom said the ideas, themes and values which emerged from the December forum are highlighted in the final report on pages 10 through 20 with the vision for 2040 on page 14.

Vision Statement Workgroup

Steve said the vision statement workgroup would be a short term group using the information gleaned from the forum. Volunteers included Ken Dallmeyer, Mark Reshkin, George Malis, Dave Ellis, Sylvia Planer, Joan Bliss, Dale Engquist, Dr. Earl Jones and Sandy O'Brien.

Next Steps and Framework

**Next Steps:** Phil Hanagraaf of HNTB did a presentation on the next steps in the process and the framework of the plan. NIRPC's previous planning efforts have primarily focused on transportation and will now delve into land use, environmental issues and other elements. There is a fine line between "visioning and hallucinating" and you want to be very clear about what you want to accomplish and how to go about it. This is the centennial of Daniel Burnham's lakefront plan. The community realized the value in this plan and the public invested in it. Forecasts look at future change and are expert-driven and projection-driven, while scenario building looks at trends analysis and variables to determine alternate futures. Sustainability is a strong issue. Regions of the future will be livable, sustainable and provide people with choices for education, jobs, etc.

The transportation network is being looked at. Land use and implications outside of transportation must be looked at as well. Areas such as organization, location, implications and effects. The challenge is to look at what we have and find what has not been dealt with adequately and the options to successfully lay those down regionally. There is a nexus between land use and transportation – through land use and transportation, land use and environment, environment and transportation, employment and housing. There is an interrelationship on what is involved. There are many levels of a sustainability model: energy & materials, community, habitat, environment, mobility, water, etc. There may be a need for a sustainability workshop. There are tools through GIS and identification of resources which we can use to begin painting the regional picture of what we would like to see and what we are capable of doing.

**Framework:** Phil discussed the draft timeline for the comprehensive regional plan. The plan is policy oriented. It is multi-comprehensive and most importantly, it is based on community expression of values and needs. We are at the Steering Committee formation stage. There will be an unknown number of working groups based on needs and there are at least four sub-regional cluster meetings planned for citizens to discuss the plan's development. There will be synthesis reports to process and analyze. There will be regional open houses, assemblies and a public hearing before going for final approval by the NIRPC Board in December 2010. Kay Nelson suggested more detail in

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the timeline to show the different participation levels and possibly more opportunities for involvement. Beth Downes referred to an award won by Youngstown, Ohio for their participation plan on their comprehensive plan. Ron Thomas replied that NIPC (Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission) received the same award for their regional participation process. It was suggested that the people present act as ambassadors to go out into the neighborhoods, churches, senior citizens and public housing areas to bring more grass roots people into the process. Phil added that all it takes is making about 10 to 15 phone calls over a weekend.

Other Business

Steve said the vision statement working group could convene in about a week and a half. The steering committee should meet monthly either during the day or evening. Other suggestions included smaller listening sessions and NIRPC would analyze staffing capacity and venues. NIRPC will make documentation such as the final report available on their website and information will be emailed to the participants to keep them informed of future events and meetings. Media releases will also be utilized.

The next Steering Committee meeting will be held on February 19 at 5:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at noon.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary Thorne  
Planning Secretary  
Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission  
January 30, 2009