

**STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING  
NIRPC AUDITORIUM  
February 19, 2009  
Minutes**

**Members**

Chuck Oberlie, Acting Chairman, Keith Kirkpatrick, Leslie Dorworth, Mary Stewart-Pellegrini, George Malis, Kay Nelson, George T. Janiec, Dave Ellis, Rich Herr, Joe Crnkovich, AJ Bytner, Michael Aylesworth, Dale Engquist, Beth Downes, Joan Bliss, Don Babcock, Richard Morrisroe, Peter Borcz, Cliff Fleming

**Consultants**

Daniel Clark

**Staff**

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

**Welcome & Minutes**

Mayor Oberlie chaired, calling the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. with self-introductions. A few members did not receive the emailed minutes. Their addresses will be reconfirmed. On a motion by Keith Kirkpatrick and a second by AJ Bytner, the minutes were approved as submitted.

**Vision Statement Workgroup.**

Tom VanderWoude discussed the Vision Statement Working Group's meeting on February 11, utilizing the final report on the Forum of the Future of Northwest Indiana to create two draft vision statements. Dale Engquist described the meeting and the process of forming the two draft vision statements in the packet. Tom said that no decision was made between the two statements and he proposed one more working group meeting within a week or two to reach consensus on the drafts, bringing one final draft before the Steering Committee next month. The committee was asked to review the drafts, and email any comments to Tom for the Work Group to incorporate at their meeting next week. Chuck Oberlie suggested changing the word "lake" to "Lake Michigan". Don Babcock and Mike Aylesworth expressed approval for the format of the second draft statement:

**"IN"vision:**

- ***vibrant***
- ***revitalized***
- ***accessible***
- ***united***

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Keith Kirkpatrick suggested “weighing in” to get feedback as to what kinds of descriptor words that are wanted.

Steve referred to comments he received via email from Earl Jones at IUN after he read the draft vision statements. His concerns were about the absence of representation of the environmental justice community's vision in the statement. Kay Nelson said environmental justice was defined in an executive order signed by then President Clinton in the early 1990's and applied mostly to environmental issues under EPA and is defined as the concentrations of people of color and concentrations of lower income individuals. Of interest is that none of Lake County's communities meet all of the definitions and requirements to be considered an environmental justice community. There are neighborhoods in some communities but there is no one municipality which is defined as an environmental justice municipality. The vision statement working group was very small and no one group was particularly well-represented. Dr. Jones was present, but did not comment at the working group meeting and the issue was not addressed at that time by the vision statement working group. A committee member asked if there were other representatives of the environmental justice community who could attend these meetings as well to encourage more representation in the region. A socio-economic working group was suggested as well as a communications/outreach work group, perhaps having some smaller meetings at churches etc. to get their input. Steve suggested a few members of the steering committee, perhaps those with environmental justice expertise, to join him in attending a meeting with Dr. Jones at IUN to discuss his comments and concerns in depth. Steve said another snag has developed in the process and reminded the committee that a month of time will be lost in having to finalize the vision statement as well. Daniel Clark suggested people who are educated and connected strengthen the language about providing for choices for housing, jobs, etc. and perhaps create a media release. Other suggestions included working groups to work parallel to each other to save time. Kirkpatrick suggested putting out an agreement of principles:

“We realize small groups of our total committee will be utilized to perform specific tasks in information collection and analysis of writing. Therefore, our final outcomes, conclusions or products will be reviewed by a larger group for consensus and approval. The steering committee is committed to engage in a process that seeks to involve a broad and diverse representation of our region. We need to commit to an operational principle that defines the groups and the process to ensure that the decision will be made by an appropriate number of people at the table. A membership survey can be completed to see what groups are represented and where are the gaps. “

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Kirkpatrick provided his draft of a survey to Mary Thorne who will key it in. Clark said the language is present in the committee guide. Once the members sign into the committee, gaps can be better identified and filled.

Roles & Responsibilities

Steve Strains referred to the Steering Committee Guide included in the packet showing some of the language which would be appropriate, reviewing the roles of the Committee, staff and consultants and individuals. He also briefly touched on the definition of consensus as defined in the guide. Tom added this could help members determine where they would like to participate in the Regional Comprehensive Plan, whether it be on the Steering Committee, in a working group(s) or at the public participation meetings, realizing that each can require a significant amount of time. Participation on both the Steering Committee and a working group is possible. It was noted by a member of the committee that the amount of members present at this meeting was considerably less than that of the previous meeting. Mayor Oberlie reiterated the importance of the members of the Steering Committee not miss meetings and give considerable time in performing this responsibility. The creation of the plan will be through the different working groups. The steering committee would make recommendations on the products presented. The working groups would provide product, the steering committee would recommend action to the NIRPC board for final approval. Clark said there may be variables as to size and duration of working groups. Don Babcock expressed a desire to see a more detailed framework or more clarification of the planning process. Dave Ellis suggested a task force be formed quickly to identify how the steering group was put together and the assurance of some level of diversity to this group's participation.

Commitment

Mayor Oberlie began discussion of the commitment form and asked how many were received. Thorne replied three commitment forms were submitted to date. Mary Stewart-Pellegrini said she would like to see a schedule of meetings in order to be able to plan ahead. Thorne responded that a 2009 calendar would be projected as a visual aid to assist in members' determining their involvement and commitment on the steering committee, working groups, etc. Ellis said a member of the Sierra Club Duneland Group could attend if he were unable to make a meeting; others concurred. Nelson shared concerns that if another representative fills in, that person may need to be brought up to speed which could present a time problem during meetings and it is frustrating to spend so much time on getting people to come to the meetings. This meeting was scheduled for 5:00 p.m. to enable more people to come and yet there are less people than at the last meeting. Nelson suggested enlisting the aid of the Commissioners to define the Steering Committee to ensure demographic

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representation and that the present members could join the working groups. The NIRPC elements are represented by their policy committees. Babcock said this would put responsibility for this plan back on the municipalities. Kirkpatrick said the same criticism of not including more people in this process would come out. Nelson said NIRPC's meetings are open to everyone and there are many opportunities for engagement. Downes suggested more interactive website use. George Malis said he viewed the commitment form as getting the "paid" people to join the Committee which would eliminate the "volunteers." Strains said that was not the intent of the form. George Janiec said the issue is regional representation. It is the core of a strong leadership group that will provide direction on the Plan more than anything else. The work groups and the ancillary products of individuals and volunteers will bring the cross-section of issue to the table for the Steering Committee to filter. Mayor Oberlie closed the discussion by asking the members to sign the commitment forms to express their interest in serving on the Steering Committee prior to the commission meeting next week. The issue will go to the NIRPC board next Thursday to fill any vacancies which will insure representation.

Land Use Committee

Eman Ibrahim gave a brief presentation on an overview of the Land Use Committee and showed mapping illustrating the committee's continuing work and data analysis using GIS and other tools to plot historical changes in land use and projections for future land use. Other plans, like the Greenways & Blueways Plan will be incorporated in the analysis. This smart growth mapping, if adopted, can also impact the trend of future financial investments in infrastructure. Other layers may include factors on air quality, congestion, as well as economic development implications. The committee also developed a draft vision statement and roles and responsibilities. The Land Use Committee's membership is open and the committee could easily serve as a Working Group as it already is performing a lot of the work needed for use in the Plan.

Next Steps

Steve Strains said results from the December 6 assembly are continuing to be analyzed. There is still \$80,000 in the contract with *AmericaSpeaks* and HNTB and we must decide how best to use their assistance and time. This figure could cover about one-half to one-third of the steps in the Plan. Addition funding is being researched including stimulus package planning funding through transportation construction money.

Goal Setting Options

Daniel Clark said scoping is still being done which is one reason why more concise details regarding the working groups and work shops are still not in

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place. More definitive outlines will be forthcoming. The goal setting work group may be a larger and more diverse group and may go through a course of three to four months to develop goals based on the vision and priorities identified at the regional assembly and then bring them to sets of cluster workshops. Confusion in the clarity of the process was voiced by some and a desire for a more definitive outline of options and plans of actions was expressed. Tom said HNTB presented the timeline of the Preliminary Program for the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan at the previous meeting. It was agreed that the pace must be picked up. A vision statement was to have been brought to the steering committee today and the final draft has been postponed. Public engagement should be done sooner than later. Further delays will put the project further behind and it is NIRPC's responsibility to keep the Plans on track.

Other Business

Ellis suggested engaging participation with members' constituents and work to keep everyone on board throughout the whole two-year process. Kirkpatrick proposed an interest form be posted to help with diversity of the committee.

Schedule of Meetings

After discussion by the committee, it was decided that meetings would be decided based on product from the working groups or other necessity. The next meeting will be held on March 12 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary Thorne  
Planning Secretary  
Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission  
February 25, 2009