



# **CREATING TOMORROW TODAY**

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## ***CREATING THE PLAN***

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission 6100 Southport Road Portage, Indiana 46368 (219) 763-6060

### **2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan Steering Committee Meeting NIRPC Auditorium July 23, 2009 Minutes**

#### **Members**

Don Abraham, Mike Aylesworth, Don Babcock, Joan Bliss, David Blumenthal, Lee Botts, Cassandra Cannon, Jan Dick, Beth Downes, Dwight Gardner, Phil Gralik, Jerry Halperin, Rich Herr, George T. Janiec, Eric Kurtz, George Malis, Christopher Meyers, Richard Morrisroe, Kay Nelson, Sandy O'Brien, Chuck Oberlie, Lauren Riga, Jill Ritchie, Carolyn Saxton, Daniel Suson, Debbie Thomas, Garry Traynham, Joe Wszolek

#### **Guests**

Mike Bianco, Mike Bartholomew, Sacha Burns, June Calen, Joe Exl, Marge Hefner, Jacqueline Jones, Quadeer Mohammed, Mark Reshkin, Jerry Tessarolo, George VanderWerken, Richard Wotkun

#### **Consultant**

Phil Hanegraaf

#### **Staff**

Gabrielle Biciunas, Bill Brown, La'kesha Girder, Matt Hay, Ryan Hicks, Jordan Isringhaus, Eman Ibrahim, Christopher Mercado, Sarah Nerenberg, Belinda Petroskey, Lauren Rhein, Steve Strains, Mary Thorne, Matt VanderWerken

#### **Welcome & Minutes**

Mayor Oberlie chaired, calling the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. with self-introductions. The minutes of June 25 stood approved as presented.

#### **Water Quality/Watershed Planning Presentation**

Sarah Nerenberg gave the presentation on public perceptions of and actual regional water quality in northwestern Indiana as well as current planning approaches.

The top three priorities to water resources are for drinking water, support to both aquatic and wildlife. 37% think water quality is worsening, 37% think it is unchanged and 8% think it is

improving. Almost half think industry has contributed the most waterway pollution, while actually stormwater runoff is the biggest contributor to pollution.

In the past 20 years, significant improvements have been made due to point source regulations (industrial and municipal pipe) and reductions in combined sewer overflows, however, the rivers and lakes are still not meeting swimmable and fishable goals. Problems with water quality include impaired biotic communities (poor fish and wildlife diversity), E.coli which contributes to beach closures, fish have unsafe levels of toxic chemicals in their bodies, septic, sediment in the streams and high concentrations of nutrients in agricultural land which contribute to algae blooms and fish kills. Causes and sources of pollution are urban, suburban and rural point sources which contribute through stormwater runoff, point sources and construction sites and the hydrologic cycles of runoff.

Current planning approaches include watershed, low impact development, green infrastructure planning and local ordinances and plans. Existing plans include the Coastal Program nonpoint pollution control, MS4, Grand Calumet remedial action plan, Kankakee River Basin Commission, IDEM water quality reports and various regional and local watershed planning efforts. These help evaluate and prioritize water resource planning. Outcomes include setting protection goals and objectives, protection ordinances, open space conservation plans, stewardship and education projects, and restoration and enhancement projects. Urban and rural goals include implementing nonpoint source practices to achieve and maintain applicable water quality stands and improve quality of life.

Benefits of low impact development include pollution prevention, groundwater protection, construction cost reduction, public work fund savings and quality of life enhancement. Ways to accomplish this include better roadway design, use of permeable paving, native plant landscaping.

Green infrastructure interconnects natural areas and open space that conserves ecosystem values and functions that sustain our society. It is highly effective for stormwater runoff reduction and pollutant removal, cost effective, restores and extends natural and built regional infrastructure and identifies opportunities for acquisition or protection of wildlife and green corridors.

Water quality considerations for the 2040 Regional Comprehensive Plan include the effect of land use scenarios on water quality, watershed planning as a possible implementation strategy and siting and expansion of new wastewater treatment plants.

#### Outreach Subcommittee

The chairman was not present; the subcommittee is still working on the RFQ for the outreach coordinator.

#### Goals and Objectives

NIRPC's policy committees will look at the goals and objectives which were gleaned from the goal-setting workshops to see that all the issues are represented. Varying objectives were given and after the cluster workshops, more judgment will be added at the professional level to form policy. Other issues include education, tying in objectives from K-18 plan that addresses higher education goals. Several initiatives and models can be used. The Gary Chicago Airport should be under the economic development section. Issues relative to recapture and reuse of demolished facilities materials should be included in terms of sustainability. City and town comprehensive plans should be submitted to NIRPC's Land Use Committee. Funding

mechanisms for regional goals and objectives must be determined as well. No word-smithing of the goals and objectives will be done at this point, nor will the feasibility of the goals be determined at this point. The major objective is to determine what issues are missing from these goals. Does the document contain the topics we need? Any comments as to missing goals and objectives or questions should be directed to Belinda Petroskey at [bpetroskey@nirpc.org](mailto:bpetroskey@nirpc.org). The plan will focus primarily on NIRPC's focus elements. Economic development as a stand-alone issue is needed and is now a part of NIRPC's responsibility. Certain other issues and goals will be delegated to the appropriate responsible source for a statement to be included in the Comprehensive Regional Plan. The finalized draft goals will be on the website. Future steps will include determining implementable steps for the more feasible goals.

One small change was made on the draft Vision Statement to include the "healthy and engaged" wording under the "A vibrant region" section. It was noted that air quality was not addressed in the goals. Other plans will be looked at and issues will be incorporated.

### Subregional Cluster Workshops

The next steps in the planning process are to hold a series of two to three hour subregional cluster workshops, two in Lake County, and one in each of Porter and LaPorte Counties for about 75-100 participants in each. The purpose statement in the packet describes the need for these workshops to look at the current regional preferences for locations of new growth, development and redevelopment to envision the physical future of Northwest Indiana. The tentative agenda includes an overview of the work plan, vision and draft goals, work instructions, charette workshop and table reporting and wrap up. The focus will be on a land-use/transportation nexus with the other items coming into play. The public will be invited to look at how growth and conservation should play out. Sustainability is a theme throughout the elements of the plan. The input from these workshops will help shape the draft plans, which are the future scenarios for the goal themes based on urban, rural, etc. Mapping tools will be used as well as a "centers," "corridors" and "green areas" approach. Preliminary palettes of the breakdown of the approaches will be defined. Reference sources will be available such as existing and future land use, zoning, planned transportation improvements, population, employment and other materials. Participants will look at the vision statement, review the draft goals and objectives and participate in hands on activities which will map out the goals and objectives and identify where development should be concentrated, protection and restoration of natural resources and identify multi-modal connectivity opportunities. HNTB will do a synthesis report in October, to be brought into a regional open house possibly in November. HNTB will have greater presence, doing the actual technical modeling analysis, run the scenarios and bring the analysis back for review in early January about implementation. Brief discussion followed. Tentative dates for the subregional cluster workshops are in September; final dates will be provided at a later date.

### Other Business

- Staff Comments – An FHWA-led environmental justice training workshop is being planned as a result of the Federal planning certification review through the outreach effort. Training is for staff and other interested parties.
- Pat Jackson of Northwest Indiana Federation wrote a letter which was shared with the federal staff.

The next Steering Committee meeting will be on August 27 at 9:00 a.m., featuring a presentation on the State of Transportation in Northwest Indiana.

Mayor Oberlie adjourned the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

Handouts provided:

- Agenda
- June 25 Meeting Minutes
- June 25 Meeting Summary
- Draft Vision Statement and Goals/Objectives/Strategies dated July 15, 2009
- Goals/Objectives/Strategies from current NIRPC-adopted and Related State and Regional Plans dated July 17, 2009
- Introduction to Cluster Workshops
- Water Quality/Watershed Planning Presentation
- Planning with Power Newsletter
- *CRP Newsletter*

*Audio tapes of this meeting are filed. Contact Mary Thorne at NIRPC should you wish to schedule a time to hear them.*

Respectfully submitted August 18, 2009  
Mary Thorne, Planning Secretary  
Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission