

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN
February 15, 2018
Minutes

Call to Order

Chairman Geof Benson called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. Self-introductions were made.

Executive Board Members present included Geof Benson, Karen Freeman-Wilson, Justin Kiel, Mark Krentz, Tom McDermott, Greg Stinson, Jim Ton and George Topoll.

Commissioners present included Christopher Anderson, Robert Carnahan, Bill Emerson, Jr., Don Ensign, Will Farrellbegg, Jane Jordan, Dave Shafer, Brian Snedecor, and Mary Tanis.

Guests present included Zully Alvarado, Lauri Keagle, Jim Nowacki, Andrew Steele, Barbara Waxman, Richard Waxman, Rick Powers, Lyndsay Quist, AJ Monroe and Greg Towler.

Staff present included Dave Hollenbeck, Ty Warner, Kathy Luther, Daria Sztaba, Talaya Jones, Charles Bradsky, Eman Ibrahim, Mitch Barloga, Meredith Stilwell, Scott Weber, James Winters, Jody Melton, Gabrielle Biciunas and Mary Thorne.

Public Comment

Jim Nowacki, resident of Gary, commented on replacement of infrastructure in the nation and flooding issues in Gary.

New Appointment

David Hollenbeck announced the appointment of Carolyn Saxton from the Town of Ogden Dunes.

Minutes

On a motion by Jim Ton and a second by Greg Stinson, the minutes of the January 18, 2018 Full Commission meeting were approved by the Executive Board.

Report of the Executive Director

Ty Warner commented that the meeting is being live-streamed. He thanked Mayor James Snyder for his assignment of a police officer to the meeting as there is a gathering of elected officials and others here today.

Ty Warner and Geof Benson presented the Norman Tufford Award to Barbara Waxman, former NIRPC staffer for her service to NIRPC and for her many accomplishments in the region.

Ty Warner presented certificates for perfect attendance during 2018 to Jim Ton, George Topoll, Justin Kiel and Geof Benson.

Ty Warner reported on the NARC Conference of Regions which he attended along with Geof Benson, Dave Shafer and Justin Kiel. The infrastructure proposal for \$200 billion to be levered into \$1.5 trillion which would help with the backlog of projects. \$100 billion would incentivize local governments to find new sources of revenue. \$50 billion is specifically for rural areas. \$20 billion is for transformative projects like disruptor-type technologies and another

\$20 billion for lending programs and the remaining \$10 billion for programs in the toolbox. The source of the \$200 billion is not identified. The funding split under this proposal is 20% federal and 80% local. The budget proposal zeroes out the capital investment grants. These are only launches of conversations at this time.

The NIRPC group met with the Senators Young and Donnelly and Congress members Visclosky and Walorski. They are all united on the South Shore projects. We conveyed the NARC and NIRPC platform for the need for a stable federal partner with the infrastructure and budget proposals the expiration of the FAST Act in 2020.

Geof Benson commented that it was convenient to be there during President Trump's announcement of an infrastructure bill. Dave Shafer commented that there was frustration on both sides of the aisle at not being able to get things done due to the political climate. Justin Kiel commented that the President's proposal included discussion on removing some regulations on some of the projects to keep the timeline under two years, but there was nothing offered on the highway trust fund. Indiana passed the infrastructure bill and is addressing the need for a state gas tax. Will Farrellbegg commented that in Europe the gas tax has covered infrastructure for many years. Geof Benson said the tax has not been raised since 1993. Ty Warner said while the proposed 25 cent gas tax translates to approximately \$9 per month in fuel expenses, consideration also must be given to the costs of repair of vehicles from crumbling infrastructure.

Report of the Chair

Geof Benson announced the new committee assignments. The Rail/Freight Committee will be absorbed into the Surface Transportation Committee. Bob Carnahan declined as Chair of the Outreach Committee. A new Chair will be appointed. Contact Ty Warner or Mary Thorne if you have any questions or changes.

Finance & Personnel Committee

George Topoll reported that the committee met this morning and approved two contracts with Kankakee River Basin Commission and South Shore Clean Cities. On a motion by George Topoll and a second by Karen Freeman-Wilson, the Executive Board voted to adopt the contracts.

Environmental Management Policy Committee

Geof Benson deferred to the new Committee Chair, Bill Emerson, Jr., who said that the committee heard a presentation from Katherine Powell of the Field Museum on the effects of climate change on the Dunes. The committee meets at 9 a.m. on the first Thursday of the month.

Technical Planning Committee

Kevin Breitzke reported that the Technical Planning Committee (TPC) met on February 13 and heard updates on the VW Settlement and the deep River Dam. A brief video was shown on "Hobart – The Eco-Friendly Community." A presentation was made by staff on the draft Greenways+Blueways 2020 Plan, which has been released for a 30-day public review. An open house will be held tonight from 5 pm to 7 pm at NIRPC. Mitch Barloga gave a presentation on the plan. Visit the website for more information or to leave a comment at <http://www.nirpc.org/2018/02/01/30-day-public-comment-period-on-new-documents-amendments/>.

There are no actions today. The next meeting of the Technical Planning Committee is scheduled for March 13, 2018 at 9 a.m. at NIRPC.

Indiana Department of Transportation

Rick Powers reported on their efforts to cope with winter storm Mateo. Some areas saw over 18 inches of snow. Pothole repair will begin soon. INDOT saw one million hits on their Facebook page. This data will be leveraged right

into the construction season. The I-65 expansion project will resume this month. The 137th Street bridge over I-65 will close over the next two months for resurfacing.

Legislative Committee

Mary Tanis said she was in Indianapolis where new issues to be addressed are police tension and provision for the families of the fallen.

Other Business

Geof Benson said committee information will be going out shortly via email so that we can update our committee participation for 2018.

Announcements

- Bob Carnahan announced that the 16 small to mid-sized Lake County communities known simply as "16 Plus" will meet next Friday at 9:00 a.m. at Schererville Town Hall. The new US Attorney is the speaker. The Lake County Council will discuss their master plan.
- Kevin Breitzke said Expedia named Chesterton the best place to escape in Indiana.
- Ty Warner announced that NIRPC is seeking a GIS Planner and public Coordination Person. Go to www.nirpc.org for more information.

Adjournment

Hearing no other business, on a motion by George Topoll and a second by Tom McDermott, Geof Benson adjourned the meeting at 10:10 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.

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, familial status, parental status, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.