

OUTREACH COMMITTEE MEETING

February 6, 2018

NIRPC Lake Michigan Room

Minutes

Justin Kiel called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self introductions. Attending were Justin Kiel, NIRPC Commissioner and owner and publisher of the Regional News and Westville Indicator; George Topoll, NIRPC Commissioner and Union Township Trustee; Lauri Keagle, South Shore Clean Cities; Kathy Sipple, ValpoNEXT; Maggie Clifton, City of Valparaiso; Joe Alamillo, Hammond Hispanic Community Committee; Kelly Anoe, Legacy Foundation; Heath Carter, Valparaiso Human Resource Council; Kelly Wenger, South Shore Line; Nate Loucks, Statestreet; Renae Jackson, Everybody Counts; Judi Hawn, Everybody Counts; Lorrell Kilpatrick, Everybody Counts North.

NIRPC staff included Kathy Luther, Chief of Staff and Director of Environmental Programs; Dominique Edwards, Outreach Coordinator, Gabrielle Biciunas, Planner; and Mary Thorne, Administrative Assistant.

The INDOT meeting participation survey was available on the table in the lobby.

Public Comment -

Lorrell Kilpatrick commented on the publicity for this meeting and would like to see more of the public in attendance. She felt the public comment should take place after the business of the meeting. Staff noted that it is generally better for the public to comment before any action takes place on an agenda item, however, this would be taken into advisement.

Renae Jackson also felt the public comment should take place after the business of the meeting. Outreach to the people with disabilities and the underserved is lacking. Ms. Jackson wants to see more outreach and public feedback. Several community HRC's never received notice of this meeting, nor did the local NAACP. Outreach and advance notification of meetings is very important, especially if people need to make transportation arrangements. Justin Kiel responded that signing up to receive the newsletter is encouraged. Up-to-date information is on the NIRPC website. There are always many opportunities for feedback, not just at this meeting but throughout the processes.

Jody Hawn said one of the major problems with the outreach plan is low attendance, difficulty in reaching people and lack of resources. Everybody Counts is a huge resource and NIRPC is encouraged to reach out to them. Your meetings are in a place where people with disabilities and the elderly have great difficulty getting to because they rely on public transportation. People are not hard to reach, you need to know how to reach out to them. One of your goals is to reach protected communities; who is that? Justin Kiel replied that they are federally designated protected classes. Dominique Edwards replied that that language is taken from federal NEPA and federal transportation laws on underserved communities and protected

classes. NIRPC is trying to increase its visibility through various methods of outreach. The Public Participation Plan is currently our Standard Operating Procedure for all of our planning processes. Today's discussion will revolve around those gaps in communications that you are talking about.

Kathy Luther commented that the issue of public comments at the end of a meeting meant that we had taken all the action during the meeting and comments after that action would not change the action. The NIRPC Commission intentionally moved the public comment to the beginning so that comments taken might have an opportunity to influence the discussion of an agenda item. As we go through this process, this committee could advise the Commission to consider changing that.

Justin Kiel said we will be approving the business plan today and will be continuing to review the Public Participation Plan for a longer period of time.

Speaking to Jodi Hawn's comment that limiting comments to three minutes per person when there were only three commenters was disheartening, Justin Kiel said that the three-minute rule has not always been followed, but it is a guideline to be respectful of everyone's time. Comments can be submitted to staff at any time.

Outreach Committee Overview of the Business Plan

Dominique Edwards said she has received some emailed comments. Laurie Keagle noted two typos: one on page 5 ... "minimum for a PPP **and**" contained aspirational goals..." and on page 6 ... "must update the PPP. The submitted action plan **was**" requested and it comprised...". In response to a question posted by Ms. Keagle, Kathy Luther said management is moving toward holding fewer topical committee meetings, but no decision was final. With regard to discrepancies in the tables on page 9, she suggests adding an explanation at the end of the plan. Another comment was that perhaps an overview should be provided. Kathy Luther provided a brief history of the task force convened a couple of years ago that suggested we have an Outreach Committee and due to a change in representation and some staff, this is the first opportunity we have had to convene this committee. NIRPC will provide an opportunity for the 2019 Commissioners to provide a choice of committees on which they would like to serve and we may get more added to this committee. We are federally required to have a Public Participation Plan and we will examine our current plan for the purpose of improving it as to feasibility. There are three major documents which are required by federal law: the Long Range Plan (2050), a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and a work plan (UPWP). Justin Kiel added that our first priority is to satisfy federal requirements regarding public participation. But we can do other things. Our enabling legislation requires us to do regional planning for transportation, environment and economic development. 80-90% of our funding comes from Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Authority. We allocate funding for highway and transit projects that are applied for by local government and transit operators. Justin Kiel said the last TIP was \$1.75 billion for four years. Some are state transportation projects. A funding section will be added to the business plan. Financial data by county and

also links to resources on NIRPC's website will also be provided to the Committee. A list of NIRPC's outreach activities will also be provided as well as more detailed matrices of outreach engagement efforts. Staff will do a brief presentation on the R-TIP at a future meeting.

NIRPC's outreach efforts include social media, newsletters, contact lists, the website, email blasts, a digital project plan, comment email, phone comment line, press releases, livestream capability, and public radio shows.

On a motion by Laurie Keagle and a second by Heath Carter, the Committee voted to approve the business plan with the amendments suggested.

In 2017, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Authority performed its quadrennial review of NIRPC's planning process. NIRPC was found to have a corrective action for public participation. NIRPC submitted a plan of action to improve its public participation plan with nine internally identified areas to improve with 15 actions. These are outlined in the business plan. FHWA and FTA replied to NIRPC in late December. We have a draft copy of their report.

The current Public Participation Plan was adopted in 2014 and is designed to be our standard operating procedures for all of NIRPC's planning processes. We will review and update the plan. The feds advised NIRPC to scale back on some of its loftier aspirations and be in compliance with federal regulations. It was suggested to develop a target audience persona and identify the organizations working with those target audiences, (Meals on Wheels for the elderly for example). Also measuring the final outcomes on Google Analytics using Google Goals. Justin Kiel commented that getting participation at government meetings is a challenge not unique to NIRPC. A metric of what is an ideal rate of participation is necessary. Kathy Luther said other MPO's generally do minimum of a public meeting and a public comment period. She suggested that groups with their own email lists share our information to their group lists. The public participation plan also has an evaluation form that we use to track our demographics. It was suggested that people don't know anything about NIRPC and how any of NIRPC's business has anything to do with their lives. The key is finding ways to communicate to people why this matters to them. Their feedback would be how something will impact them. NIRPC needs a creative "hook" to get them interested. There are 88 guidelines as to how government entities post on social media and how they send emails. People don't care because they don't know that they should care. This committee needs to get the message right, make it accessible and responded to by every audience. Staff has also utilized on the ground strategies over the last several months. Lack of access to technology is also a barrier and face-to-face contact with the public also helps build trust. In the early stages of developing our 2050 plan, we received some valuable public feedback which helped define our critical paths which, in turn, helped drive the rest of our process. A suggestion was made to leverage local government's public engagement to further NIRPC's presence, but there are some logistical challenges to that, in addition to the need to meet our federal requirements.

The Committee was asked to review the corrective actions which are in the business plan to help in updating the Plan to meet federal requirements. The timeline ends with the adoption of the update to the Public Participation Plan by the NIRPC Commission in August.

Justin Kiel invited further public comment based on the proceedings today. Lorrell Kilpatrick suggested inviting representation on the committee by members of the targeted audience. Nothing discussed today is any different than what was discussed during the last Plan creation. She declined to answer a question by a committee member as to what she would like to see occur, but felt there needed to be honest engagement and dialogue with people who have ideas. There is a difference between an inclusive process and an inclusive intent and actual numbers in engagement would be helpful.

Rena Jackson said there should be some sort of documentation available of the processes since the last Plan update to see what was done, what worked and what didn't. Many people still don't have access to technology and they are still not being reached.

Kathy Luther said NIRPC just completed its Household Travel Survey, sending out thousands of paper mailings and got a large amount returned "not at this address". We have a problem of not only doing a paper mailing but people are still going to be hard to reach. An evening meeting is a problem because some public transportation providers only operate during the day. A request was made to share a list of Committee members and those who were invited.

The next meeting will be March 13 at 10 a.m. at NIRPC. Hearing no further business, Justin Kiel adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.