

NIRPC Full Commission Meeting  
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN  
September 19, 2019  
Minutes

Call to Order – Chairperson Diane Noll called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was streamed live on YouTube.

A moment of silence was observed for Mary Thorne. Mary was an Administrative Assistant with NIRPC for over 13 years.

Roll call was taken by Candice Eklund.

Commissioners present included Diane Noll, Jeanette Bapst, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Charlie Brown, Joshleen Denham, Bill Emerson, Don Ensign, Will Farrellbegg, Richard Hardaway, Jack Jeralds, Justin Kiel, Mark Krentz, Andrew Kyres, Tom McDermott, Sheila Matias, Lori Mercer, Edward Morales, Carolyn Saxton, Tom Schmitt, Dave Shafer, Gene Simmons, Brian Snedecor, Greg Stinson, Gerald Swets, Sharon Szwedo, James Ton, George Topoll and Mary Brown.

Commissioners absent included Kyle Allen, Sr., Christopher Allen, David Anderson, John Cannon, Robert Carnahan, Anthony Copeland, Michael Griffin, Tony Hendricks, Tim Jones, Jane Jordan, Steve Kramer, Jeff Larson, Nick Meyer, Matt Murphy, Jean Poulard, Mark Ritter, Michael Rosenbaum, Rick Ryfa, Ed Soliday, and Joe Stahura.

Guests present included Matt Deitchley, Jessica Miller, Tim Werner, Deb Backhus, Lauren Varga, David Wright and John Wotkan.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Kathy Luther, Mitch Barloga, Peter Kimball, Kevin Polette, Dominique Edwards, Scott Weber, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

New appointments – Dave Hollenbeck announced the appointments to the Commission of Mary Brown (City of Gary) and Gerald Swets (Town of St. John).

Minutes – The minutes of the August 15, 2019 Executive Board meeting were approved on a motion by Charlie Brown and a second by Geof Benson.

Report of the Chair – Diane Noll

Diane Noll turned the report over to Geof Benson for an announcement from NIRPC. Mr. Benson congratulated NIRPC on receiving approval for the Economic Development District Designation for Lake, LaPorte, and Porter Counties from the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Ty Warner, Geof Benson, Justin Kiel, and Dave Shafer were privileged to meet with the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development of the EDA at the National Association of Regional Councils conference in Omaha this year. The opportunity to make the connection and explain the value of the designation is a prime value from NIRPC's participation in this national organization.

Ty Warner thanked the many individuals who worked on the Economic Development Designation (EDD) documentation over the last 12 years. Mr. Warner stated former Commissioner Roosevelt Allen, who was a champion of this initiative, sadly passed away before seeing this designation. He also acknowledge the NWI Forum as being a partner in creating the original nonprofit board to support this initiative in the early days, and for identifying EDD designation as a specific goal within the *Ignite the Region* economic transformation initiative. Part of the reason for the length of time necessary to obtain the EDD approval was modifying the application to be solely vested in NIRPC and not the separate nonprofit board, which had been created to respond to rules for EDD board composition that had changed since the non-profit was

created. Warner reiterated to the Commission the purpose of NIRPC as stated in its state enabling statute, which is to develop “planning and programming processes for transportation, environment, and economic development.” While NIRPC’s role in transportation and environment has been clear, NIRPC has primarily been involved in economic development through indirect planning activities and partnerships. The EDD Designation now gives a defined role for NIRPC in economic development and affords greater opportunities for additional funding to the communities that currently don’t have access without the EDD eligibility. Updates will be provided as the program is developed and administered.

#### Report of the Executive Director – Ty Warner

Ty Warner introduced Kevin Polette, NIRPC’s new Technical Assistant and James Gross, NIRPC’s new intern. Mr. Warner thanked the Shirley Heinz Land Trust for maintaining and mowing the prairie grass around NIRPC’s building. He also announced the Drive Electric event being sponsored by South Shore Clean Cities in NIRPC’s parking lot following today’s meeting, and encouraged the group to stop by after the meeting.

#### Finance & Personnel Committee – Justin Kiel

Justin Kiel stated Amendment #2, the proposed 2019 Budget Amendment, comes with a favorable recommendation from the F & P Committee. Kathy Luther provided details on the three revised additions to the budget, resulting in \$210,690 in new revenue. On motion by James Ton and second by Greg Stinson, the Full Commission approved the adoption of Budget Amendment #2.

#### Legislative Committee – Ty Warner

Ty Warner thanked the Commissioners for their attendance at the meeting and for achieving a full quorum.

Warner presented Resolution 19-27 and noted it was a re-iteration of Resolution 19-06, which had already been approved at the Executive Board meeting on February 21, 2019 to support an increase to NIRPC’s per capita rate. With the adoption of Resolution 19-06, Resolution 19-27 is not technically necessary but expresses the urgency of the appropriation increase, given the new Economic Development District Designation, which will require local match to administer. The current allocation of \$0.70 per capita is based on the last decennial census and is used to match NIRPC’s operating costs as an MPO to receive federal funding. The additional benefit of the \$0.70 per capita is that these funds are unrestricted and unconstrained funds, as opposed to the federal funds received. The per capita has not changed since it was adopted in 1992 and has not kept pace with inflation, which currently translates to \$0.96 per capita using the current value of 2003 dollars to be conservative. The current appropriations awarded to NIRPC, based on the \$0.70 per capita is \$540,000 yearly and the increase to \$0.96 per capita would increase the yearly appropriations by \$200,000. The additional funding would provide more programs and assistance desired by the communities, including the administration of the EDD. The 2020 budget for NIRPC is currently being drafted and will be very constrained under the current per capita amount. NIRPC needs a sponsor to move this request to the 2020 legislative session, and adopting the resolution will confirm the Commission’s intent to move this forward this session.

Brian Snedecor clarified that the increase in Resolution 19-27 would not affect the counties’ budgets until FY 2021.

Tom McDermott stated Lake County is already facing tax caps, and though he is supportive of NIRPC’s work, he would throw in a dissenting vote regarding the increase of \$120,000 for Lake County.

The Commissioners discussed and agreed the proposed increase should be addressed with the Chairman of each County Council due to budgets impacted and that a sponsor would be sought to advance the new per capita appropriation for the 2020 legislative session.

On motion by Geof Benson and second by Don Ensign, the Full Commission approved Resolution 19-27, with all in favor except for Tom McDermott and Bill Emerson.

Environmental Management Policy Committee – Jan Bapst

Jan Bapst reported the Calumet Heritage Area presented their events calendar at the last EMPC meeting. The calendar enables groups to search on various environmental and industrial events in the region. NIRPC also has a link to the calendar on their website.

Vehicle emission testing requirements in NWI were also discussed at the EMPC meeting. Concerns regarding the ongoing requirements to have vehicles emission tested were discussed due to the EPA changing their status from moderate to severe in their evaluation process. Some of the factors could be how the transportation component rating can be looked at within IDEM, unsafe chemical releases in the region by ArcelorMittal last month, and if chemicals released exceeded the limited amount, resulting in the fish kill. The main concern from the disaster is how it was communicated to the public officials and the general public. Kathy Luther is working with IDEM and the EPA to schedule a workshop with public officials.

Indiana Department of Transportation – Matt Deitchley

Since the departure of Rick Powers, Matt Deitchley confirmed he is the acting Deputy Commissioner for the time being. Mr. Deitchley reassured the relationship with NIRPC will not change. Mr. Deitchley introduced Jessica Miller, the Capital Program Management Director with INDOT, who will be present at NIRPC. INDOT will be completing projects for the season, preparing for the winter and hiring seasonal snow plow drivers.

Other Business –

Kevin Breitzke reminded the group of the 21-day public comment period on the draft amendment to the 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) ending September 25, 2019. The TPC Continuous Improvement working group is staying on schedule and has a target date of November to finalize the improved NOFA process for 2020.

Tom McDermott noted the Rail Crossings Task Force will meet October 1, 2019. The Task Force was formed when the Indiana Supreme Court ruled local municipalities could no longer issue tickets to trains sitting on the tracks longer than 10 minutes. A Bill was created at the state level but did not receive a hearing. This may be the final meeting of the Task Force as data is being collected on the crossings.

Dave Shafer discussed the relocation project of railroad tracks onto 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Munster while the underpass is being excavated. The cut over of the tracks will occur on October 8 and 10.

Adjournment-

Hearing no other business, Diane Noll adjourned the meeting at 10:11 a.m. The Full Commission/Executive Board will meet on October 17, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. at NIRPC.

A digital MP3 of this meeting is filed. Contact [nirpc@nirpc.org](mailto:nirpc@nirpc.org) should you wish to receive a copy of it. Barring technical issues, the livestream video recording of this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/NIRPCPlanning>.