

NIRPC Full Commission Meeting

Electronic Meeting via Zoom

November 19, 2020 Minutes

Call to Order

Chairman, Michael Griffin, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

This meeting was convened as an *electronic meeting*, pursuant to Governor Holcomb's Executive Order 20-47 on November 1 extending the declaration of emergency, allowing such meetings pursuant to IC 5-14-1.5-3.6 for the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency until December 1. All persons were meeting remotely on a Zoom platform that allowed for real time interaction, and supported the public's ability to observe and record the proceedings. When the agenda item provided for public comment, this was supported as well.

New Appointments to the Commission

Dave Hollenbeck announced the appointment to the Commission of Mayor, Steve Spebar (City of Whiting).

Roll call - Taken by Candice Eklund.

Present

The 28 Commissioners present included Jeanette Bapst (Dune Acres), Janet Beck (Pottawattomie Park), Geof Benson (Beverly Shores), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Charlie Brown (Lake County Council), Robert Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Tom Dermody (LaPorte), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Michael Griffin (Highland), Richard Hardaway (Merrillville), Eric Hull (Burns Harbor), Justin Kiel (La Crosse), Andrew Kyles (Crown Point), Sue Lynch (Portage), Sheila Matias (LaPorte County Commissioner), Wendy Mis (Munster), Diana Noll (Wanatah), Duane Parry (Michigan City), Carolyn Saxton (Ogden Dunes), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Brian Snedecor (Hobart), Steve Spebar (Whiting), Greg Stinson (Porter), Gerald Swets (St. John), Mary Tanis (Dyer), James Ton (Chesterton), and George Topoll (Union Township). Also present was Matt Deitchley representing INDOT.

Absent

The 23 Commissioners absent included Kyle Allen (Lake County Commissioner), Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Jim Biggs (Porter County Commissioner), Bill Carroll (Lake Station), Anthony Copeland (East Chicago), Joshleen Denham (Trail Creek), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Tony Hendricks (LaPorte County), Jack Jeralds (Schneider), Tim Jones (Kouts), Jeff Larson (Porter County Council), Robert Lemay (Long Beach), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Lori Mercer (Westville), Edward Morales (Porter Township), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), David Peeler (Hebron), Jerome Prince (Gary), Michael Rosenbaum (LaPorte County), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Ed Soliday (Governor Appointee), Sharon Szwedko (New Chicago), and John Yelkich (Lowell).

Kingsbury and The Pines have appointed no representatives to NIRPC.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Kathy Luther, Charles Bradsky, Mitch Barloga, Flor Baum, Eman Ibrahim, Scott Weber, Meredith Stilwell, Kevin Polette, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

Approval of Minutes

Under General Consent, Michael Griffin declared the minutes of the September 17, 2020 Executive Board meeting minutes were adopted. There were no objections.

The Chair, by General Consent, modified the agenda by moving the matters requiring a vote forward in the agenda. The reports of the Finance & Personnel (F&P) Committee and the Technical Planning Committee (TPC) will be voted on by matters of Consent and all matters will be taken as one vote. The report of the Chair and Executive Director will follow the roll call of the consent agenda. There were no objections.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Environmental Management Policy Committee - Jeanette Bapst

Jan Bapst reported the EMPC met on November 5, 2020 and reviewed two local projects, one being an agriculture restoration project. A grant application for South Shore Clean Cities (SSCC) for FY 2025 and FY 2026 was also reviewed.

Finance & Personnel Committee - Richard Hardaway

Richard Hardaway reported the Finance & Personnel (F & P) Committee met this morning to review the bank reconciliations and claims registers. There are two actions for consideration that come highly recommended for approval from the F & P Committee.

Dave Hollenbeck presented the addendum for the Executive Director contract. In November 2018, NIRPC entered into a three-year employment agreement with Ty Warner to serve as the Executive Director, with the contract providing an annual performance review. The addendum reflects a recommendation of the Chair and the unanimous recommendation of the F & P Committee that Mr. Warner receive a salary increase of 3% in calendar year 2021.

Talaya Jones, NIRPC's Chief Financial Officer, presented the proposed budget for 2021, stating revenues increased 32% for 2021. The increase is due to the new CARES Act funding from the Economic Development District (EDD) program and from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding where subrecipients reprogrammed some of their transportation funding from 2020. Talaya provided details for each of the budget expenditures and explained the variance between the budget items in 2020 and 2021.

Technical Planning Committee - Kevin Breitzke

The Technical Planning Committee (TPC) met virtually on November 10, 2020. The Gary Public Transportation Corporation (GPTC) gave a presentation on the electric buses they purchased for their Broadway Metro Express route. The buses are scheduled to be operational by early 2022. Please contact David Wright for more information.

Kevin Breitzke stated there were two actions for consideration today and each one comes with a favorable recommendation by the TPC.

Eman Ibrahim and Scott Weber presented on Resolution #20-27, E-Commerce in Northwest Indiana. The report was created as a result of *NWI 2050* on how to improve communities within our region. In March of this year, E-Commerce in the retail market was nearly 12% and as of today that number has more than doubled, with freight expecting to increase 40% by 2050. Sheila Matias asked if broadband width would be a regional effort, as it will require funding and collaboration across governmental jurisdictions. Mr. Warner noted that as part of NIRPC's EDD function, funding received would be allocated to review several pandemic recovery activities.

Kathy Luther presented the details for Resolution #20-28, UPWP 2021-2022 Amendment #3. As a result of having unexpended funds in the transportation funding category, as noted under the 2021 budget presentation, the funds need to be amended into the 2021-2022 UPWP. The unspent federal funding of \$86,243 in CMAQ funds, \$3,000 for surface transportation funds, \$559,306 for planning funds, and \$551,998 for data collection equipment and supplies, trail counters, modeling software, and creating an E-TIP; will all need to be moved into the 2021-2022 UPWP.

The next TPC meeting will be held on January 12, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

By virtue of the Full Commission of General Consent to allow all items to be Consent Agenda matters, Michael Griffin asked for a vote on the four matters below:

- Adoption of the 2021 Addendum Employment Agreement for the Executive Director's Contract
- Approval of Resolution #20-29, The 2021 Budget
- Adoption of Resolution #20-27, E-Commerce in Northwest Indiana Report
- Approval of Resolution #20-28, UPWP 2021-2022 Amendment #3

Hearing no objections, a motion was received by Charlie Brown and seconded by Kevin Breitzke to adopt the matters on the consent agenda. Roll call was taken by Candice Eklund for these four matters. With Janet Beck, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Charlie Brown, Robert Carnahan, Tom Dermody, Michael Griffin, Richard Hardaway, Eric Hull, Justin Kiel, Andrew Kyles, Sue Lynch, Sheila Matias, Wendy Mis, Diane Noll, Duane Parry, Tom Schmitt, Brian Snedecor, Steve Spebar, Greg Stinson, Gerald Swets, Mary Tanis, James Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.

Report of the Chair - Michael Griffin

Michael Griffin stated he is working with the Executive Director on the Commission meeting schedule for 2021 and is continuing to refine the rules for the Commission to consider and adopt, with hopes to present them to the Commissioners in the near future. Michael noted the Legislature is trying to accommodate the pandemic, but he would like to work on NIRPC being able to continue holding meetings electronically without needing an executive order from the Governor.

Report of the Executive Director - Ty Warner

Ty Warner referenced the state's new color-coded map for COVID-19, stating Lake and Porter Counties are now in the red category. As a result, NIRPC staff is working remotely and will continue to do so until January, and reiterated all staff will continue to be available by phone and email. With the CARES Act funds received, funding also became available to hire new staff. Ty introduced Lucas Eklund-Baker as NIRPC's Communications Specialist.

Ty Warner announced that NIRPC and the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) were awarded \$206,000 in Indiana Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Trust Fund grants, allowing for 24 electric vehicle charging stations in the communities these two agencies serve. Ty thanked NIRPC's partner, South Shore Clean Cities (SSCC), for all of their efforts in this initiative.

Mr. Warner announced that Diane Noll, NIRPC's Immediate Past Chair, will be retiring at the end of this year and thanked her for her services to the Commission and wished her well in her upcoming retirement. Ty also welcomed Mayor Steve Spebar to the Commission.

INDOT - Matt Deitchley

Matt Detichley, La Porte District Deputy Commissioner, reported the Community Crossings program had a call for projects last month. The awarded projects should be announced by the end of the year. All INDOT staff is working remotely, with the exception of their essential workers.

Matt noted the roundabout at SR 55 and 73rd avenue in Merrillville is scheduled to begin construction in FY 2022. The public hearing held for the work on I-65 and 109th Avenue was held virtually due to COVID-19.

Charlie Brown requested a description of the Hoosier Helpers Program be distributed to elected officials. Matt will deliver this information to NIRPC for distribution to the Commissioners.

Announcements

Lauri Keagle, SSCC, noted there would be electric vehicle charging stations installed in all three counties that NIRPC serves. A formal announcement of the Indiana Volkswagen Mitigation grants will be coming soon.

Mary Tanis talked about the groundbreaking ceremony that took place two weeks ago at the Munster/Dyer South Shore line expansion location.

Robert Carnahan wished all of his colleagues a Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas.

Ty Warner announced the retirement of Joyce Newland from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and thanked her for her services. Joyce announced the Alternative Fuels Corridor call is going out. Joyce informed the Committee that Robert Dirks will be her replacement when she retires on December 31, 2020.

Ty Warner shared a chat message from Zully Alvarado noting December 3 is International Disability Awareness day and there is a Governor's Council for People with Disabilities Town Hall Meeting on this date for Northwest Indiana.

Adjournment

Hearing no other business, Michael Griffin adjourned the meeting at 10:32 a.m.

Michael Griffin ended the meeting saying NIRPC is made up of 53 elected officials to represent different regions in a democracy elected to do what is best for the people they serve, yet they transcend our structure by thinking about what our neighboring communities need as well. Michael expressed his thankfulness for the Commissioners, and their encouragement and examples of leadership.

The Executive Board will meet on January 21, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

The livestream video recording of this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_BM0bP21Mw