

NIRPC Full Commission Meeting

Electronic Meeting via Zoom

January 21, 2021 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 20-52 on December 31, 2020 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. 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 appointments to the Commission of Denise Ebert (Town of Wanatah), Robert Forster (Town of Kouts), and Bob Poparad (Porter County Council).

Roll call - Taken by Candice Eklund.

Present

The 34 Commissioners present included Janet Beck (Pottawattomie Park), Geof Benson (Beverly Shores), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Charlie Brown (Lake Cty Council), Robert Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Bill Carroll (Lake Station), Joshleen Denham (Trail Creek), Tom Dermody (LaPorte), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Robert Forster (Kouts), Michael Griffin (Highland), Richard Hardaway (Merrillville), Eric Hull (Burns Harbor), Justin Kiel (La Crosse), Andrew Kyres (Crown Point), Robert Lemay (Long Beach), Sue Lynch (Portage), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Lori Mercer (Westville), Wendy Mis (Munster), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), Jerome Prince (Gary), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Brian Snedecor (Hobart), Greg Stinson (Porter), Gerald Swets (St. John), Mary Tanis (Dyer), James Ton (Chesterton), George Topoll (Union Township), and John Yelkich (Lowell). Also present was Matt Deitchley representing INDOT.

Absent

The 16 Commissioners absent included Kyle Allen (Lake Cty Commissioner), Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Jeannette Bapst (Dune Acres), Jim Biggs (Porter Cty Commissioner), Anthony Copeland (East Chicago), Tony Hendricks (LaPorte County), Jack Jeralds (Schneider), Sheila Matias (LaPorte Cty Commissioner), Edward Morales (Porter Township), Duane Parry (Michigan City), David Peeler (Hebron), Bob Poparad (Porter County Council), Michael Rosenbaum (LaPorte County), Ed Soliday (Governor Appointee), Steve Spebar (Whiting), and Sharon Szwedo (New Chicago).

Kingsbury, Ogden Dunes, 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, Gabrielle Biciunas, Denarie Kane, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

Approval of Minutes

Under General Consent, Michael Griffin declared the minutes of the November 19, 2020 Full Commission meeting minutes were adopted. There were no objections.

Public Comment - There were no public comments.

2020 NIRPC Annual Report - Ty Warner

Ty Warner introduced Lucas Eklund-Baker, NIRPC's Communications Specialist and thanked him for his efforts in creating NIRPC's 2020 Annual Report. Denarie Kane, NIRPC's Economic Development Specialist, was also

introduced. Ty provided an overview of the annual report and stated it would be sent out after the meeting. NIRPC's 2020 activities included the allocated CARES Act funds received from the FTA, and the creation of plans and applications for the CARES Act funds for the Economic Development District (EDD). In summary, NIRPC helps connect communities to receive federal funds for the transportation projects they want to accomplish in its capacity as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). It was noted the Cline Avenue bridge project was completed last month using private funding. NIRPC modeled this project to ensure it fit within the network and in the conformity congestion management process. Lastly, Ty will meet with the new Chair to create the yearly topical committee interest survey to gather information on the areas the Commissioners would like to serve in. Mr. Griffin thanked Ty for his administrative leadership.

Officers and Executive Board for 2021 - Michael Griffin

Michael Griffin presented the recommendations of the Nominating Committee for 2021. No additional nominations were made. A roll call would traditionally be taken for each of the Executive Board positions separately but since there were no objections from the Commission, the full report was allowed. There were no objections to the recommendations of the Nominating Committee. Mayor Dermody noted Jim Pressel, Indiana House of Representatives, was in attendance and would be replacing Representative Ed Soliday on the Executive Board. Michael stated we are waiting for the formal appointment letter from Governor Holcomb and will hold Mr. Pressel as the putative holder of the seat of Governor's appointee.

Commissioner McDermott questioned how Executive Board members were chosen to be eliminated. Mr. Griffin stated one of the complications when selecting a Commissioner from Lake County is there are 19 cities and towns that can be represented and offered one could propose to the floor a nomination if desired. Commissioner McDermott said Lake County has at least twice as many people as Porter or LaPorte Counties and questioned if it was legal or constitutional that Lake County only be allowed two appointees to the Executive Board. Mr. Griffin responded that we have to presume the laws creating NIRPC's Executive Board are presumptively constitutional until a court of proper jurisdiction tells us otherwise, which is equal numerical representation from Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties on the Executive Board. Mr. Griffin thanked Commissioner McDermott for his insight.

Elected as Chair for 2021 was George Topoll, Union Township Trustee. Justin Kiel, Town Council President of La Crosse, was elected as Vice Chair. Richard Hardaway, Councilman from Merrillville was elected as Secretary, and Greg Stinson, Councilman from Porter, was elected Treasurer.

Members elected to the Executive Board included Clerk-Treasurer Wendy Mis (Munster) and Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), representing Lake County; County Commissioner Sheila Matias and Mayor Tom Dermody (LaPorte), representing LaPorte County; and Mayor Sue Lynch (Portage) and Councilman James Ton (Chesterton), representing Porter County. Michael Griffin, Clerk-Treasurer of Highland, now serves as Immediate Past Chair.

Hearing no objections to taking a roll call after each of the recommendations of the Executive Board nominations were announced, a roll call was taken by Candice Eklund for the 2021 Nominating Committee. With Janet Beck, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Charlie Brown, Bill Carroll, Robert Carnahan, Joshleen Denham, Tom Dermody, Jon Derwinski, Daina Dumbrys, Denise Ebert, Bill Emerson, Robert Forster, Michael Griffin, Richard Hardaway, Eric Hull, Justin Kiel, Andrew Kyles, Robert Lemay, Sue Lynch, Lori Mercer, Wendy Mis, Matt Murphy, Jerome Prince, Rick Ryfa, Tom Schmitt, Brian Snedecor, Greg Stinson, Gerald Swets, Mary Tanis, George Topoll, and John Yelkich voting in the affirmative, Tom McDermott voting in the negative, and Jim Ton with a present vote, the report of the nominating committee was approved and the members listed were elected. Charlie Brown asked if it should be a consideration of the Legislative Committee to have a weighted vote or consider having more representation from Lake County based on population. Ty Warner presented (virtually) Michael Griffin with a gavel plaque and thanked him for his excellent service over the past year.

Environmental Management Policy Committee (EMPC) - Bill Emerson

The EMPC met on January 7 and discussed their planning meeting schedule for 2021, adding that the Clean Water Permit for MS4 from the state is being updated. The next EMPC meeting is scheduled for April 1, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

Finance & Personnel Committee (F & P) - Richard Hardaway

Richard Hardaway reported the F & P Committee met this morning to review the financial standings and announced there was a recommendation to approve Procurement #21-01 for two replacement Body on Chassis (BOC) vehicles for LaPorte TransPorte. The purchase will be made with the FTA funds at 80% from grant IN 2020-039, with the cost not to exceed \$118,400 in federal funds. There were no comments.

Technical Planning Committee (TPC) - Kevin Breitzke

Kevin Breitzke welcomed Representative Jim Pressel to the meeting, stating Mr. Pressel is the Chair of the House Roads and Transportation Committee. The TPC met virtually on January 12, 2021 and recommends the adoption of two resolutions for consideration. The first action is Resolution #21-01, Amendment 12 to the 2020-2024 TIP. Charles Bradsky stated there were no public comments received. The Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) provided one comment, stating the document showed Amendment 11 instead of Amendment 12. The error was corrected and approval was received from the ICG on December 28, 2020.

Kevin Breitzke reported the second action for consideration is Resolution #21-02, the State's Safety Performance Measure Targets. Scott Weber reported that NIRPC is federally required to either adopt the state's safety performance targets or set their own yearly. NIRPC staff made the decision to adopt the state's performance measure targets and in accepting their recommendations, technical changes were required to be made in NIRPC's two core planning documents, the *NWI 2050* plan and the FY 2020-2024 TIP.

Kevin Breitzke informed the Commission that state budget orders are occurring, with COVID having an impact on the revenue stream for the state. The next TPC meeting will be held on February 9, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

By virtue of the Full Commission of General Consent to allow all items to be Consent Agenda matters, George Topoll asked for a vote on the three matters below:

- Approval of Procurement #21-01, Two replacement BOC vehicles
- Approval of Resolution #21-01, FY 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment #12
- Adoption of Resolution #21-02, The State's Safety Performance Measure Targets

Hearing no objections, a motion was received by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by Greg Stinson to adopt the matters on the consent agenda. Roll call was taken by Candice Eklund for these three matters. With Janet Beck, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Charlie Brown, Bill Carroll, Robert Carnahan, Joshleen Denham, Tom Dermody, Jon Derwinski, Daina Dumbrys, Denise Ebert, Bill Emerson, Robert Forster, Tom McDermott, Michael Griffin, Richard Hardaway, Eric Hull, Justin Kiel, Andrew Kyles, Robert Lemay, Sue Lynch, Lori Mercer, Wendy Mis, Matt Murphy, Jerome Prince, Rick Ryfa, Tom Schmitt, Brian Snedecor, Greg Stinson, Gerald Swets, Mary Tanis, Jim Ton, George Topoll, and John Yelkich voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.

NIRPC Economic Development District Report - Gabrielle Biciunas

Gabrielle Biciunas provided a background of the EDD stating NIRPC was designated by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to administer the district for economic development activities. As an EDD, the communities in Lake, Porter, and LaPorte counties have access to federal funding opportunities for economic related projects. Due to the pandemic, congress passed the CARES Act in 2020 and the EDA awarded NIRPC with two CARES Act grants to assist all three counties for economic recovery. The first grant in the amount of \$400,000 is to address short and long term economic development impacts and NIRPC hired two staff members, as noted under Ty Warner's report. The second grant in the amount of \$583,000, is to establish a new regional Revolving Loan Fund program, called *Recover NWI* Loan Program. The cost to administer the plan is \$53,000, leaving \$530,000 in available funding to assist businesses in their recovery. For assistance in seeking funding opportunities contact Gabrielle Biciunas.

INDOT - Matt Deitchley

Matt Deitchley, La Porte District Deputy Commissioner, reported the Community Crossings program had a call for projects this month. There were 241 municipalities awarded \$101 million in the 2nd call for projects in 2020.

Matt noted I-94 will be under construction in 2021 and 2022 between the Illinois state border and Indianapolis Boulevard. There will also be construction from I-94 West to I-65 in 2021 and I-94 East to I-65 in 2022.

Other Business

Ty Warner referenced the meeting dates document for 2021 stating the venue will be dependent on the Governor's emergency declaration to enable virtual meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for March 18 for the Executive Board. NIRPC will send out calendar invitations and continue to email the meeting materials before each meeting.

Announcements

Members of the Commission recognized Michael Griffin for his years of service as Chair and for guiding the Commission in 2020.

Bob Carnahan asked that we remember and pray for family and friends who have lost loved ones to COVID.

Bill Emerson requested more communication on the nominations for the Executive Board members in 2022 to allow sitting members more notice to either lobby for themselves or provide additional communication before the meeting.

Adjournment

Hearing no other business, Michael Griffin adjourned the meeting at 10:11 a.m.

The livestream video recording of this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wPJRRQCj1U>