

# NIRPC Full Commission Meeting

Electronic Meeting via Zoom

March 18, 2021 Minutes

## Call to Order

Chairman, George Topoll, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

This meeting was convened as an *electronic meeting*, pursuant to Governor Holcomb's Executive Order 21-05 on February 25, 2021 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

Ty Warner stated there were no new appointments to the Commission, but he formally welcomed Jim Pressel as the appointed Representative that Governor Holcomb made official in his announcements.

**Roll call** - Taken by Candice Eklund.

## Present

The 18 Commissioners present included Geof Benson (Beverly Shores), Jim Biggs (Porter Cty Commissioner), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Robert Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Bill Carroll (Lake Station), Tom Dermody (LaPorte), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Bill Emerson (Lake Cty Surveyor), Richard Hardaway (Merrillville), Justin Kiel (La Crosse), Sue Lynch (Portage), Wendy Mis (Munster), Jerome Prince (Gary), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Steve Spebar (Whiting), Greg Stinson (Porter), James Ton (Chesterton), and George Topoll (Union Township). Also present was Matt Deitchley representing INDOT.

## Absent

The 32 Commissioners absent included Kyle Allen (Lake Cty Commissioner), Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Jeannette Bapst (Dune Acres), Janet Beck (Pottawattomie Park), Charlie Brown (Lake Cty Council), Anthony Copeland (East Chicago), Joshleen Denham (Trail Creek), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Robert Forster (Kouts), Michael Griffin (Highland), Tony Hendricks (LaPorte County), Eric Hull (Burns Harbor), Jack Jeralds (Schneider), Andrew Kyres (Crown Point), Robert Lemay (Long Beach), Sheila Matias (LaPorte Cty Commissioner), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Lori Mercer (Westville), Edward Morales (Porter Township), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), Duane Parry (Michigan City), David Peeler (Hebron), Bob Poparad (Porter Cty Council), Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee), Michael Rosenbaum (LaPorte Cty Council), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Brian Snedecor (Hobart), Gerald Swets (St. John), (Whiting), Sharon Szwedo (New Chicago), Mary Tanis (Dyer), and John Yelkich (Lowell).

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, Denarie Kane, Kevin Polette, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

## Approval of Minutes

Under General Consent, George Topoll declared the minutes of the January 21, 2021 Full Commission meeting minutes were adopted. There were no objections.

**Public Comment** - There were no public comments.

## Report of the Chair - George Topoll

George Topoll asked Ty Warner to introduce the new NIRPC staff members. Denarie Kane was hired as the Economic Development Specialist and Lucas Eklund-Baker was hired as the Communications Specialist. Ty also noted the position for Director of Transportation has been posted and two Planning positions will be

posted in the near future. The Grants and Programming Assistant position has been posted on NIRPC's website.

#### **Report of the Executive Director - Ty Warner**

Mr. Warner congratulated the communities in Northwest Indiana who received funding from the Next Level Trails program and noted that Mitch Barloga will present a summary on this program during the report of the Technical Planning Committee (TPC). Denarie Kane will present on the two items being presented during the Finance and Personnel (F&P) report for the existing Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) for LaPorte County that NIRPC administers and the new Regional RLF for Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties that is under the CARES Act funding that NIRPC received. These revisions will provide additional opportunities for small businesses.

Ty discussed the notification that was sent to the Commissioners this week for the EDA Bootcamp scheduled on April 22. NIRPC's former staff member James Winters, who is now working for the EDA, will be giving a presentation on what makes a successful application for a competitive submission. The Commissioners were encouraged to submit the names of individuals in their communities they would like to receive invitations to the event. Ty noted that under the recently adopted American Rescue Plan, there was \$30 billion allocated to the EDA to sustain activities for economic recovery through the pandemic, and as these funds will provide additional competitive grants for economic development, it will be important for NIRPC's communities to be prepared to submit good, competitive grant applications.

#### **Environmental Management Policy Committee (EMPC) - Kathy Luther**

Kathy Luther provided an update on the Environmental Resilience applications that were submitted to Indiana University. There were 14 jurisdictions that submitted applications, including 11 cities and towns from Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties. NIRPC will send a letter of congratulations to the communities who applied and include an invoice for just under \$1,200 to fund NIRPC's responsibilities for the intern. A webinar is scheduled for May 6, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. for participating communities to receive further details.

#### **Finance & Personnel Committee (F & P) - Greg Stinson**

Greg Stinson reported the F & P Committee met this morning to review the financial reports and claims registers for January and February, as well as the preliminary year-end report for December 2020. The F&P Committee recommended the two action items below to the Commission.

Denarie Kane presented Resolution #21-03, Amend the Management Plan for the LaPorte County RLF, stating the plan is part of the required five-year update and includes the changes requested from EDA. Denarie also presented Resolution #21-04, Amend the Regional RLF Management Plan, as it relates to changes to the application collection fee. The total fee of \$1,000 is not changing, but the initial collection fee of \$200 will increase to \$450 to cover costs related to the preparation of the credit memo and credit reports. The remaining fee of \$550 is collected at the time of the closing.

By virtue of the Executive Board's General Consent to allow these items to be Consent Agenda matters, George Topoll asked for a vote on the two matters below:

- Approval of Resolution #21-03, Updating the Management Plan for the LaPorte County RLF
- Approval of Resolution #21-04, Regional RLF Management Plan Amendment

Hearing no objections, a motion was received by Richard Hardaway and seconded by Greg Stinson to adopt the matters on the consent agenda. Roll call was taken by Candice Eklund for the two matters. With Tom Dermody, Bill Emerson, Richard Hardaway, Justin Kiel, Sue Lynch, Wendy Mis, Greg Stinson, Jim Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.

#### **Technical Planning Committee (TPC) - Kevin Breitzke**

The TPC met virtually on March 9, 2021. Kevin Breitzke informed the Commissioners that 30-day public comment periods were underway for the FY 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Amendment #13, the *NWI 2050 Plan*, Amendment #2, the 2022-2026 TIP adoption, and the Air Quality Conformity Determination Report. The comment period runs from March 9 thru April 8, 2021. There are no

TPC action items today, but the following updates were provided on action plans that will be presented at the Full Commission meeting on April 15, 2021.

Scott Weber provided the following updates:

- *NWI 2050 Plan* - There are four changes in Amendment #2 that affect Northwest Indiana. Two changes are being made to existing projects and two projects were deemed regionally specific from the discussions that occurred from the 2020 Notice of Funding Applications (NOFA).
- Air Quality Conformity Determination Report - This report is required because Northwest Indiana is in a nonattainment area as determined by the Environmental Protection Agency for ozone in our region.

Charles Bradsky provided the following updates:

- FY 2022-2026 TIP - Depicts how the new TIP will be utilized going forward. INDOT is currently reviewing this TIP and NIRPC is awaiting their recommendations and approval.
- FY 2020-2024 TIP, Amendment #13 - Three projects in FY 2021 will have funding added to each project in excess of \$100,000, constituting an amendment to the TIP.

Mitch Barloga provided a brief summary on the second round of the Next Level Trails program stating there was \$29.6 million in available funding. The three projects that were funded within Northwest Indiana are the Pennsy Greenway in Crown Point, Marquette Greenway in Portage, and Vale Park West in Valparaiso. Applications for round 3 of the program can be submitted starting November 1, 2021 for 30 days. There will be \$35 million in available funding this round, totaling \$90 million for all three rounds.

#### **INDOT - Matt Deitchley**

Matt Deitchley, La Porte District Deputy Commissioner, reported their winter operations are nearing completion and they are in the process of planning their maintenance work plan for FY 2022. Due to INDOT's preservation practices, there has been a 27% reduction in potholes from last year. Matt discussed the meetings that he and Adam Parkhouse are having with the County Commissioners throughout their district in an effort to establish lines of communication. Jim Ton noted ongoing concerns with issues on Route 49 in Chesterton.

#### **Other Business**

There was no other business discussed.

#### **Announcements**

Bob Carnahan informed the Commissioners that the United States Census data will be released in May.

#### **Adjournment**

Hearing no other business, George Topoll adjourned the meeting at 9:43 a.m.

*The livestream video recording of this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zE33gS761DoS761Do>*