

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting

Electronic Meeting via Zoom

April 15, 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 21-08 on March 31, 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

Dave Hollenbeck announced there were no new appointments to the Commission.

Roll call - Taken by Candice Eklund. Though the meeting was intended as a Full Commission meeting, attendance was one Commissioner short of a quorum of Commissioners present at the beginning of the meeting for a Full Commission. A quorum of the Executive Board was present and the meeting reverted to a meeting of the Executive Board. All actions could be taken up by the Executive Board.

Present

The 9 Executive Board members present at the meeting included Tom Dermody (LaPorte), Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Richard Hardaway (Merrillville), Justin Kiel (La Crosse), Sue Lynch (Portage), Wendy Mis (Munster), Greg Stinson (Porter), James Ton (Chesterton), and George Topoll (Union Township).

The 17 Commissioners present at the start of the meeting included Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Jeannette Bapst (Dune Acres), Geof Benson (Beverly Shores), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Charlie Brown (Lake County Council), Robert Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Bill Carroll (Lake Station), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Jack Jeralds (Schneider), Andrew Kyres (Crown Point), Duane Parry (Michigan City), Jerome Prince (Gary), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Steve Spebar (Whiting), Gerald Swets (St. John), and Mary Tanis (Dyer). Also present was Matt Deitchley representing INDOT. Daina Dumbrys joined later in the meeting.

Absent

The 3 Executive Board members absent at the meeting included Michael Griffin (Highland), Sheila Matias (LaPorte County Commissioner), and Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee).

The 21 Commissioners absent included Kyle Allen (Lake County Commissioner), Janet Beck (Pottawattomie Park), Jim Biggs (Porter County Commissioner), Anthony Copeland (East Chicago), Joshleen Denham (Trail Creek), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), Robert Forster (Kouts), Tony Hendricks (LaPorte County), Eric Hull (Burns Harbor), Robert Lemay (Long Beach), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Lori Mercer (Westville), Edward Morales (Porter Township), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), David Peeler (Hebron), Bob Poparad (Porter County Council), Michael Rosenbaum (LaPorte County Council), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Brian Snedecor (Hobart), Sharon Szwedo (New Chicago), 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, Talaya Jones, Mitch Barloga, Flor Baum, 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 March 18, 2021 Executive Board meeting minutes were adopted. There were no objections.

Public Comment - There were no public comments.

Report of the Chair - George Topoll

George Topoll reported only 19 Commissioners responded to the Commissioner Interest Survey that was emailed to them on March 30 and April 12; therefore, topical committee assignments will not be updated until additional responses are received.

Report of the Executive Director - Ty Warner

Mr. Warner offered additional comments on the Interest Survey stating it was not only used to formulate committee's but also asks for demographic information for federal reporting requirements. The current committee structure was adopted in 2015 but has since been discussed that the structure needs to be streamlined further to make the best use of time for the Commissioners and NIRPC staff.

Ty discussed the Brownfield Community Capacity Assessment survey that will be sent to the Commissioners addressing the Brownfield Coalition grant that NIRPC received for Brownfield assessments. Some projects have been submitted but more opportunities remain.

A survey regarding the Coastal Management Needs for Local Governments on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River was also sent to the Commissioners of the region's coastal communities but only two responses have been received. This information will be used to compile lists from the Great Lakes Communities, including Indiana.

Ty recognized NIRPC staff for their milestones in service: Allen Hammond for 15 years, Joe Exl for 10 years and Meredith Stilwell for 10 years of service.

Environmental Management Policy Committee (EMPC) – Bill Emerson

The EMPC met on April 1 and Kathy Luther and Kathy Sipple provided an update on the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative program. Bill Emerson thanked the Commissioners for their approval and support of this initiative. The next EMPC meeting is scheduled for July 1, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

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

Greg Stinson reported the F & P Committee met this morning to review the year-end final report for 2020 as well as the financial reports and claims registers for March. The F&P Committee favorably recommends Resolution #21-05 as part of the Consent Agenda. The 2021-2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) includes a revised budget that reflects the 2022 planning funds allocated to NIRPC. Kathy Luther stated the UPWP is NIRPC's scope of work for all NIRPC activities as an MPO and for transit oversight activities.

Technical Planning Committee (TPC) - Kevin Breitzke

The TPC met virtually on April 6, 2021. Kevin Breitzke stated TPC favorably recommends Resolutions #21-06 and #21-10 as part of the Consent Agenda. Scott Weber presented on Resolution #21-06, State Performance Measures. INDOT revised five performance measure in October 2020, giving NIRPC 180 days to agree with the states adjusted target measures or set their own. The recommendation of NIRPC staff is to agree with INDOT's adjusted performance targets.

Charles Bradsky presented on Resolution #21-10, FY 2020-2024 TIP Amendment #13, stating no comments were received during the 30-day public comment period. Charles noted this public comment also included the adoption of the FY 2022-2026 TIP. Approval was received from the Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) on April 8. Amendment #13 is adding significant funding to two projects and eliminating two projects.

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 three matters below:

- Approval of Resolution #21-05, 2021-2022 UPWP Amendment #4
- Approval of Resolution #21-06, State Performance Measures
- Approval of Resolution #21-10, FY 2020-2024 TIP Amendment #13

Hearing no objections, a motion was received by Jim Ton and seconded by Greg Stinson to adopt the matters on the consent agenda. Roll call was taken by Candice Eklund for the three 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 following Resolutions were voted on separately because these resolutions build on each other and will show transparency in this section before proceeding to the next resolution. Scott Weber discussed the 30-day public comment period report that collectively covered the Air Quality Determination report for Amendment #2 to the *NWI 2050*, the FY 2022-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) program, as well as Amendment #2 to the *NWI 2050 Plan*. No public comments were received.

1. Resolution #21-07 Air Quality Conformity – Scott Weber stated this resolution needs to be approved before the Commission can adopt Amendment #2 to the *NWI 2050 Plan* or the FY 2022-2026 TIP due to the Environmental Protection Agency designating Lake and Porter Counties as non-attainment with respect to ozone. On a motion by Greg Stinson and seconded by Jim Ton, the Executive Board voted to approve the Air Quality Conformity report. Roll call was taken by Candice Eklund. With Tom Dermody, Bill Emerson, Richard Hardaway, Justin Kiel, Sue Lynch, Greg Stinson, Jim Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.
2. Resolution #21-08 Move NWI – Scott Weber stated the *Move NWI* document stipulates that a project that adds capacity, cannot be added to any programming document using federal funds without first demonstrating adherence to the *Move NWI* Congestion Management Process. This resolution illustrates the two projects that came about as Amendment #2 to the *NWI 2050* and FY 2022-2026 TIP that caused a need to demonstrate adherence. The projects include the Cline Avenue gap extension in St. John and the Willowcreek Avenue extension in Porter County. On a motion by Richard Hardaway and seconded by Sue Lynch, the Executive Board voted to approve the Demonstration of Congestion Management Compliance. Roll call was taken by Candice Eklund. With Tom Dermody, Bill Emerson, Richard Hardaway, Justin Kiel, Sue Lynch, Greg Stinson, Jim Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.
3. Resolution #21-09 *NWI 2050 Plan* Amendment #2. Scott Weber discussed the two projects that are being added and the two projects that are being changed in the *NWI 2050 Plan* for this amendment. On a motion by Greg Stinson and seconded by Sue Lynch, the Executive Board voted to approve the *NWI 2050 Plan* Amendment #2. Roll call was taken by Candice Eklund. With Tom Dermody, Bill Emerson, Richard Hardaway, Justin Kiel, Sue Lynch, Greg Stinson, Jim Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.
4. Resolution #21-11 FY 2022-2026 TIP – Charles Bradsky stated NIRPC submitted the new FY 2022-2026 TIP to INDOT and the FHWA and are awaiting comments from them. Charles does not anticipate any comments that would cause a need for the TIP to be recreated. On a motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Richard Hardaway, the Executive Board voted to adopt the FY 2022-2026 TIP. Roll call was taken by Candice Eklund. 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.

Charles Bradsky provided an overview of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA). Northwest Indiana received \$5.5 million in funding from INDOT, which must be obligated by the end of FY 2024. NIRPC staff developed guidelines for use of these funds, and they will be using the list of projects from the 2020 NOFA as possible candidates at the TROC Committee meeting scheduled on April 27, 2021. The results discussed at the TROC meeting will be recommended to the TPC.

Kevin Breitzke encouraged the Commissioners to attend the TROC meeting to represent their communities. Kevin noted the new Greenways and Blueways bike maps are available at the NIRPC office and they can contact staff to pick them up. The next TPC meeting is scheduled on May 11, 2021 at 10:00 am.

NIRPC Economic Development District Report – Denarie Kane

Denarie Kane reported on the *Recover NWI* Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). There is a contract in place with the Regional Development Company to perform the underwriting and to run credit reports on the applicants. A website page is currently being created so applicants can submit their applications electronically. Denarie will contact the communities for assistance in distributing the information to their local business communities once the program has launched.

Denarie reminded the Commissioners of the Economic Development Administration (EDA) Bootcamp Zoom meeting on April 22, 2021. James Winters, the Economic Development Representative for the state of Indiana, and former NIRPC staff planner, will be the featured speaker. The bootcamp will offer communities how to be more competitive when submitting their grants to the EDA.

INDOT - Matt Deitchley

Matt Deitchley, La Porte District Deputy Commissioner, reported that bridge work this construction season will cover 20% of INDOT's district, with 2022 representing the largest amount of funding being allocated to bridge work maintenance in their history. Matt noted that National Work Zone Awareness Week is April 26-30 and Wear Orange Day will be on April 28. Matt also provided information regarding the vaccination clinic in Gary at Roosevelt High School. With the turn out being lower than expected, INDOT is helping with advertising by including the information on their message board, social media posts, and the overhead messaging on I-94.

Other Business

Robert Dirks, the Planning and Environmental Specialist at the Federal Highway Administration, discussed the federally required certification review that is conducted every four years by the FHWA and FTA on planning processes. As the NIRPC MPO was last certified in December of 2017, it will need to be recertified by December of 2021. Reviews will likely begin late summer, to be followed by a draft report that NIRPC will have the opportunity to review prior to finalizing the certification. Robert Dirks will coordinate the review with Ty Warner and NIRPC staff in the near future.

Mary Tanis shared the Town of Dyer has two considerations. With the West Lake Corridor having an effect on their community, they are looking into constructing two round-a-bouts, one at 213th and Sheffield and the other at Main Street and Sheffield, with the latter needing assistance from the Town of Munster. They are also looking to expand the bike trail that stretches into Illinois, which they would like to take south to Steger Road rather than the northern route. They would also like a pedestrian bridge over Route 30.

Bob Carnahan shared two subdivisions are being built on U.S. 41 and the new center lane will be beneficial with the new construction.

Announcements

Bob Carnahan announced the Farmer's Market in Cedar Lake will soon be open on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. Summer Fest is scheduled for July 2-5, with fireworks on July 2nd and 3rd.

Ty Warner noted the Executive Board meeting will be held on May 20 at 9:00 a.m. and will likely be a safely held in-person meeting.

Ty Warner noted the trails map has been distributed across the region and has become very popular, especially during the pandemic for people to get outside and discover the trails. For additional information, contact Mitch Barloga at mbarloga@nirpc.org.

Adjournment

Hearing no other business, George Topoll adjourned the meeting at 10:21 a.m.

The livestream video recording of this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=268HoHR4eGM>