

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting

Electronic Meeting via Zoom

May 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*, in accordance with House Enrolled Act (HEA) 1437 as incorporated into Governor Holcomb's Executive Order 21-13. 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.

Present

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

The 6 Commissioners present at the start of the meeting included Geof Benson (Beverly Shores), Jim Biggs (Porter County Commissioner), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Robert Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), and Tom Schmitt (Schererville).

Absent

The 3 Executive Board members absent at the meeting included Tom Dermody (La Porte), Michael Griffin (Highland), and Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee).

The 32 Commissioners absent included Kyle Allen (Lake County Commissioner), Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Jeanette Bapst (Dune Acres), Janet Beck (Pottawattomie Park), Charlie Brown (Lake County Council), Bill Carroll (Lake Station), Anthony Copeland (East Chicago), Joshleen Denham (Trail Creek), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Robert Forster (Kouts), Tony Hendricks (LaPorte County), Eric Hull (Burns Harbor), Jack Jeralds (Schneider), Andrew Kyres (Crown Point), Robert Lemay (Long Beach), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Lori Mercer (Westville), Edward Morales (Porter Township), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), Duane Parry (Michigan City), David Peeler (Hebron), Bob Poparad (Porter County Council), Jerome Prince (Gary), Michael Rosenbaum (LaPorte County Council), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Brian Snedecor (Hobart), Steve Spebar (Whiting), Gerald Swets (St. John), 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, Talaya Jones, Mitch Barloga, Flor Baum, Meredith Stilwell, Denarie Kane, Peter Kimball, Kevin Polette, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the April 15, 2021 Executive Board meeting were approved on motion by James Ton and second by Richard Hardaway. With Bill Emerson, Richard Hardaway, Justin Kiel, Sue Lynch, Sheila Matias, Greg Stinson, James Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.

Public Comment - There were no public comments.

Possibility of Remote (hybrid) Meetings – Attorney, Dave Hollenbeck

Dave Hollenbeck reported Governor Holcomb rescinded the order allowing remote meetings in deference to HEA 1437 adopted by the Indiana General Assembly and its allowance to meet remotely during a public health declaration. Once the declaration has ended, meetings will not be able to operate entirely remotely, but a hybrid system could be created if a core of individuals would meet in-person and after a policy is formally adopted by the Commission. Mr. Hollenbeck will continue to monitor this provision and inform Ty Warner and George Topoll of any changes. Sheila Matias asked if a resolution should be created to support the continuation of virtual meetings for our commission. Dave noted the General Assembly is currently not in session, but this could be a possibility if there was a consensus of the Commission to continue meeting entirely remotely. George Topoll suggested forming a subgroup of Commissioners before the Full Commission meeting scheduled on July 15, to consider Sheila's suggestion.

Report of the Chair – George Topoll

George Topoll reported that four notifications were sent to the Commissioners who did not respond to the Commissioner Interest Survey. Of the 53 Commissioners on NIRPC's board, 35 survey responses were received. George complimented Ty Warner on his efforts in creating the committee assignments.

Report of the Executive Director - Ty Warner

Ty Warner discussed the press release that was sent out regarding NIRPC's project that surveyed and documented each bus stop in Northwest Indiana. Peter Kimball and Kevin Polette, NIRPC staff, presented their findings from physically surveying each of the 561 bus stops. NIRPC's Allen Hammond also assisted in this project. Photographs of each bus stop were taken, and data was collected for ADA compliance. A map was created showing the location of each of these transit stops with key information and photographs of the location. This electronic map was also provided to each transit operator. The map depicting this data can be found on NIRPC's website by selecting Transit under the Mobility pull down menu. The link also includes information on how to use the map and where you can connect between the various transit systems in the region. It also provides a link to each of the transit operators' websites.

Ty introduced Marie Foster-Bruns, the new president and CEO of One Region. Marie said she's looking forward to working with the NIRPC Commission and for them to feel free to contact her with any questions.

Ty informed the Commissioners that Jim Ranfranz passed away last month. Jim was with NIRPC for 35 years and was NIRPC's second Executive Director. Jim was instrumental in many things that still affect the region today, such as forming a task force to look at the expansion of the Borman Expressway to help relieve congestion and his involvement with helping to form the Northwest Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD). Dave Hollenbeck added that Jim wanted our MPO to bring people together and to speak as one voice on a regional basis and felt NIRPC should be more than an MPO but also a Council of Governments.

The EDA Bootcamp held on April 22 had received very positive feedback. The bootcamp aided communities on how to prepare their applications for the Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding programs and make them as competitive as possible. Ty urged the Commissioners to think about their projects now because the process will be very competitive. Since congress approved the American Rescue Plan, \$3 billion in funding was allocated to the EDA, and the notice of funding opportunities are expected to be announced shortly. For assistance in creating applications and navigating the EDA process, contact Denarie Kane at dkane@nirpc.org. Also, as part of the application process, the EDA requires a letter from NIRPC stating the project is consistent in NIRPC's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). NIRPC will need a minimum of 10 days advance notice to prepare these letters for applicants.

Ty presented a slideshow depicting the results of the 2021 Commissioner Topical Interest and Demographic Survey, that included 35 of the 53 commissioners' responses received. The reason for the survey is to gain knowledge on where our committee structure equips the items the Commissioners are most interested in. The two final questions on the survey were the demographics of our board, which is needed for NIRPC's Title VI program, and the economic interests represented as part of NIRPC's EDD, because the EDA wants to see that the Commission acting as the EDD Board represents the general economic interest of the region. The current committee structure is composed of a potential 14 committees, all of which require Commissioner staffing and Commissioner involvement. The proposed committee structure going forward would be just four committees addressing Transportation, Economic Development, Environment, and General Governance. This

structure would provide better NIRPC committee focus and greater simplicity in fulfilling NIRPC's statutory mandates. Changing the committee structure, however, will require a Full Commission vote, which could be brought forward as early as the Full Commission meeting in July.

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

Greg Stinson reported the F & P Committee met this morning to review the financial reports, bank reconciliations, and claims registers for April. The F&P Committee favorably recommends Resolution #21-13, based on the directive from the State Board of Accounts regarding the establishment of a policy for electronic funds transfers and online banking for special districts. On motion by Richard Hardaway and second by Greg Stinson, the Executive Board voted to approve Resolution #21-13, Establishing a Policy for Electronic Fund Transfers. With Bill Emerson, Richard Hardaway, Justin Kiel, Sue Lynch, Sheila Matias, Wendy Mis, Greg Stinson, James Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.

NIRPC Economic Development District Report – Ty Warner and Denarie Kane

Ty Warner presented Resolution #21-12, a Resolution Authorizing the Submittal of the Economic Development Administration FY 2021 Partnership Planning Grant Application to Administer the Economic Development District (EDD). This is to support ongoing financial support for administering the EDD. The EDA is requiring an annual resolution each time NIRPC re-applies for the operating assistance funding. On motion by James Ton and second by Bill Emerson, the Executive Board voted to approve Resolution #21-12. With Bill Emerson, Richard Hardaway, Justin Kiel, Sue Lynch, Sheila Matias, Wendy Mis, Greg Stinson, James Ton, and George Topoll voting in the affirmative, and no one voting in the negative, the motion passed.

Denarie Kane reported that a short list of consultants has been created for the RFQ and five consultants will receive the RFP for the resilience plan. Also, Denarie noted that James Winters, with the EDA, will field all application calls for the State of Indiana. Denarie encouraged any questions regarding applications for the EDA be addressed with her so she can schedule project calls with James.

Presentation: Cline Avenue Bridge Update – Terry Veiligan

Terry Veiligan, General Manager of Operations, provided an update on the Cline Avenue bridge project. The bridge opened in December 2020, is one mile in length, and has two lanes but has the ability to add additional lanes if traffic increases. A map will be developed to highlight businesses and attractions around the bridge and to re-introduce the bridge to educate people on its locality and to show incentive impacts for NWI and surrounding communities. The bridge offers the most direct route into Lake County and is the most time-saving route to Chicago. The bridge was 100% privately funded.

INDOT - Matt Deitchley

Matt Deitchley was not able to attend the meeting but did convey any questions could be submitted to him.

Other Business

There were no other business announcements.

Announcements

Bob Carnahan announced Cedar Lake has a farmer's market on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, and also an upcoming Business Showcase even with the Cedar Lake Chamber of Commerce.

Mitch Barloga reminded the Commissioners bike maps can be picked up at the NIRPC office from 8:00a-1:00p. For additional information, contact Mitch Barloga at mbarloga@nirpc.org or to schedule a time to pick up maps, contact Meredith Stilwell at mstilwell@nirpc.org.

Adjournment

George Topoll referred to Ty Warner regarding commissioner's attendance at full commission meetings. Ty stated NIRPC's enabling statute includes provisions when a commissioner has missed more than three Full Commission meetings and the communities will be reminded of the importance of NIRPC representation. Ty reiterated that items on the agenda only provide half of the value in participating in NIRPC. Networking before and after the meetings and active participation are important because they build relationships that help build a better region.

Hearing no other business, George Topoll adjourned the meeting at 10:35 a.m.

The livestream video recording of this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SznVZcnqpgc&t=2228s>