

# NIRPC Full Commission Meeting

Electronic Meeting via Zoom

July 15, 2021 Minutes

## Call to Order

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

This meeting was convened as an *electronic meeting*, in accordance with House Enrolled Act (HEA) 1437. 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 Mike Mollenhauer (LaPorte County Council).

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

## Present

The 28 Commissioners present at the meeting included Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Jeannette Bapst (Dune Acres), Janet Beck (Pottawattomie Park), Geof Benson (Beverly Shores), Jim Biggs (Porter County Commissioner), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Robert Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Joshleen Denham (Trail Creek), Tom Dermody (La Porte), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Michael Griffin (Highland), Richard Hardaway (Merrillville), Justin Kiel (La Crosse), Andrew Kyres (Crown Point), Sue Lynch (Portage), Sheila Matias (Laporte County Commissioner), Wendy Mis (Munster), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), David Peeler (Hebron), Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee), Jerome Prince (Gary), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Greg Stinson (Porter), James Ton (Chesterton), and George Topoll (Union Township).

## Absent

The 22 Commissioners absent included Kyle Allen (Lake County Commissioner), Charlie Brown (Lake County Council), Bill Carroll (Lake Station), Anthony Copeland (East Chicago), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Robert Forster (Kouts), Tony Hendricks (LaPorte County), Eric Hull (Burns Harbor), Jack Jeralds (Schneider), Robert Lemay (Long Beach), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Lori Mercer (Westville), Mike Mollenhauer (LaPorte County Council), Edward Morales (Porter Township), Duane Parry (Michigan City), Bob Poparad (Porter County Council), Brian Snedecor (Hobart), Steve Spebar (Whiting), Gerald Swets (St. John), Sharon Szvedo (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, Eman Ibrahim, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

## Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the May 20, 2021 Executive Board meeting were approved on motion by Michael Griffin and second by James Ton. With Duane Arndt, Jeanette Bapst, Janet Beck, Geof Benson, Jim Biggs, Kevin Breitzke, Robert Carnahan, Joshleen Denham, Tom Dermody, Jon Derwinski, Daina Dumbrys, Bill Emerson, Michael Griffin, Richard Hardaway, Justin Kiel, Andrew Kyres, Sue Lynch, Sheila Matias, Wendy Mis, Matt Murphy, David Peeler, Jim Pressel, Jerome Prince, Rick Ryfa, Tom Schmitt, 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.

## Report of the Chair – George Topoll

George Topoll stated the Commission meetings will meet again in person at some point, but it is unclear at this time when they will resume. Mr. Topoll welcomed Commissioner Mike Mollenhauer and thanked the Commissioners for their attendance at today's meeting to obtain a quorum.

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

Ty Warner and NIRPC staff presented on the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF), Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation (INVEST), and the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) programs.

- RLF – NIRPC recently launched *Recover NWI*, which is funding that is available from the CARES ACT through the Economic Development Administration (EDA). This funding is for small business organization loans for Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties. NIRPC had already administered an RLF for LaPorte County, but with the CARES Act funding it has been expanded to all three counties. NIRPC sent out press releases and other organizations have spread the word about this program that will help with pandemic relief. There is over \$500,000 in available funding to distribute throughout all three counties.
- INVEST – Charles Bradsky reported the INVEST in America Act is a transportation bill that has been passed by the U.S. Congress and is being sent to the U.S. Senate. There are four projects in our region that are earmarked for these funds totaling \$19 million: the Kennedy Avenue bridge over the Little Calumet River, Willowcreek Road extension, reconstruction of Central Avenue in Portage, and the reconstruction project on 45<sup>th</sup> avenue in unincorporated Calumet Township. Ty extended his appreciation to Representative Mrvan for these projects in Northwest Indiana.
- RAISE – Ty Warner noted this program was formerly the BUILD and TIGER grants. Mitch Barloga reported the \$23 million grant application for the completion of the Marquette Greenway trail was submitted on July 12, 2021. Mitch extended his gratitude to those who provided letters of support and Ty thanked NIRPC staff for their efforts in submitting this application.

Ty recognized Eman Ibrahim for her 15 years of service with NIRPC.

### **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 May. The F&P Committee favorably recommended the two action items below for consideration.

- NIRPC 2021 Budget Amendment #1 – Greg Stinson and Talaya Jones reported this amendment will be to reallocate \$75,000 of the planning communication budget line item to the planning contractual budget line item to cover a potential contract for the end of calendar year 2021.
- South Shore Clean Cities (SSCC) Contract – This annual contract is a vehicle to pass through congestion mitigation and air quality projects that have been applied for in the TIP. The contract total is \$438,000 and provides support to SSCC for Partners for Clean Air, helps reduce air quality emissions, and provides public education in the form of advertising and social media.

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

Kevin Breitzke reported the TPC met on July 13, 2021 and recommends the adoption of Resolution #21-14, FY 2022-2026 TIP Amendment #1. NIRPC staff also reported on the Marquette Greenway RAISE grant progress at the TPC meeting. For additional information on the RAISE grant, visit NIRPC's website at <https://nirpc.org/raise-grant/>. You can also contact Charles Bradsky at [cbradsky@nirpc.org](mailto:cbradsky@nirpc.org) with any questions. The TPC meeting scheduled on August 10 has been cancelled.

Charles Bradsky stated there were no public comments received on Resolution #21-14. The draft FY 2022-2026 TIP was submitted on February 15, 2021 and NIRPC awaits approval from INDOT, FHWA, and the FTA. Approval of the TIP is expected. There is one carryover bridge project and 64 new INDOT projects in this amendment.

Emergency Transit Amendment #15 to 2020-2024 TIP – At the request of the Gary Public Transportation Corporation (GPTC), this amendment to the 2020-2024 TIP was created so they could write grants on four projects before the funding expired.

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 NIRPC's 2021 Budget Amendment #1
- Approval of the South Shore Clean Cities Contract

- Approval of Resolution #21-14, FY 2022-2026 TIP Amendment #1

Hearing no objections, a motion was received by Michael Griffin and seconded by Jim Ton to adopt the matters on the consent agenda. Roll call was taken by Candice Eklund for these three matters. With Duane Arndt, Jeanette Bapst, Janet Beck, Geof Benson, Jim Biggs, Kevin Breitzke, Robert Carnahan, Joshleen Denham, Tom Dermody, Jon Derwinski, Daina Dumbrys, Bill Emerson, Michael Griffin, Richard Hardaway, Justin Kiel, Andrew Kyres, Sue Lynch, Sheila Matias, Wendy Mis, Matt Murphy, David Peeler, Jim Pressel, Jerome Prince, Rick Ryfa, Tom Schmitt, 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 – Denarie Kane**

Denarie Kane reiterated the launching of the *Recover NWI* Regional Revolving Loan Fund program. The Commissioners were sent a copy of the flyer for this program and NIRPC is asking for their assistance in posting it on their municipal websites. The flyer was also sent to the Local Economic Development Organizations (LEDO) in our three county area for their assistance with advertising. There are currently two applications being processed.

#### **INDOT – Adam Parkhouse**

Adam Parkhouse reported for Matt Deitchley. Adam reported INDOT is experiencing their busiest construction season in the history of their district. They have 264 projects, totaling \$225 million for roadways. All work being done on I-94 is on schedule and will maintain 2-way traffic flow. Adam also noted the second call for Community Crossings will remain open until July 30. Lastly, INDOT will be hosting a series of public information meetings. They launched a Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) study to try and manage congestion on the Borman Expressway. The in-person public meetings are scheduled for July 28 at the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Charter School in Gary and on July 29 at the Purdue University Northwest campus in Hammond at the alumni Hall, both from 3:00-6:00 p.m. Contact Adam Parkhouse or Matt Deitchley with questions.

#### **Other Business**

There were no other business announcements.

#### **Announcements**

Bob Carnahan announced there will be a town-wide yard sale in Cedar Lake on August 7 and the 2020 census data is scheduled to be released in August.

Michael Griffin commended Ty Warner and NIRPC staff for adding closed captioning to NIRPC's virtual meetings.

#### **Adjournment**

Hearing no other business, George Topoll adjourned the meeting at 10:51 a.m. The Executive Board will meet on September 16, 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=LJ6b3oDZ\\_QE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJ6b3oDZ_QE)*