

NIRPC Full Commission Meeting  
NIRPC/Forum Building, Portage, IN  
January 15, 2015

Minutes

Chairman Brian Snedecor called the full Commission meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commission members present included Roosevelt Allen, Jr., Geof Benson, Robert Carnahan, Tom Clouser, Anthony Copeland, Jon Costas, Dave Decker, Jeff Dekker, Stan Dobosz, Bill Emerson, Jr., Don Ensign, Karen Freeman-Wilson, Jeff Freeze, Jeff Good, Michael Griffin, Richard Hardaway, Tom McDermott, Roger Miller, Blair Milo, Rich Murphy, Diane Noll, Randy Novak, Lori Reno, Chris Salatas, Bob Schaefer, Tom Schmitt, Joe Simonetto, Brian Snedecor, James Snyder, Greg Stinson, Jim Ton, George Topoll, Dave Uran and Jamal Washington.

Others present included Rick Marquis, Justin Mount, Joyce Newland, Rick Powers, Karen Bobo, Dave Shafer, Rebecca "Sis" Williams, David Wright, Julia Surber, Val Gomez, Greg Falkowski, Ray Dumbrys, Deb Backhus, John Swanson, Mary Kay Swanson, Holly Strains, Carole Carlson, and Keith Benman; and Tony Greep, Federal Transit Administration, Region 5 via conference phone.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Steve Strains, Angie Hayes, Dave Hollenbeck, Mitch Barloga, Belinda Petroskey, Kathy Luther, Jody Melton, Gary Evers, Jack Eskin, Sarah Geinosky, Stephen Sostaric, Scott Weber, Gabrielle Biciunas and Mary Thorne.

**Appointments:** Dave Hollenbeck announced the following appointments to the NIRPC Commission: Richard Hardaway for the Town of Merrillville, Jeff Good for the Porter County Commission, Bob Carnahan for the Town of Cedar Lake, Jamal Washington for the Lake County Council, Jeff Freeze for the Town of Burns Harbor, George Topoll, Union Township Trustee, Randy Novak for the La Porte County Council, and Chris Salatas for the Town of Lowell.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the December 18, 2014 meeting were approved on a motion by Geof Benson and a second by Anthony Copeland.

**Report of the Chair:**

Ty Warner said Norman E. Tufford was the first Executive Director at NIRPC and NIRPC presents an award to those who not only serve NIRPC but the entire region. He announced the Norman E. Tufford Award recipient this year as John Swanson, who provided an important connection and enhanced communication between Northeast Illinois and Northwest Indiana. He has continued to serve the region as President of Catholic Charities and on the Shirley Heinze Land Trust board. John Swanson said he had known Norman Tufford personally, and thanked the Commission for their work as well in making this a better region for all residents.

Brian Snedecor said the Nominating Committee consisted of Blair Milo, Geof Benson, Tom McDermott, Brian Snedecor and Ty Warner. The recommendations being nominated for the slate of officers and executive board members for 2015 are:

Chairman	Blair Milo
Vice-Chair	Jim Ton
Treasurer	Roosevelt Allen, Jr.
Secretary	Bob Schaefer

Executive Board Members are:

Lake County	Michael Griffin
Lake County	Anthony Copeland
La Porte County	Dave Decker
La Porte County	Richard Murphy
Porter County	Don Ensign
Porter County	Greg Stinson
Governor's Appointee	Ed Soliday
Immediate Past Chair	Brian Snedecor

Election of Officers/Executive Board: Randy Novak motioned to approve the 2015 slate of officers; George Topoll seconded; motion carried.

Brian Snedecor thanked the Commission for the opportunity to serve as Chairman and remarked on the importance of attending these meetings as well as the committee meetings in order to be able to conduct the important business of NIRPC. He then turned the gavel over to Blair Milo.

Ty Warner presented Brian Snedecor with a plaque for his service as Chair for going above and beyond in his service to NIRPC and the region through sometimes difficult matters.

Blair Milo added that it was great working with the Commission and the committees. She said her goals for the year include keeping the meetings on point, improving transparency and helping people in following the processes and to make the region a better place for everyone.

The schedule of NIRPC Commission meetings for 2015 as well as a list of committees was available in the packet of materials. Ty Warner announced that due to the build out of the NIRPC offices, meetings in February and March will likely be held at locations other than NIRPC. The next full Commission meeting is in April and we should be able to meet at NIRPC.

Blair Milo said that changes in committee structure are still being examined. She encouraged Commissioners to submit their preference sheets today, if possible. Ty Warner corrected the date that was on the committee sheet that the Land Use Committee meets on the *third* Wednesday.

Ty Warner presented a staff service award to Steve Strains, who has completed 40 years of exemplary service at NIRPC beginning in 1973 as an intern and full-time since 1974. Steve Strains commented that

at NIRPC he has worked with many of the best and brightest in the region, both staff and elected officials. Blair Milo commented that Steve has been a tremendous asset to the Commission and to the region.

**Report of the Executive Director:**

- Ty Warner encouraged everyone to read the NIRPC newsletter, which highlighted some very significant accomplishments in 2014. He thanked staff for all their fine work during the year, and pointed out the special interview with Steve Strains that also appears in the newsletter.
- Reconstruction of the office space will begin on February 22. The Commissioners were given their city, town and county seals, and city and town hall and county building photographs that hung on a wall at NIRPC. Due to the reconfiguration of the office, they will no longer be able to be displayed, though another way will be found to exhibit NIRPC members. Ty Warner said some staff will temporarily occupy the auditorium and February and March NIRPC meetings of any kind will be held at other venues. Regular discussions with the architect have been and are being held with NIRPC, the Northwest Indiana Forum, the Portage Redevelopment Commission and Holladay Properties.
- The next full Commission meeting is scheduled for April.
- The National Association of Regional Council's (NARC) annual *Conference of Regions* is being held next month. Ty Warner, the Commission officers, Geof Benson as NARC District Representative and Dave Shafer as past President of NARC will be traveling to D.C. to attend the conference.
- Rep. Ed Soliday is taking the NIRPC resolution on the change to NIRPC's enabling legislation to the General Assembly, relative to weighted voting to be the *last* decennial census instead of the 2000 decennial census. Rep. Soliday is also a co-sponsor of HB 1215 to increase the amount of the Public Mass Transit Fund to \$60,000,000. The NIRPC Legislative Committee will discuss this and other matters at their next meeting.
- Ty Warner thanked staff member Jack Eskin for his work. He will be leaving NIRPC to become the Deputy Director of Redevelopment for the City of Gary at the end of the month.
- With regard to the Alliance for Regional Development, NIRPC took the lead in developing a GIS tool which combines data for southeast Wisconsin, northeast Illinois, and northwest Indiana, which will be used by the private sector. This was the highlight of a summit presented last month at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago and will help make this part of the Midwest globally competitive in this market. Sarah Geinosky put in a large amount of time and extra hours working with Purdue's Center for Visualization and Simulation and their Center for Regional Development, mentoring Purdue students to make this tool possible.

**Presentation:** Kathy Luther, NIRPC Environmental Programs Director, gave a presentation on the kickoff to the *Solarize Northwest Indiana* campaign, which is an augmented power source connected to the grid. Solarization programs have resulted in the creation of jobs as well as more accessibility and affordability of solar energy. Up to four communities or community partnerships within the NIRPC region will be selected to participate in the program. Significant outreach will be done and NIRPC will assist with recruitment efforts from regional environmental organizations and universities. The communities selected will work as a partner with NIRPC and the solar photovoltaic (PV) installer procured by NIRPC. The installer, which will be selected in January, will provide attractive pricing, purchase and financing options, installation services, community incentives and technical support. Training and a workshop will also be held. Pilot communities will be selected in February. The program will run 15 weeks, beginning in mid-March. An application form is included in the brochure. There have been other successful pilot programs in several states. Contact Kathy Luther for more information.

**Finance & Personnel Committee:** Committee Chair Jim Ton suggested that becoming a member of this Committee is the quickest crash course on the workings of NIRPC. He thanked Angie Hayes and her staff for their work with the Committee. He reported that the committee met this morning and reviewed the financial status. The budget expenditure is under 85% for 2014. What to do with old equipment relative to the build-out were discussed. Bids will be awarded on January 22. New accounting software, AccuWare, was purchased and will go live in April. Jim Ton thanked the Commission for the opportunity to serve on this Committee.

**Environmental Management Policy Committee:** Committee Chairman Geof Benson said the draft December minutes were in the packet. The Committee met on January 8 at the National Park Ranger Training Station and heard presentations on the Greenways and Blueways Plan and a report from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the status of the coal ash issue in The Pines.

**Transportation Policy Committee:**

- Stan Dobosz reported that the Transportation Policy Committee met on January 13th. The Committee heard a presentation from NIRPC staff on their updates of both the 2010 Ped and Pedal Plan and 2007 Greenways & Blueways Plan. A presentation on that topic will be made at the February Executive Board meeting. There are six actions for consideration. The first action was on Resolution 15-06 on pages 21-24, adopting the ITS Architecture update for 2015. Scott Weber described some of the elements of the Architecture and referred to the two-page frequently asked questions sheet in the packet. The entire Architecture is on the NIRPC website. In answer to a question by Michael Griffin, Scott Weber said the Architecture will be used in solicitation for projects in the long range transportation plan. Steve Strains added that in the 2013 Planning Certification Review, NIRPC received a corrective action by the federal transportation agencies and Scott Weber did a fine job in helping to rectify this matter. On a motion by Geof Benson and a second by Greg Stinson, the Commission voted unanimously to approve Resolution 15-06 adopting the ITS Architecture update.
- The second action was on Resolution 15-01 on pages 25-27, Amendment #31 to the Fiscal Year 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program. Gary Evers described the amendment for changes to existing projects for the City of Hobart, Lake County and La Porte County. On a motion by Stan Dobosz and a second by Joe Simonetto, the Commission voted unanimously to approve Resolution 15-01, Amendment #31 to the FY 2014-2017 TIP.
- The third action was on Resolution 15-02 on pages 28-30, Amendment #32 to the Fiscal Year 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program. Gary Evers described the amendment, which would add two new INDOT projects. On a motion by Stan Dobosz and a second by Joe Simonetto, the Commission voted unanimously to approve Resolution 15-01, Amendment #32 to the FY 2014-2017 TIP.
- The fourth action was on Resolution 15-05 on pages 31-33, amending the FY 2015-2016 Unified Planning Work Program. Belinda Petroskey describe the amendment, which would include a \$150,000 transit feasibility study for the City of Hobart, utilizing \$120,000 in federal funds with a \$30,000 local match. Brian Snedecor added that the demand for public transit is growing and we have to be prepared to meet that need. On a motion by Stan Dobosz and a second by Joe Simonetto, the Commission voted unanimously to approve Resolution 15-05, amending the FY 2015-2016 Unified Planning Work Program.

- The fifth action was on Resolution 15-04 on pages 34-36, amending the FY 2015-2016 Unified Planning Work Program. Belinda Petroskey described the amendment that would include a \$150,000 transit feasibility study for the City of Portage, utilizing \$120,000 in federal funds with a \$30,000 local match. James Snyder commended Valparaiso for their work with public transportation and invited other communities to work together to share the cost of provided public transportation to the region. On a motion by Stan Dobosz and a second by Joe Simonetto, the Commission voted unanimously to approve Resolution 15-04, amending the FY 2015-2016 Unified Planning Work Program.
- The final action was on Resolution 15-03 on pages 37-39, Amendment #30 to the FY 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program. Belinda Petroskey described the amendment that would include the transit feasibility studies for both the City of Hobart and the City of Portage. Stephen Sostaric added that a 30-day public comment period was held between December 10 and January 9. Five favorable comments were made, and the positive comment report was provided today in matrix format which reflects the newly adopted Public Participation Plan. The matrix makes it easier to see the break-out of information as required in the Plan. In addition to some residents of the region, comments were provided by the City of Valparaiso's transit manager and the coordinator with the Indiana Citizens Alliance for Transit. On a motion by Stan Dobosz and a second by Greg Stinson, the Commission voted unanimously to approve Resolution 15-03, amending the FY 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program.
- The next meeting of the Transportation Policy Committee is scheduled for 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Indiana Department of Transportation:** Rick Powers reported that INDOT is waiting to hear on the Illiana, which was suspended by new Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner along with planning and development of other major road projects pending his review. Issues Rick Powers discussed or was asked about were the recent breakdown of some INDOT plow trucks resulting in trucks being sent in from other parts of the State; the desire for the Cline Avenue Bridge to be built to improve traffic and safety on local roads; and the matter of lights along the Borman Expressway not working, and lack of reflectors on the Borman and other roads. Rick Powers said copper thieves were responsible for the lack of adequate expressway lighting. Karen Freeman-Wilson commented that a concerted effort should be made by all communities through the regional STOP team to help stop the thefts. Dave Uran commented on damaged and unreplaced median safety cable barriers on I-65. Tom McDermott concurred, and commented that safety barriers should be in place on other multi-lane highways throughout the state, citing an example of a recent traffic fatality on the Indiana Toll Road due to the driver texting and crossing over into oncoming traffic. He added that the next NIRPC Legislative Committee, which he chairs, will meet on January 16 at 10 a.m. will discuss the issue of making median safety barriers mandatory in the State of Indiana. Blair Milo closed the discussion, and suggested anyone with questions contact Rick Powers directly.

**Northwest Indiana Economic Development District (NWIEDD):**

Roosevelt Allen, Jr. reported that the NWIEDD met on December 11 and received a response to their RFP for a District Director from Indianapolis-based Ratio. A subcommittee was created to interview their candidate, Matt Ruff. At a subsequent meeting the NWIEDD reconciled the differences in the RFP and his response. The NWIEDD entered into a contractual agreement after getting approval from Patricia Overall of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). As the Director, Matt Ruff's three

primary functions are to obtain official district designation, maintain and update the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and assist smaller units of government in obtaining federal grants from the EDA.

**Other Business:**

- Tom McDermott said the Legislative Committee meets on call, more often during the legislative session. The first meeting is tomorrow at 10 a.m. to discuss cable strip barriers, the Regional Development Authority (RDA) changes, HB 1215 the increase in Public Mass Transportation Funds (PMTF) and any federal issues. All are invited to attend.
- Robert Carnahan said the Indiana Bicentennial Commission is now being implemented. A lot of communities already started doing things. He invited every Lake County elected official to come to the *16 Plus* meeting on January 23 at 9 a.m. at the Town of Schererville. As part of Indiana's Bicentennial in 2016 a torch will be carried throughout every county. Blair Milo commented that La Porte County has a group involved in bicentennial events.
- Roosevelt Allen, Jr. said he and Dave Decker have formed an agreement between Lake County and La Porte County to pursue obtaining the Indiana Toll Road lease. Dave Decker said government does work when you want it to work. He thanked Lake County for its support and participation.
- Ty Warner said the new Commissioners have received information packets.

**Announcements:**

- Belinda Petroskey said the first meeting of the Triangle Transit Service between Michigan City, the City of LaPorte and Purdue North Central in Westville will be held on January 29 at 9:00 a.m. at Michigan City City Hall. Blair Milo added that the scheduled start date of service is February 2. Three of the four Commissioners instrumental in getting this service were present: Blair Milo, Rich Murphy and Dave Decker.
- Gary Evers said a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) was issued and the deadline is February 13 for the \$13.5 million in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding and \$9.9 million in Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) money in Lake and Porter, \$3.7 million in STP Group 2 in La Porte County as well as HSIP and CMAQ funds. NIRPC will be meeting with La Porte County stakeholders and a list of what was submitted for that solicitation will be listed at the March Transportation Policy Committee meeting. This is the last chance to obtain funding for alternative fuel, as Congress did not extend funding for that.
- David Wright, GPTC announced their 2014 annual report. It was a good year with service expansion from 8 to 10 communities and added vehicles.
- The Commissioners were reminded to turn in their Committee Preference Forms.

**Public Comment on Agenda Items:**

- No requests for public comment were made.

Hearing no other business, on a motion by Geof Benson and a second by Dave Decker, Blair Milo adjourned the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

*A Digital MP3 of this meeting is filed. Contact Mary Thorne at the phone or email below should you wish to receive a copy of it. DVD recordings will be available once they are received by NIRPC from the videographer.*

For requests for alternate formats, please contact Mary Thorne at NIRPC at (219) 763-6060 extension 131 or at [mthorne@nirpc.org](mailto:mthorne@nirpc.org). Individuals with hearing impairments may contact us through the Indiana Relay 711 service by calling 711 or (800) 743-3333.

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