

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting
NIRPC/Forum Building, Portage, IN
December 11, 2014

Minutes

Chairman Brian Snedecor called the Executive Board meeting to order at 9:11 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Executive Board Members present included Roosevelt Allen, Jr., Anthony Copeland, Dave Decker, Don Ensign, Blair Milo, Brian Snedecor, Ed Soliday, Jim Ton and Nancy Adams via Skype (non-voting).

Other Commissioners present included Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Jeff Dekker, Stan Dobosz, Bill Emerson, Jr., Karen Freeman-Wilson, Michael Griffin, Tom McDermott, Jr., Roger Miller, Rich Murphy, Diane Noll, Lori Reno and Joe Simonetto.

Others present included Justin Mount, Steve Walsh, Robert Alderman, Rick Powers, Bob Carnahan, Bruce Lindner, David Wright, Jim Nowacki, Jennifer Alander, Julia Surber, Tom MacLennan, Val Gomez, Teresa Torres, Rebecca L. "Sis" Williams, Renae Jackson, George T. Janiec, Christa Sierra, Christopher Murphy, Jon Voelz, Ray Dumbrys, Christopher Meyers, Carole Carlson, and Keith Benman.

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

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the October 16, 2014 meeting were approved on a motion by Dave Decker and a second by Don Ensign.

Report of the Chair:

- Brian Snedecor thanked outgoing commissioners Nancy Adams, Jim Polarek, Rich Mrozinski and Anthony Pampalone for their service and commitment to the Commission. He also thanked Rosalie Jacobs, who retired a few months ago.
- Brian Snedecor and Ty Warner will meet with the Nominating Committee after the Executive Board meeting. Committee members include Blair Milo, Geof Benson and Tom McDermott.
- Brian Snedecor presented Jim Ton and Joe Simonetto with Perfect Attendance certificates, commenting that it is a challenge to meet full quorums and these two Commissioners attended all 12 meetings of the Commission in 2014.

Report of the Executive Director:

- Ty Warner provided the commissioners with the presentation given at the last meeting by Kelly Dissler on economic development issues in the region as well as his contact information.

- Ty Warner attended the very successful TEDx (Technology Entertainment Design) local conference organized through the Emerging Leaders Network. Blair Milo was one of the four speakers and created her own slide of the *Pathway to 2040*. Blair Milo added that there is an opportunity to create a regional “happiest place on earth,” which would be a long-term deep-seated feeling of contentment which comes from earned success and the ability to add to the world around you. Through the six themes outlined in the *Pathway to 2040* plan of transportation, environmental stewardship, etc., we can create this environment for everyone to have an opportunity to earn success.
- Ty Warner said a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Chicago to Detroit high speed rail line is being reviewed. NIRPC has also been working with communities along the corridor for proposed high speed rail from Chicago to Columbus, with local stops in Gary and Valparaiso, and local funding is being secured for that EIS.
- Based on the resolution of support for the Regional Development Authority (RDA) passed by NIRPC, Ty Warner testified before the state budget hearings with Bill Hanna of the RDA in support for the RDA.
- Support for the RDA was the top issue at the OneRegion community leaders retreat held in October. NIRPC provided keypad polling for the event and Sarah Geinosky of NIRPC staff provided the technical support.
- Steve Strains recently presented on the 2040 planning process at IUN’s recent civic engagement conference.
- Sarah Geinosky, Gabrielle Biciunas and Scott Weber have been working with the Alliance for Regional Development. NIRPC took the lead in producing a GIS tool combining regional infrastructure tool combining data from the NIRPC region with data Northeast Illinois and Southeast Wisconsin. The tool will be showcased at the December 19 tri-state summit in Chicago.
- The next meeting of the Commission scheduled for January 15, 2015. There is a full agenda with election of NIRPC’s officers, and a quorum is needed for that full Commission meeting.

Presentation: Steve Walsh, Lake Shore Public Media moderated the October 29 public meeting regarding public transit services in Northwest Indiana and provided a summary and comments. He said there were public transit representatives as well as elected officials present at the meetings. NIRPC staff listened to the public and answered questions and presented on NIRPC’s role as a conduit for funding for some of the smaller agencies. Everybody Counts members were on hand and advocated for those with disabilities in Northwest Indiana. Steve Walsh said there was no solution, but a greater understanding of public transportation needs was achieved. Some people expressed frustration and others were satisfied with their transit options. He reported that North Township Trustee Frank Mrvan talked about North Township’s Dial-a-Ride, that it quadrupled in size since 2012 and said that the \$1.3 million in federal funds they are using will run out before the end of next year. A local revenue source must be found in order to maintain the level of service they are providing. Steve Walsh provided examples of comments heard at the meeting by those who are in need of a better public transportation system.

Brian Snedecor thanked Steve Walsh for his time and patience in moderating both sessions on October 29. Ty Warner added that the transcripts and video of the meetings are available on the NIRPC website. Bound copies of the transcript were handed out today and a copy was at each Commissioner’s places with their packet. He encouraged the Commissioners to read the information to see the level of passion

in the region about the critical need for public transportation. He said that while the item on the agenda today ends the responsibilities of the settlement agreement with Everybody Counts, and the Consent Decree is over, it is not the end of NIRPC's commitment to this issue of expanding transit service in the region. The challenge remains the lack of a local share match to be able to acquire more federal funding. Tom McDermott offered for NIRPC to form a committee to examine the needs of public transportation in the region and Karen Freeman-Wilson expressed her willingness to serve on such a committee. Brian Snedecor said bus transit is something everyone has to get serious about, as the need for it increases with the region's increasing aging population. He commended GPTC for their efforts in trying to meet the demand for public transportation and thanked Everybody Counts for their engagement at these meetings. Ty Warner suggested inviting Mike Noland, the new NICTD general manager, to attend a Commission meeting next year.

Finance & Personnel Committee: Committee Chair Jim Ton reported that the committee met this morning and received various information, updates and reports. There were no adverse issues. The budget expenditure is under 80% and under 92% for the year. Some old equipment will be recycled. The staff health insurance plan was tweaked to meet the Affordable Care Act. NIRPC staff will be going to 26 pay periods from 24, which will help with NIRPC's accounting process. Meetings on the office reconstruction are taking place regularly and work should begin in February. The Government Finance Office Association issued a Certificate of Achievement for excellence in financial reporting to NIRPC for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for this physical year ending December 31. Jim Ton commended Angie Hayes and the accounting staff for their fine work. Ty Warner added that this is the highest award given for government financial reporting, and NIRPC has enjoyed 10 years of perfect audits.

Environmental Management Policy Committee: Committee Chairman Geof Benson said the committee met twice since the last Commission meeting. Chicago Wilderness is giving an award to Shirley Heinze Land Trust for their excellence in ecological restoration. This is the first given in Indiana. Next month, NIRPC will be looking for communities to volunteer to help promote solar rooftops, through installation for both residential and businesses. The next meeting will be on January 8 at the Indiana Dunes Ranger Training Station on Mineral Springs Road.

Transportation Policy Committee:

- Vice Chairman Stan Dobosz reported that the committee met on December 9 and heard a presentation from staff on the Regional Corridor Study, which will examine gaps between regional highways and limited access local arterials to help with congestion. A survey about people's travel in the region is available and will be posted on line.
- Gary Evers described Resolution 14-33, Amendment #29 to the FY 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program for local projects for Griffith, Highland, Crown Point and Michigan City. These are the last of the 2013-2014 projects and the funds are zeroed out through 2014. On a motion by Jim Ton and a second by Anthony Copeland, Resolution 14-33 was adopted by the Executive Board.
- Gary Evers described Resolution 14-34, Amendment #28 to the FY 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program for 10 small INDOT projects. On a motion by Dave Decker and a second by Blair Milo, Resolution 14-34 was adopted by the Executive Board.
- Stephen Sostaric presented the Public Participation Plan Public Comment Report. Steve Strains presented an overview of the over two-year Public Participation Plan update process and the

extensive amount of work that went into developing the new plan. He added that NIRPC has engaged thousands of people in its almost 50-year history, and the Public Participation Plan is adding technological advantages such as social media, variable meeting locations and webcasts and webinars as they become available. He listed some of the ways the new plan is an improvement over the plan adopted in 2007. On a motion by Dave Decker and a second by Jim Ton, Resolution 14-35, the Public Participation Plan, was adopted by the Executive Board.

- Stephen Sostaric reported on the 2040 Plan Update Public Comment Summary Report which was in the packet. It provides comments people had during the comment period that opened the development of the update of the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan. Stan Dobosz said the next meeting of the Transportation Policy Committee will be at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 13, 2015.

Indiana Department of Transportation: Robert Alderman asked to meet with the officers immediately after the meeting to discuss a situation. Robert Alderman introduced Rick Powers, new Director of INDOT-Northwest District. Rick Powers presented his background and said he will work to improve the District. He said INDOT is shifting more toward maintenance than new construction. Robert Alderman asked to meet with Ty Warner, Blair Milo, Brian Snedecor and Ed Soliday early next year to discuss INDOT's finances and funding priorities. Brian Snedecor expressed appreciation for everything Robert Alderman has done for the counties and communities in the Northwest District.

Northwest Indiana Economic Development District (NWIEDD):

Roosevelt Allen, Jr. reported that the NWIEDD discussed staffing the Economic Development District at their meeting on October 28. The district board members agreed to create and publish a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the work. One RFP was received from Ratio, which has offices in Indianapolis and Chicago. The NWIEDD will meet at 11 a.m. to review that proposal. The District also had a discussion with Heather Ennis and Kay Nelson of the Northwest Indiana Forum to lobby the governor and the Indiana Economic Development Corp. for their letters of recommendation to forward to the Economic Development Association to assist in receiving district status.

Other Business: No other business was brought before the Commission.

Announcements:

- Brian Snedecor expressed his appreciation for Nancy Adams and her service both to Porter County and the NIRPC Board. Nancy Adams (via Skype from California) said she enjoyed her four years in office, and working with the NIRPC Commission and staff. She also commended Blair Milo for her work at the TEDx Conference.
- Geof Benson introduced Beverly Shores' new Clerk-Treasurer, John Voelz.
- Robert Carnahan, Cedar Lake Town Councilman, is completing 27 years on the council and was just reelected to his eighth term. He announced that US 41 was closed this morning due to an accident, but is now open.
- Gary Evers said a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) is out and applications are due February 13, 2015. FHWA extended CMAQ funding for alternative fuels through 2017 and after that it will no longer be available. Alternative fuels include anything but electricity – biofuels, propane, E85, CNG, propane, etc.

Public Comment on Agenda Items:

- Everybody Counts Executive Director Teresa Torres thanked Steve Walsh for his presentation and for his facilitation at the October meeting and she asked that NIRPC periodically hold these kinds of discussions on public transportation. She said the methodologies in the Plan approved by the NIRPC board today builds neither accountability nor solid expectations for what NIRPC will do to encourage more public participation. Teresa Torres questioned Steve Strains' reference to the number of participants at NIRPC's meetings. She said that an Everybody Counts client is still waiting for a response from NIRPC to a complaint, although she acknowledged NIRPC's attorney issued a response. Ty Warner clarified that Steve Strains' reference to the amount of people involved referred to NIRPC's entire history, not just participation over the last two years.
- Jim Nowacki, Gary, commented that there are three prime sources of economic development in the City of Gary: all levels of government, U.S. Steel and the illegal drug trade. There was a drug raid on a property being rented by the Gary Chicago Airport to a trucking company. He pleaded that everyone responsible look at everything going on at the airport.
- Christa Sierra, Merrillville, related her experiences with the lack of an efficient public-transit system in the region and a bad experience she had with the South Lake County Community Services staff. She said that good public transportation is desperately needed by seniors and people with disabilities, but it should be available for everyone.
- Renae Jackson, Gary, thanked Steve Walsh for his facilitation at the meeting on October 29 and asked for a report on that meeting. She said it would be helpful to know how many people attended the other public meetings. The mailing list must continue to be updated. ADA compliance is needed in all communities. Everybody Counts has been trying to advocate for the disabled and convey their passion and despair regarding public transportation.

Hearing no other business, on a motion by Dave Decker and a second by Jim Ton, Brian Snedecor adjourned the meeting at 10:45 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. Individuals with hearing impairments may contact us through the Indiana Relay 711 service by calling 711 or (800) 743-3333.

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