

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting
NIRPC Office, Lake Michigan Room
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN
April 21, 2016
Minutes

Chairman Jim Ton called the meeting of the Executive Board to order at 9:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Executive Board members present included Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Anthony Copeland, Dave Decker, Tom McDermott, Blair Milo, Greg Stinson and Jim Ton.

Other Commissioners present included Bob Carnahan, Bill Emerson, Jr., Tom Fath, Karen Freeman-Wilson, Richard Hardaway, Jack Jeralds, Tom Schmitt, Dave Shafer and George Topoll.

Guests present included Justin Mount, Patricia Wisniewski, Angie Cloutier, Matt Deitchley, Val Gomez, Rick Powers, David Wright, Joe Crnkovich, Julia Surber and Tim Zorn.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Steve Strains, Ethan Lowe, Kathy Luther, Mitch Barloga, Gary Evers, Belinda Petroskey, Gabrielle Biciunas, Stephen Sostaric, James Winters and Mary Thorne.

Presentation: Patricia Wisniewski presented a video trailer and described the making of *“Shifting Sands: On the Path to Sustainability,”* a documentary film exploring how the Indiana Dunes region may offer a blueprint toward a more sustainable future. Funding for the educational component is being sought. The documentary will be shown on Lakeshore Public Television on April 22 at 9 p.m., April 24 at 8 p.m., April 27 at 10:30 p.m. and April 28 at 9 p.m. It will also be shown at the Douglas Center on April 23 at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., the Dorothy Buell Visitor Center, April 24 at 2 p.m., May 7 at The Field Museum Simpson Theater at 10 a.m. and May 16 at the Porter County Administration Building at 7 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: On a motion by Geof Benson and a second by Kevin Breitzke, the minutes of the March 17, 2016 Executive Board meeting were approved as presented.

Report of the Chair – Jim Ton

- A committee preference survey was electronically distributed some time ago. A paper version of the form was made available during the meeting for completion and submittal at the end of today’s meeting. Committee assignments will be made before the next meeting.
- Jim Ton commended NICTD on the decorative wrap on the South Shore train car honoring the 50th anniversary of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and also said the Bikes on Trains program is in progress for the summer.

Report of the Executive Director – Ty Warner

- This is the first month of meetings in the newly decorated room which is named the Lake Michigan Room. Ty Warner sent a letter of thanks to Dewey Pearman for his hospitality at Construction Advancement Foundation the past few months, graciously hosting many NIRPC meetings. Northwest Indiana Forum and NIRPC share the space formerly occupied by NIRPC. There are two conference rooms off the lobby: The Dune Room and the Swale Room. There are three conference rooms in the NIRPC office: The Calumet Room, the Kankakee Room and the Mural Room.
- Mitch Barloga passed out copies of the *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan Update Companion*, which was adopted last year, and mentioned that an amendment to the 2040 Plan regarding I-65 will be presented for action at the May 19 meeting.
- May 19 will be a meeting of the Full Commission at 9 a.m. One of the items on the agenda will be discussion and action on the I-65 added travel lanes project.
- As has been relayed in many news accounts already, the proposed Great Lakes Basin Transportation's proposed freight rail line runs from LaPorte County, Indiana all the way around Chicago into Wisconsin. NIRPC staff met with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) about the process and to offer data and information about the region, but NIRPC has no formal approval role in the process as there are no public funds proposed for the project. The public meetings on the project currently being conducted by the STB are part of the scoping process, and the STB will then be embarking on the development of an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) which could take an additional one to two years to complete. There will be additional opportunities for comment – and more information to comment on – as the STB develops alternatives to the route in its EIS, including a no-action option. James Winters is the point person from NIRPC staff tracking developments with the project and interfacing with the STB. NIRPC has a link to the project on its website for informational purposes, and will supplement this with additional information in the future. In the meantime, comments on the project should be directed to the Surface Transportation Board, and there is a link on NIRPC's website to the STB where comments can be submitted. At this point in the STB's process, there is one more public meeting scheduled for Seneca, Illinois the evening of April 21, and an online webinar scheduled for April 27.
- The Marquette Action Plan survey may be taken by accessing NIRPC's website and a business card was provided with access via smartphone through a QR code on the card.
- Following the principles of the Wingspread Accord signed by NIRPC and the three MPOs of southeast Wisconsin, northeast Illinois, and southwest Michigan, there have been increased meetings by the Executive Directors of these agencies to enhance cross-state collaboration. Updates to NIRPC's cooperative agreements with Chicago Metropolitan Area for Planning and Southwest Michigan Planning Commission specifically will be voted on today, and will help to further increase the effectiveness of joint planning work across state lines.
- The Northwest Indiana Forum hosted "*For the Love of the Region*," an afternoon discovering all that is right in our region, with NIRPC staff participating. Keynote speaker, Peter Kageyama, author of the books *For the Love of Cities* and *Love Where You Live*, shared his insights on what makes a community "lovable." The following workshop with Kageyama generated many good ideas for helping northwest Indiana's residents fall in love with their region.

Environmental Management Policy Committee:

- Stephen Sostaric referred to the Public Comment Report on the Deep River-Portage Burns Waterway Watershed Management. There was one comment made, but it did not require any major modifications.
- Geof Benson reported that the committee met on April 7 and recommends adoption of Resolution 16-10, approving the Deep River-Portage Burns Waterway Watershed Plan. Kevin Breitzke motioned to adopt the resolution, seconded by Greg Stinson. Bill Emerson said he was impressed with Kathy Luther and Joe Exl's involvement in this project. Kevin Breitzke noted this was a bi-county effort and it is important that we work together toward a common end. Geof Benson said the Indiana Department of Environmental Management asked NIRPC to take this on and it is groundbreaking. Jim Ton called for a vote, noting a motion and second were made. The Executive Board voted to adopt Resolution 16-10, the Deep River-Portage Burns Waterway Watershed Plan.

Transportation Policy Committee:

Dave Decker reported that the Transportation Policy Committee met on April 12th. The Committee heard staff presentations on nine miles of new trails opening in 2016, and the survey for the Marquette Action Plan which will help improve access to Lake Michigan.

At the TPC meeting, there was a lengthy discussion and several motions on how to best divide \$1.149 million in unprogrammed funds at risk of being returned to INDOT. Consensus was reached with the City of Hammond receiving \$200,000 and prorating the remaining funds based on the project applications submitted by the transit operators. The STIP, which is the State TIP, submission window deadline was April 13 and NIRPC issued an emergency amendment allocating the funds.

Several actions were presented for consideration. The first two regard the approvals of Cooperative Agreements with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning found on pages 9-11, and the Southwestern Michigan Planning Commission found on pages 12-13. Steve Strains briefed the Board on the agreements. Dave Decker said the Transportation Policy Committee recommended action on the two agreements. On a motion by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by Geof Benson, the Executive Board voted to approve the agreement with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and the agreement with Southwestern Michigan Planning Commission.

Stephen Sostaric referred to the Public Comment Report on the FY 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program. A 7-day public comment period was held and no comments were received.

Belinda Petroskey described the two Indiana Dunes projects and two INDOT projects for highways in Amendment 18. Dave Decker said the Transportation Policy Committee recommends action on Resolution 16-11. On a motion by Dave Decker, seconded by Geof Benson, the Executive Board voted to adopt Resolution 16-11, Amendment #18 to the FY 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program.

Belinda Petroskey described the various NICTD transit projects under Federal Transit Administration Section 5337 in Amendment 19. No comments were received during the comment period. Dave Decker said the Transportation Policy Committee recommends action on Resolution 16-12. On a

motion by Dave Decker, seconded by Kevin Breitzke, the Executive Board voted to adopt Resolution 16-12, Amendment #19 to the FY 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program.

The next meeting date of the Transportation Policy Committee will be Tuesday, May 10th at 9:00 a.m. at the NIRPC office.

Indiana Department of Transportation:

Rick Powers said there was an issue with delivery of parts needed for replacement of cable strip barriers along I-65, but all the work should be completed by the end of the month. The road-marking work around Renaissance School in LaPorte has been done, which answers a comment made at last month's Executive Board meeting. Construction season is here and summer maintenance and repair is beginning. Matt Deitchley from INDOT answered a question by Bob Carnahan concerning US 41 from 135th to US 30 and said communication with the Town of Cedar Lake is being improved. Geof Benson thanked INDOT for their help with fueling with the National Lakeshore. Dave Decker thanked INDOT for their help in closing a road for the Pyrotechnics Fireworks Convention coming to LaPorte in August. Jim Ton said the work on SR 49 was greatly needed. Tom McDermott thanked INDOT for their diligent work with the cable strip barriers.

Other Business:

Tom McDermott initiated a discussion on the impacts of the Great Lakes Basin Railroad proposal for a freight rail bypass around Chicago. Currently, there is no federal funding involved, nor has a route been determined. Jim Ton said the railroad is in the information-gathering stage. Geof Benson said the final route has yet to be determined, so the current line on maps doesn't matter as much as a final location. He mentioned the problem is how to separate grade crossings. Dave Decker said that there are 62 proposed bridges planned over major highways on its route and it could go higher. There are a lot of unknowns until the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is completed. Ty Warner said the EIS will provide a list of alternatives. NIRPC is taking an active role in providing population and other data to the STB.

Public Comment on Agenda Items:

Jim Nowacki, resident of Gary, commented on money that spent recently on roads, particularly U.S. 12 in Gary, and commended East Chicago for rebuilding the Cline Avenue Bridge.

Announcements:

Bob Carnahan announced that Lake County Solid Waste District's first program of the summer on April 30 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Hudson Campbell Center in Gary, and tomorrow morning 19 municipalities are meeting in Schererville to continue discussion on tax appeals for big box properties and potential loss of revenue.

Hearing no other business, on a motion by Kevin Breitzke and a second by Dave Decker, Jim Ton adjourned the meeting at 10:10 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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