

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting
Construction Advancement Foundation
2050 Southport Road, Portage, IN
August 20, 2015

Minutes

Chairperson Blair Milo called the meeting of the Executive Board to order at 9:08 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and a brief stretch session.

Executive Board Members present included Roosevelt Allen, Jr., Dave Decker, Don Ensign, Michael Griffin, Blair Milo, Rich Murphy, Bob Schaefer, Ed Soliday and Jim Ton.

Other Commissioners present included John Bayler, Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Bob Carnahan, Karen Freeman-Wilson, Richard Hardaway, Tom McDermott, Diane Noll, Jean Poulard, Tom Schmitt, Joe Simonetto, Brian Snedecor and George Topoll.

Others present included Ethan Lowe, Mary Enright, Janette Wilson, Roy Nunnally, Matt Deitchley, Dewey Pearman, Heather Ennis, Lyndsay Quist, Bruce Lindner, Rick Powers, David Wright, Jim Nowacki, Nick Barbknecht, Mike Vandergast and Deborah Laverty.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Steve Strains, Kathy Luther, Angie Hayes, Allen Hammond, Gary Evers, Mitch Barloga, Belinda Petroskey, Kelly Wenger, James Winters, Kathleen Honl, Sarah Geinosky, Scott Weber, Gabrielle Biciunas, Stephen Sostaric and Mary Thorne.

Appointment to the Commission: Ethan Lowe, reporting for Dave Hollenbeck, announced the appointment of Cary Kirkham to the Commission representing LaPorte County Council, replacing Randy Novak.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the July 23, 2015 meeting were approved on a motion by Jim Ton and a second by Dave Decker.

Report of the Chair:

- Blair Milo reported that the State of Indiana's Regional Cities Initiative is accepting applications for funds to enhance service along the South Shore Rail Line. A partnership of NIRPC, the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD), the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA), the Northwest Indiana Forum and One Region has been jointly preparing the application. The opportunity for funding through this initiative would provide for substantial investment in commuter rail connecting Chicago to Northwest Indiana. On a motion by Ed Soliday and a second by Michael Griffin, the Executive Board approved Resolution 15-22 in support of an application to the Regional Cities Initiative.

- Blair Milo said the new committees were approved at the May Full Commission meeting. Many Commissioners have submitted their preferences. The first draft of committee appointments will be sent out shortly and Commissioners should review it for any issues so that it can be finalized and in place for 2016.

Report of the Executive Director:

- Ty Warner reported that the NIRPC office is still under construction and NIRPC should be able to start occupying the new offices in the beginning of September, with the Northwest Indiana Forum moving into their new space about a month afterwards. NIRPC will not have access to its auditorium again until January or February 2016, but multiple smaller conference rooms are being built into the new space and will be available. He thanked Forum staff for being so accommodating to NIRPC staff affected by the water main break. He also thanked Dewey Pearman for the Construction Advancement Foundation's graciousness in using the Training Center.
- Ty Warner welcomed several members of INDOT staff from Indianapolis who will be meeting with NIRPC staff after the Executive Board meeting.
- Ty Warner said the federal transportation reauthorization – the six year DRIVE Act (Developing a Reliable and Innovative Vision for the Economy (DRIVE) Act (S. 1647) – was passed by the Senate and would provide \$277.4 billion in spending for highway programs, which represents an average growth of \$5.3 billion per year. It still must go before the House when they reconvene later this month. The current funding reauthorization has been extended through October 29. There is an issue with a reduction in Surface Transportation Program (STP) funding for localities which needs to be corrected; an amendment was drafted by Senators Wickam (MS) and Booker (NJ) to fix this, but no amendments were allowed on the Senate floor. This will be watched carefully with an attempt to fix this issue in the Senate.
- Ty Warner said he attended the Executive Directors training at the National Association of Regional Councils in Austin, Texas, which was followed by their Board meeting, which Geof Benson attended.
- Ty Warner asked for the Board's consent for him to sign the Memorandum of Agreement for collaboration on a high speed rail corridor from Chicago to Columbus, Ohio. An earlier study for this corridor identified potential stops in Valparaiso and at the Gary/Chicago International Airport. Communities along the corridor have already signed the agreement (including Gary and Valparaiso), and now MPOs along the corridor have also been asked to sign. The MOA commits no funding to the project. The MOA would provide participation to do a Tier One Environmental Impact Study (EIS). On a motion by Jim Ton and a second by Dave Decker, the Executive Board authorized the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement for a high speed rail corridor from Chicago, IL to Columbus, OH by Ty Warner.
- Ty Warner said NIRPC plans to jointly host an open house with the Northwest Indiana Forum when the renovations of the office space are complete. 2016 marks NIRPC's 50th anniversary as well as the 50th Anniversary of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service, and the 200th Anniversary of the State of Indiana.
- Ty Warner congratulated the City of LaPorte and the City of Valparaiso for advancing in the America's Best Communities Competition.

Finance & Personnel Committee:

Roosevelt Allen, Jr. reported that the committee met this morning. Two items are being brought to the Executive Board. Separate feasibility studies will be performed by SRF Consulting Group for both the City of Portage and the City of Hobart. The Finance & Personnel Committee recommends 2015 budget amendment 4 to add new revenue for contractual for the Hobart Feasibility Study in the amount of \$149,610. On a motion by Roosevelt Allen, Jr. and a second by Jim Ton, the Executive Board voted unanimously to adopt budget amendment 4.

Roosevelt Allen, Jr. said the Finance & Personnel Committee recommends the 2015 budget amendment 5 to add new revenue for contractual for the Portage feasibility study in the amount of \$149,610. On a motion by Roosevelt Allen, Jr. and a second by Jim Ton, the Executive Board voted unanimously to adopt budget amendment 5.

Roosevelt Allen, Jr. reported that the Committee reviewed NIRPC's financial status and had no issues to report.

Transportation:

Ty Warner said the agenda items needed to be removed from the agenda and will be brought before the Transportation Policy Committee and the Full Commission in September.

Indiana Department of Transportation: Rick Powell said the Northwest District resources were realigned to better prepare for the coming road projects and winter weather. Roosevelt Allen, Jr. asked for information on the Cline Avenue Bridge, the loss of which is a major concern to the counties and the cities around the Gary/Chicago International Airport. Ed Soliday responded that the funding was bundled into a \$1 billion package and the principal is acquiring office space in the area. The Army Corps of Engineers have deemed the permits in order. This is an all cash project and they are raising the cash from 200 of the wealthiest entities in America.

Ed Soliday also reported on the I-65 bridge issues in central and southern Indiana. HB 1104 mandated that INDOT contract with an outside agency to create a decision-making tool for funding roads through 2030 and will analyze a lot of data provided by the MPOs. That metrics tool turned out far more robust than anticipated, and it will be brought to the Legislative Interim Study Committee. Indiana needs \$300 million this year alone just to stabilize and maintain our roads this year. \$1 billion is needed for INDOT to make the improvements to better our road systems. There are 11,000 miles of state highway and 88,000 miles of county and local roads. The condition of our roads is a bipartisan issue and the biggest deficit we can leave to future generations is if we don't maintain them. The southbound lane on I-65 at the Wabash River had a beam corrosion issue which was repaired with 2020 money. An artesian well eroded the support structure but was caught in time. I-65 should be a six-lane road border to border. There are more trucks and other vehicles crossing the Illinois Indiana state line than anywhere else in the world and much of that traffic goes to and from I-65. There are a lot of crashes due to construction and it was suggested to use police vehicles to slow traffic several miles before the construction zones. Rick Powers added that efforts are being made to stabilize the bridge in that area and an estimated 45 minutes commute time was added in the northbound direction.

Tom McDermott said the closure of the Cline Avenue Bridge is unacceptable and has put a huge burden on the local roads and has caused a lot of deterioration in the last six years. Also, he does not believe people will pay a toll to travel to and from work every day at the mills.

Tom McDermott said the installation of cable strip barriers on highways should be mandated by state law. The barrier saves lives, and should be repaired quickly after an impact. Rick Powers said INDOT has a maintenance program to fix them but there is no specific time requirement to do so. He suggested contacting INDOT to report problems.

Other Business:

- Robert Carnahan reported that Cedar Lake's North Park was renamed Senator Sue Landske Memorial Park after the long-time beloved State Senator who was from Cedar Lake.
- Ty Warner introduced James Winters, NIRPC's new Regional Planner & Policy Analyst, who has come to NIRPC from the Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. James will be working with communities to give them the best regional data possible.
- Mitch Barloga announced the availability of a survey that will inform the new Greenways Blueways 2020 Plan and urged everyone to take the survey.
- Brian Snedecor announced that the City of Hobart received their official certificates for the downtown Hobart Commercial District as achieving a designation on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Tom Schmitt announced that the construction project on Main Street is wrapping up and should be open within a week.
- Don Ensign announced that Hebron is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year with a block party on September 19.
- Blair Milo announced that the Tour de LaPorte to benefit cancer victims is this weekend.

Public Comment on Agenda Items:

Jim Nowacki, Gary, suggested that NIRPC contact the RDA about not scheduling their meeting at the same time as NIRPC's Commission meetings so that members of the public can attend both meetings. Tom McDermott asked that a letter be sent to the RDA asking them to change the time of their meetings so that they do not conflict with NIRPC's meetings which have met on the third Thursday of the month at 9 a.m. for a long time; Rich Murphy seconded the motion. Geof Benson asked whether a member of the Executive Board should make the motion. Rich Murphy amended his second and moved that a letter be sent to the RDA asking them to change the time of their meetings so that they do not conflict with NIRPC's meetings; seconded by Don Ensign. The motion carried. Ty Warner said he had already mentioned the issue to Bill Hanna.

Hearing no other business, on a motion by Dave Decker and a second by Jim Ton, Blair Milo adjourned the meeting at 10:00 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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