

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting  
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN  
June 15, 2017  
Minutes

**Call to Order**

Vice Chairman Geof Benson called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions. Geof Benson noted there was not as yet a quorum.

Executive Board members present included Geof Benson, Karen Freeman-Wilson, Justin Kiel, Blair Milo, Greg Stinson and James Ton.

Other Commissioners present included Kevin Breitzke, Will Farrellbegg, Tom Schmitt, Mary Tanis and George Topoll.

Guests present included Lyndsay Quist, Justin Mount, Matt Deitchley, David Wright, Bill McCall, Jim Nowacki, Jill Murr, K-Todd Behling, Zully Alvarado, Jessie Rausch, Randy Strasser, Kay Nelson, Tim Zorn and Andrew Steele. Joyce Newland participated via conference phone.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Kathy Luther, Angie Hayes, Allen Hammond, Mitch Barloga, Scott Weber, Gary Evers, Eman Ibrahim, Meredith Stilwell, James Winters, Gabrielle Biciunas and Mary Thorne.

**Report of the Vice Chairman**

Geof Benson reported on the National Association of Regional Council's conference last week. Ty Warner reported that Geof was elected President-Elect, which will mean this is the second time NIRPC will have a commissioner serve as NARC President (Dave Shafer previously served on this capacity). Blair Milo is also on the NARC Board of Directors. Ty Warner was re-elected to the Executive Directors Council, where James Turnwald of MACOG (South Bend) is an at-large EDC member and Sally Fahey from the Tippecanoe County area MPO was just elected as another EDC at-large member. Overall, Indiana is extremely well-represented at the national level at NARC.

Ty Warner also relayed some highlights from the NARC Annual Meeting discussions, including the Federal Reserve presenting on economic dynamism and community reinvestment. There was also significant discussion on the future of autonomous vehicles, and Ty Warner noted this conversation has started moving beyond the "gee whiz" futuristic aspect of this technology to a more serious examination of its projected impacts on the future of transit, housing, land use, etc.

**Report of the Executive Director**

Ty Warner introduced Rachel Veronesi, NIRPC's new part-time environmental educator. Kathy Luther has been promoted to Chief of Staff of NIRPC, and Meredith Stilwell has been named Office Manager (in addition to her duties as Website Coordinator). With the shift in overall office administration duties to Meredith, Angie Hayes' title has been changed to Chief Financial Officer. James Winters has been named Transit Planner, replacing Belinda Petroskey who previously served in this role.

Warner invited the Commission to the Regional Partnership Open House that afternoon to celebrate the remodeling and completed occupancy of the building that houses NIRPC, the Northwest Indiana Forum, Purdue University Northwest, and the South Shore Leadership Center. South Shore Clean Cities will also be participating in celebrating the electric vehicle charging station and will have electric vehicles on-hand.

The triennial review has been completed with one minor correction for a couple of transit operators but overall was a successful review. The quadrennial certification review with USDOT will take place in July and the MPO Conference in the fall. A vehicle disposition sale is taking place on June 21.

Ty Warner also relayed the presentation from the Figg Group on the Cline Avenue Bridge project given at the Lakeshore Chamber luncheon. The Group expects the bridge to be completed by 2019.

### **Minutes**

Geof Benson noted that there was now a quorum of the Executive Board. On a motion by Jim Ton and a second by Greg Stinson, the minutes of the May 18 Executive Board meeting were approved.

### **Environmental Management Policy Committee**

Geof Benson said the committee heard a presentation by IDEM on the Grand Calumet River/Indiana Harbor Ship Canal Remedial Action Plan. The next meeting will be on August 3 at 9 a.m. at NIRPC.

### **Technical Planning Committee**

Kevin Breitzke reported that the Technical Planning Committee met on Tuesday. Staff presented on the Planned Growth Goal of the *2040 Comprehensive Plan*. The Committee also heard a presentation from Ratio Architects and Butler, Fairman & Seufert on the draft I-65 and US 30 Safety Plan. The public comment period on the draft plan runs until the end of June.

There is one action for consideration. Resolution 17-15, Amendment #1 to the FY 2018 Unified Planning Work Program was explained by Eman Ibrahim. On a motion by Greg Stinson and a second by Jim Ton, the Executive Board voted to adopt Resolution 17-15, Amendment #1 to the FY 2018 Unified Planning Work Program.

The next meeting of the Technical Planning Committee is scheduled for July 11 at 9 a.m. at NIRPC.

### **Legislative Committee**

Blair Milo reported that she read the President's budget amid concerns regarding the substantial programs being eliminated or reduced in the President's budget submission. It is anticipated that there will still be a significant amount of change to the submission by the legislature. The federal government is about \$20 trillion in debt, double what it was eight years ago. None of the mandatory discretionary spending is being impacted by the changes proposed in the President's budget. Without addressing mandatory spending, by 2030 it will occupy about 96% of the federal budget, which will end in even greater problems than we are seeing now. The Legislative Committee will soon meet to review some bi-partisan proposals to carry forward our message via resolution to our delegation of possible solutions. The Committee would welcome suggestions by the Commission. Jim Ton asked for a summary of talking points for the Commission to focus on as a result of the Committee's deliberations.

### **Indiana Department of Transportation**

Reporting for Rick Powers, Lyndsay Quist said the I-65 widening project has begun with shifting traffic patterns. The Community Crossings grant applications will be accepted until 5 p.m. EST on July 14.

### **Other Business**

Kevin Breitzke said the comment period for the US 30 safety study is very important as the improvements will benefit the entire region.

### **Public Comment**

Jim Nowacki, Gary, asked that everyone pay attention to past flooding and sidewalk issues as work begins on SR 53 from downtown Gary south.

## **Announcements**

- The Outdoor Adaptive Escapade, a Co-Neighborhood Spotlight Community project, will be held on July 15 at 10 a.m. at Marquette Park. A flyer is available.
- Air Quality Action Days are today and tomorrow. Carpool if possible.
- The Lighting Bug Music Festival will be held on July 2 at Sunset Hill Farm.
- The Cedar Lake Summerfest is from June 30th thru July 4th, 2017
- Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. announced its build program with plans for transportation projects to provide new rail, surface road, and air transport capacity for the Midwest region and disclosed its shareholders.
- The Beverly Shores Necktie Run is this Saturday.
- The Shiny Hiney Lightning Bug 5k/10k/2k is Sunday July 2 in Valparaiso.

## **Adjournment**

On a motion by Jim Ton and a second by Greg Stinson, Geof Benson adjourned the meeting at 9:55 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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