

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

NIRPC - Lake Michigan Room

September 6, 2018

Minutes

Members/Guests: Geof Benson, George Topoll, Laura Reilly, Deb Backhus, Kathryn Vallis, Sylvia Collins, Leslie Dorwith, Sherryl Doerr, Unis Krouse, Paul Labus, Tim Kingsland, Richard Morrisroe, Lauri Keagle, Cathy Martin, Brenda Scott Henry, Kris Krouse, John Rogner and Chris Mulvaney.

NIRPC Staff: Ty Warner, Kathy Luther, Trey Wadsworth, Scott Weber, Mitch Barloga, Joe Exl and Candi Eklund.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Geof Benson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.

NIRPC Business:

Approval of Minutes

On motion by Tim Kingsland and a second by Richard Morrisroe, the June 7, 2018 EMPC meeting minutes were approved as presented.

Presentation: Performance Based Planning (PbP) Framework for 2050 Plan

Scott Weber presented the draft Performance Based Planning (PbP) Framework for the 2050 Plan to the committee. The PbP is the result of a federal requirement from the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. There are 25 U.S. Department of Transportation performance measures that states are required to set. The PbP framework will include these required measures and break down how NIRPC will go beyond those using the 16 critical paths as outlined in the 2050 Plan matrix to achieve Northwest Indiana's vision. The Environmental plan focus area, as it relates to the vision statements, was examined at length for the committee. Staff will be looking at data metrics and measures, and baseline conditions to achieve increased or decreased performance targets by 2035 and 2050.

Feedback from the committee included questions regarding the integration links between people and green space, assess and provide public access points to managed lands, consideration of certain segments of land being targeted for public use and Low-impact development, which impacts sustainability. Paul Labus stated that since trees are linked to air quality, he recommended that tree canopies be used as a metric in both Critical Path 5 and Critical Path 6. Lauri Keagle discussed she might be able to provide cumulative survey information to provide measurable data for the environmental critical path information. Kathy Luther encouraged the Committee to reflect on the Critical Paths and provide their knowledgeable feedback.

Presentation: Programmatic Investment Approach for 2050 Plan

Mitch Barloga presented on the draft Programmatic Investment Approach for the 2050 Plan and 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at the EMPC meeting. This enhanced approach will identify investment programs, evaluate the programs and size funding to each program based on regional priority, evaluate projects within all programs and then program the highest scored projects with available funding per program. While the usual approach is more straightforward, the enhanced approach will better utilize the flexibility provided by some funding sources. Benefits will be easier to quantify and demonstrate performance.

The best scored projects will come from regionally significant programs. Examples of what the practice might look like were shown and the scoring process for the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) was examined. The scoring of the projects will occur at the individual committee meetings to measure metrics. Feedback was solicited from the committee. The evaluation of projects types, regional priorities and staff recommendations will be discussed at the October meeting. The funding allocations for the programs will be presented at the Technical Planning Committee (TPC) meeting in November.

Presentation: Chicago Wilderness Visioning

Kris Krouse, a steering committee member of the Shirley Heinze Land Trust, stated Chicago Wilderness is being exposed to new partners and making progress in their collaborative spirit with their accomplishments over the years. Kris then introduced John Rogner, a member of the Illinois Audubon Society Board of Directors. John discussed that their regional initiative is to protect, restore and celebrate the globally important diversity of the Chicago region. They will focus on public land base where biodiversity resides. The biggest challenge is making the organization more relatable to the average citizen and become the voice for regional nature. Laura Riley was introduced as the newest staff addition to the organization.

Kris Krouse will email Kathy Luther the survey Chicago Wilderness is conducting. Kathy Luther will ask Candice to email the link to the survey to the Committee through Constant Contact.

Kathy Luther will organize and host a focus session with Kris Krouse after he presents the idea to his vision group and when they are ready to that.

Presentation: Oak Ecosystem Project

Chris Mulvaney, representing the Chicago Arboretum, said the Oak Ecosystem is a project that derived from a model by Chicago Wilderness and is now being pursued by the Chicago Arboretum on behalf of Chicago Wilderness. Chris noted that oak trees support at least 500 butterfly and moth species as well as hundreds of bird species. Oak woodlands and savannas are declining and under extreme threat in the years ahead if action isn't taken now. The Oak Ecosystem recovery plan is to help understand where the ecosystems are and what still remains. In the 1800's there were 2.5 million acres of ecosystems but only 250,000 or only 10% remain today.

Chris asked the group if there was an interest in extending their collaboration efforts to continuing mapping the ecosystems in Indiana. Kathy Luther discussed the difficulty NIRPC has faced in trying to obtain aerial photos because they are housed at the Indiana Geological survey at Indiana University and there is a substantial cost. Kathy Luther set a meeting time for Chris Mulvaney on October 30, 2018 from 9:30 a.m. 11:30 a.m. to meet with local partners in Indiana to talk in depth on what oak recovery means.

Resolution:

On motion by Brenda Scott Henry and second by Richard Morrisroe, the EMPC group recommended a resolution for NIRPC to adopt the SepticSmart week from September 17-21, 2018.

Announcements

The event announcements submitted will be distributed in an email to the committee.
Blue Way and Green Way plans and maps were distributed.

Adjournment

Hearing no other business, Geof Benson adjourned the meeting at 10:53 a.m.

A Digital MP3 of this meeting is filed. Contact Candice Eklund at 219-763-6060 Ext 142 or ceklund@nirpc.org should you wish to receive a copy of it.