

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN
October 17, 2024 Minutes

Call to Order

Chair Tom Dermody called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was streamed live on YouTube.

New Appointments to the Commission

Dave Hollenbeck announced there were no new appointments to the Commission.

Roll call - Taken by Candice Eklund.

Present

The 7 Executive Board members present at the meeting included Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Tom Dermody (La Porte), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Wendy Mis (Munster), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), and Jim Ton (Chesterton).

The 8 other Commissioners present at the meeting included Jenny Beier (Schneider), James Burge (Porter), Robert Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Duane Halliburton (Gary), David Phelps (Beverly Shores), Sharon Szewo (New Chicago), Mary Tanis (Dyer), and George Topoll (Union Township). Matt Deitchley, representing INDOT, was also present.

Absent

The 3 Executive Board members absent from the meeting included Justin Kiel (La Porte County Council), Lisa Rosenkranz (La Crosse), and Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee).

Hebron, Kingsbury, and The Pines have appointed no representatives to NIRPC in contradiction to IC 36-7-7.6-4.

The staff members present included Ty Warner, Lisa Todd, Meredith Stilwell, and Candice Eklund.

Public Comment – There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the September 19, 2024, Executive Board meeting were approved on motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Denise Ebert.

Leadership – Tom Dermody, Mayor of La Porte

Tom Dermody reported on the [Commissioner committee assignments](#) outlining the consolidation of the committees. Each Commissioner has been assigned to one of the new committees. Ty Warner reported that 18 of the 53 Commissioners completed the survey that was sent out requesting their committee preference. Those who responded received their first committee choice; those who did not respond were assigned to a committee. Commissioners are welcome to attend any committee meeting, but they can only cast a vote on the committee to which they were assigned. The 53 Commissioner assignments were spread across each of the four committees.

Wendy Mis discussed the Leadership meeting held on October 15 and reported they reviewed and approved the financial reports, bank reconciliations, and claim registers for July and August 2024. One action item for consideration was the Eco-Interactive Contract for the electronic Transportation Improvement Program (eTIP) software. On motion by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by Jim Ton, the Executive Board approved this contract. Ty Warner noted he spoke with a representative from Eco-Interactive and learned the new platform coming out soon would be more user-friendly than the prior version.

Transportation – Kevin Breitzke – Porter County Surveyor

Kevin Breitzke reported the Transportation Committee met on October 1, 2024. The committee favorably recommended the action item below. The next meeting is scheduled for November 12, 2024.

- Resolution #24-12: TIP Amendment #03. Ty Warner reported that three questions were submitted during the public comment period, and each was responded to. When NIRPC finally received approval for its 2024-2028 TIP – delayed due to erroneous air quality figures published by the state – a page was omitted from the final document, and this resolution corrects that omission. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Bill Emerson, the Executive Board approved this resolution. Jim Ton later noted that this resolution was

referred to as #24-03 when it was reported on and wanted to clarify that the vote was for Resolution #24-12. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Kevin Breitzke, the Executive Board approved the amended language.

INDOT – Matt Deitchley

Matt Deitchley reported that the construction on US 30 at the I-65 exit ramps has been completed. He also noted that the roundabout at SR 51 and US 231 in Hobart is now open. Matt thanked Mayor Huddlestun for his patience during all the construction in Hobart. INDOT is preparing for the upcoming winter months.

Economy & Place – Ty Warner

Ty Warner reported that one of the requirements of being an Economic Development District (EDD) designation is the creation of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The prior CEDS was submitted in 2018, and NIRPC received the EDD designation in 2019. The CEDS is to be submitted to EDA in March 2025. The Economy & Place Committee met for the first time on October 9 and launched the process for updating the CEDS. The Purdue Center for Regional Development has been retained to assist this endeavor. Virtual working group meetings will be held on November 12 and December 10 to advance the project.

Environment Committee – Bill Emerson

Bill Emerson reported that the Environment Committee has not met since the September Commission meeting. The next meeting will be held on November 7, 2024, when they will hear a speaker from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Other Business

Mayor Dermody reported the town of Schneider had already seen an improved relationship with the State Board of Accounts (SBOA) since they attended the meeting last month. Jenny Beier, Town of Schneider, said they recently had their audit with the SBOA. The day after the NIRPC meeting with the SBOA, they contacted the town to apologize for the \$30,000 cost and to offer a discounted rate due to the new and inexperienced auditor taking longer to complete the audit. The town was reimbursed \$10,000.

Jim Ton applauded the new, simplified committee structure because he found the prior structure cumbersome and confusing as the NIRPC chair saddled with helping to implement the prior structure after it was adopted in 2015. Meredith Stillwell informed the Commissioners that each committee structure has been updated on the NIRPC website, each with a detailed page.

- [Economy & Place](#)
- [Environment](#)
- [Leadership](#)
- [Transportation](#)

Announcements

Bob Carnahan relayed announcements of various events in Lake County and Cedar Lake. David Phelps shared Beverly Shores entered into a program with the Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHDCA) to help fund new playground equipment. Mary Tanis noted grants are available from Indiana Landmarks and Historic Preservations.

Ryan Lisek with Drive Clean Indiana (DCI) announced several events they are sponsoring. For a listing of their news and upcoming events, visit [News & Events—Drive Clean Indiana](#).

Ty Warner noted that an effort has been made to keep the Executive Board meetings crisp and brief, while the four Full Commission meetings will provide opportunities for providing helpful information and occasional presentations from outside sources. Miah Michaelsen, Executive Director of the Indiana Arts Commission, has been approached about attending the Full Commission meeting in January to discuss new grant opportunities in the arts to be released at that time.

Adjournment

Hearing no other business, Tom Dermody adjourned the meeting at 9:32 a.m. The next meeting on December 5 will be a Full Commission meeting.

The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at [10/17/2024 NIRPC Executive Board Meeting](#).