

## **Environmental Management Policy Committee**

Lake Michigan Room

August 1, 2024

### **Minutes**

Bill Emerson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Bill Emerson, Joe Exl (LMCP), Silvia Lombardo, Nicole Messacar (IDEM), Phil Gralik (BF&S), Reggie Korthals (MS4 Partnership), Andy Vasquez (Porter County Council), Bonnie Hawksworth (Dune Acres), Kay Nelson (Forum), Kathy Sipple (Earth Charter IN), Nancy Moldenhauer (Michigan City), and Ryan Lisek (DCI) were in attendance.

NIRPC staff present were Kathy Luther, Tom Vander Woude, Grace Beninger, Kevin Polette, and Flor Baum.

The meeting minutes of February 1, 2024, were approved on motion by Reggie Korthals and second by Andy Vazques.

### **Public Comments**

No public comments were submitted.

### **NIRPC Committee Restructuring**

Kathy Luther spoke on the 2024 committee restructuring. The current committee will be put into NIRPC's statutory areas. Streamlining the committees aligns with the focus of the *NWI 2050+* Plan.

- The Technical Planning Committee (TPC), the Transportation Resource & Oversight Committee (TROC), the Surface Transportation Committee (STC), and the Ped Pedal & Paddle Committee (3PC) will be placed into the Transportation Committee.
- Freight, local government assistance, the Economic Development District, and the Land Use Committee will be placed into the Economic Development Committee.
- The Environmental Management & Policy Committee (EMPC) will become the Environment Committee. Commissioner assignments are slated to change by the end of the year, but the goals and procedures will remain the same.

Goals were presented, including educating the public and holding discussions on environmental issues in the Region. The decline in attendance was discussed. Other goals set for the Environment Committee included forming coalitions and providing a vision for area-wide sustainable development.

### **Coastal Hazards Resilience Needs Assessment Report**

Jen Birchfield reported on the Coastal Hazards Resilience Needs assessment. The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) was contracted by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Lake Michigan Coastal Program (LMCP) to develop a coastal resiliency community self-assessment tool for Northwest Indiana coastal local government authorities (LGAs) and to support LGAs in completing the self-assessment. The assessment aided in identifying potential impacts of hazards and having the watershed communities consider planning and actions to increase resiliency. The assessment is not intended to rank communities against each other. The assessment results will assist the Lake Michigan Coastal Program in developing and delivering technical resources communities need to reduce or prevent natural hazard risks. Part one of the assessment identified the dangers in helping LGAs prioritize hazard issues such as coastal flooding, riverine flooding, coastal erosion, fluvial erosion, lake level change, and coastal storms. Part two focused on resilient practices to help identify joint planning and mitigation actions that LGAs can

implement to address coastal watershed hazard issues. The summary details were presented. Some findings included the following:

- Most LGAs perceive a low or moderate probability of riverine flooding, yet most also commented on flooding concerns and planning and actions to alleviate flooding.
- Many LGAs reported working closely with partners and agencies, such as the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission (LCRBDC), FEMA, Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), and County Surveyors.
- LGAs tend to indirectly address resiliency in their plans without explicitly addressing “community resilience” or “climate mitigation” in those terms.
- Roughly half of the LGAs consider projected precipitation increases in their stormwater management plans and manage infrastructure for future climate risks. Most lack flood management plans.
- Most LGAs lack a formal plan for managing access to public beaches and rivers during high lake levels or shoreline erosion. However, many take actions that are not formally documented in a plan.

### **Climate Action Planning Update – Chicago MSA Comprehensive Climate Action Plan Process**

Kathy Luther spoke on the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) update for the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). NIRPC is working with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) as the coordinating regional agency. CMAP works on behalf of 7 counties, 284 municipalities, and nearly 8.6 million residents in Illinois. Like NIRPC, the agency’s plans prioritize and distribute transportation funds to communities.

The goal of the CCAP is to achieve a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 and net zero by 2050. The CCAP is required to be comprehensive, quantifiable, and equitable. It must address all significant GHG sources. The CAP is required to include reduction estimates, implementation targets, and air quality benefits. It must identify and engage impacted communities and address workforce needs to ensure equitable access to opportunities. Stakeholder engagement, modeling, and data analysis will continue throughout 2024. The first phase of research and policy development is focused on understanding the emissions sectors and guiding the development of reduction strategies. Research and feedback received will be entered into a plan development due to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) by July 28, 2025.

### **NIRPC Fall Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Two Environment NOFA working groups were held on March 6 and June 6. Key points were presented and included the following:

- Outreach should be done to resiliency committees and MS4 operators and consultants who tend to develop their projects.
- Projects must be in a plan for a path to additional funding.
- NIRPC could promote through PROTECT and contract for developing resiliency implementation plans or regional plans, including evacuation plans and natural infrastructure. However, a match would be required.
- NIRPC should engage with the County MHMP efforts.
- Federal Highway defines resiliency as with respect to a project as “a project with the ability to anticipate, prepare for, or adapt to conditions or withstand, respond to, or recover rapidly from disruptions, including the ability to:
  - Resist hazards or withstand impacts from weather events and natural disasters.

- Reduce the magnitude or duration of impacts of a disruptive weather event or natural disaster.
- Have absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and recoverability to decrease project vulnerability to weather events or other natural disasters.
- The consideration of incorporating natural infrastructure.

**Announcements**

Announcements were made.

**Reports from Planning Partners**

For more information on events and programs with Drive Clean Indiana, please visit <https://drivecleanindiana.org/>.

The next EMPC meeting is slated for November 7, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. in the NIRPC offices.

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.