

**MINUTES OF THE LITTLE CALUMET RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION HELD AT 6:00 P.M. WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2011**

**Held at
Munster Town Hall,
1005 Ridge Road, Munster, IN**

Chairman William Baker called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. Pledge of Allegiance was recited. An Executive Session and Work Study Session was held prior to the public meeting. All four Board members were present. Minutes of the December 1st, 2010 meeting and the minutes of this January 12th meeting will be available at the February meeting.

Development Commissioners:

William Baker, Chairman
Anthony Broadnax, Treasurer
Tom Wichlinski, Secretary
Ron McAhron

Executive Director:

Dan Repay

Staff:

Sandy Mordus

Attorney:

Dave Wickland

Visitors:

Vanessa Villarreal – Army Corps
Rob Mangus – Munster Town Council
John Mulesa - Munster
James Dedelow – Munster
T. Cholipski – River Drive, Munster
Leon/Alice Kozlowski – Munster
Stephen Jadrnak – Forest, Hammond
Craig/Bea Hanusin – Munster

Visitors:

Mike Wood - Munster
Fred Baginski - Hammond
Joseph Simonetto - Munster
Dave Nellans – Munster Town Councilman
Matt Cunningham – Army Corps
Brenda Peers - Munster
Jennifer Soja - Munster
LuAnn Franklin – The Times
Bob/Judy Paulson - Munster
Barb Runberg - Munster
Bridget Bodefled - Munster
Dorothy Pazanin – Munster
Tom McLaughlin – Munster
Laurie Czulno – Forest, Hammond
John/Jean Plusch - Munster
Bill Petrites - Highland
Dorreen Carey – Broadway, Gary
Linda Cook - Griffith
Gail Nagsaysay – Munster

Chairman's Report – Chairman Bill Baker thanked everyone for their support of him being Chairman for this year. He referred to the major flood event we had in October 2008 that no one ever wants to witness again. Although it took 30 years to get to this point the lines of protection are in. The Army Corps is responsible for design and construction of the project. This Commission is the local entity providing 25% local match to the Federal 75% cost. The Commission is responsible for land acquisition and operation/maintenance. Since this is a man-made structure, it will require continuous maintenance. At this point in time, there is no funding mechanism in place for O&M. When original legislation was written, O&M was not addressed; that is what we are trying to do now. In addition to keeping the river clear from debris, fallen trees, beaver dams, etc. so we do not experience flooding, the O&M is needed to keep the accreditation so residents will not have to pay the full cost of flood insurance. Everyone needs to work together as we go forward.

Executive Director's Report – Mr. Repay reported on several items:

- The office re-location is now complete, although we are still unpacking boxes. The new address is 900 Ridge Road, Suite H, Munster, phone number 595-0599, email is drepay@littlecolumetriverbasin.org. He thanked the town of Munster for providing some storage space at their public works facility. It has been difficult working with no copier or complete computer/telephone service but it should all be up and running soon.
- A walk-thru was held on inspection of the gates/closures. A few issues came up that need to be addressed.
- Surveys, title work, appraisals are ongoing for Forest Avenue area. There are several properties which will probably require condemnation; the appraiser will do those properties first. We are hoping that offers can start going out in early February.
- We are still waiting for a final design plan from the Army Corps for the Southmoor area. The current schedule is to bid it out in the spring of 2011.
- Mr. Repay referenced the O&M/Emergency Management pamphlets for each segment. They are a condensed version for each segment for easy/quick reference and contact. He thanked Bill Rochford from the Army Corps for putting it together. It is a valuable tool for first responders to a potential flood event. We did have a rain/snow event on News Year's Eve. Officials met that morning and then again that evening with all municipalities to be ready to flood-fight, if necessary. A few blockages were found and they will be addressed as soon as possible. As emergency measures, the town of Munster dislodged a tree blocking the river so that debris could move through but it can be a dangerous situation for workers who are not trained in this area.
- Total sandbags ready to go in a flood event is about 35-40,000 sandbags. The town of Highland is still awaiting their alternative closure; then that will further reduce the number of sandbags.

Chairman Baker thanked the town of Munster, especially Dave Nellans and Rob Mangus in the audience, for responding quickly when they see a need.

Army Corps Status Report:

In Imad Samara's absence, Matt Cunningham reported that the lines of protection for the levee system are in place. Update sheets were provided to residents.

- SV-2 – The modifications needed to make corrections to the railroad gate closure is still outstanding, as well as some ditch repair work of a pipe outlet by Wendy's on Kennedy Avenue.
- SVII and SVIII still need final seeding, recreation trails, asphalt work, final grading. Contractors are in winter shutdown right now.

Commissioner Ron McAhron questioned why the Corps was still working on their current design of the closure at the railroad; it does not work and they should be looking at an alternative method of closure. He asked Matt Cunningham to go back to the Corps and come back at the next meeting with a definitive plan of action, one that is acceptable to the Commission that will work.

Chairman Baker inquired about the ditch at Wendy's in V-2. Matt Cunningham replied that the contractor had to excavate side slopes. There were 2 pipes under the driveway and no end sections were there. An alternative method needs to be used now to shore the ditch to prevent erosion.

Action Required – Chairman Bill Baker referred to the Financial Statement for November end, as well as NIRPC invoices for October and November.

- He referred for the claims for January to be approved in the amount of \$88,570.30. Commissioner Wichlinski made a motion to approve the claims; motion seconded by Anthony Broadnax; motion passed with a roll call vote of 4-0.
- Commissioner Baker then made a motion to approve the O&M claims in the total amount of \$3,332.24. Commissioner Broadnax made a motion to approve the O&M claims; motion seconded by Tom Wichlinski; motion passed with a roll call vote of 4-0.

Land Acquisition/Land Management – Commissioner Bill Baker stated that an RFP should be going to the billboard companies and public to take a look at Commission property to see if there are sites for additional billboard placement. This would generate additional revenue for the Commission.

Project Engineering and

Operation & Maintenance – Dan Repay announced that an O&M/emergency response meeting was held this morning. He has scheduled the monthly meeting to coincide with the Commission meeting date. They are planning a table-top exercise for emergency response on February 9. Chairman Baker inquired as to the attendance of all the municipalities at these meetings. Mr. Repay that all municipalities have been represented.

- Mr. Repay reported that the students from Purdue Cal have finished a draft report of the Little Calumet River hydrology information and would like to make a presentation to the Commission. Commissioners stated that they would like to see a copy of the draft report before a formal presentation is made.
- Commissioner Wichlinski asked if there were any updates on Chase Street. Mr. Repay replied that we have the materials from INDOT; we are awaiting a signed agreement between the city and the Commission. The agreement allows for access if needed; culverts will not cover the entire street; Commission will pay for it. The culverts were donated and we will put them in place. We also need Corps approval for crediting purposes. Agreement should be available by next week and then he will get it to Gary for their approval. Commissioner McAhron added that INDOT's involvement in this is just the donation of the materials. He appreciates the progress made on this item.

Legislative Committee – Commissioner McAhron reported that IDNR received an inquiry from Legislative Services on two bills that have been filed. IDNR will have a link to these bills for tracking purposes. They were asked to develop a map of the Little Calumet River watershed. They were also asked what the impacts would be to DNR if they did the O&M. Both bills originated in the House and they are subsets out of a larger bill.

- He also reported that there are numerous names submitted for the vacancy left by Dan Dernalc. He is hoping to have something more definitive for the next meeting.
- Mr. McAhron also stated that he hopes as many residents support a funding bill for the O&M as the support the Commission received for the \$14 million funding for the completion of the construction. Chairman Baker agreed and hoped that we would have everyone's support and encouraged them to voice that support to area legislators.

Other Issues/New Business – Commissioner Broadnax stated that there were some blockages in the river that need to be resolved. He proceeded to make a motion for the Executive Director to hire someone to do this clean-up in several locations in the amount not to exceed \$7,500; motion seconded by Tom Wichlinski. Areas that need to be cleaned include the NICTD trestle in Munster, an area west of Calumet Avenue, and an area about 100-150' east of Columbia Avenue bridge. An amendment was made to the motion that if there is an emergency for river clean-up when there is not a meeting for action; authorization would be given for Director to address it and just inform the Chairman first. Motion passed with a 4-0 roll call vote.

- Commissioner McAhron expressed a safety concern regarding a couple of structures built as part of Stage VII construction. The contractor is gone for the winter but he feels some protection should be put in place for safety reasons. Attorney Wickland stated that addressing this would come under the cap of \$5,000 so no action is needed and the Executive Director can just proceed with getting it taken care of.

Statements from the Floor -

- Joe Simonetto from Munster inquired if the contractor would be reimbursing us if we went ahead with addressing this safety issue. Mr. McAhron answered that we will be settling up with the Army Corps. The contractor should have taken care of it before he quit for the winter. We will make sure we are not paying twice for the same work.

- Laurie Czulno from Forest Ave. in Hammond inquired about the status of the State line project. Matt Cunningham from the Corps answered that the Corps is moving forward with the design for the State line project. He does not have a completion date. Commissioner McAhron stated that the plans were suppose to have been completed and presented at tonight's meeting. He asked Mr. Cunningham to take the message back that we want the Corps' response no later than one week from tonight. It is imperative that this project move forward.

- John Mulesa from Munster talked about the rain event on New Year's Eve. He felt that the culverts at Chase Street probably acted as a dam in that rainfall. He is concerned that just putting in a larger culvert may not address the entire problem. Commissioner McAhron stated that there will be 3 box culverts measuring 5' square. Mr. Broadnax added that it will be 100% better than what is there now and the price was right. Mr. Mulesa would like to see a schedule for installation of these culverts at the next meeting.

- Mr. Mulesa asked whether the access roads to reach the river for clean-up have been designed yet. Matt Cunningham answered that the municipalities were given proposed locations for their city/town for approval. Mr. Repay added that he thought all municipalities have agreed with the Corps on the access road placement. Commissioner McAhron asked Mr. Cunningham to also take this back to the Corps and have more information on this for the next meeting.

- Bill Petrites from Highland inquired whether or not we found out the current status of the pump station on Route 41 in Highland. Executive Director Dan Repay stated that he did check with INDOT and found out that the letting for this project will be in April. The pump station is part of the overall contract and they are on schedule.

- Paul Daniels from Munster stated that residents are more than willing to help out any way they can regarding support of the bill that would allow O&M funding. He expressed concern about the length of time certification of the levees will take and what we could be doing to help it along at the same time. Chairman Baker answered that everything we are

doing and working on is bringing us closer and closer to certification. We also have a concern and are doing what we can do at this time. Meeting monthly on O&M/emergency management is working toward certification. We are trying to develop a plan to get O&M money; a perpetual funding source needs to be put in place first. We are continuing to prioritize the work that needs to be done. Mr. McAhron added that certification is the very final step in this process. Maintenance obligation needs to be met first; lengthy record keeping commitments have to be made; as-builts have to be completed and those are not in the near future. He went on to say that the Commission will submit an A-99 letter to FEMA, whereas FEMA can reduce flood insurance to property owners where there is a Federal project. That letter should be submitted before the next meeting. We are hoping that FEMA will accept this process. When asked about Cabela's being in the process of getting certified in an accelerated manner, Mr. McAhron stated that Hammond and Highland are going through the formal process to remove an area from the floodplain, which is a LOMAR. Hammond and Highland have been pursuing that for about 2 years now – from Cline Avenue to Northcote. Cabela's is part of that but so are about 2,000 residents. Stage V-1 which was Wicker Park Manor Sub-division in Highland did this same process and they were successful in obtaining reduced rates. In the spring of 2009, a series of meetings were held with the County and FEMA for map revision. Little Cal area was set aside because of the uncompleted construction project. At this point, he believes the A-99 letter is the way to proceed. He plans to show the presentation on it again at next month's meeting.

- Chairman Baker ask that we add a line to the monthly agenda "FEMA" status.
- Brenda Peers from Munster displayed a petition and pictures of her backyards, as well as her neighbors, with an unacceptable amount of standing water on the yards. When the contractor was working, he changed the grade of the elevation of the backyards and now they are full of water. The situation needs to be addressed immediately. Although the contract is still "open", they cannot wait until spring for the contractor to return. Matt Cunningham added that the Corps is aware of the situation and probably additional catch basins can be added. Commission will follow up immediately with Corps to see what can be done in the interim. Homeowners are now pumping the water down to keep it away from their homes.
- Dorreen Carey from Gary talked about other river blockages in addition to the Chase Street closure issue. There are several sites but access is not easy. Downed trees are creating a massive blockage and the situation should be addressed. She offered to work with the Commission and more or less be a go-between us and the City to make some of this clean-up possible. If we can obtain a price for tree removal, it would assist the City in finding some funds to do this work. She sees these areas being more of a blockage to river flow than Chase St. She will identify the areas and get that information to Mr. Repay.
- Leon Kozlowski from Munster asked about the tree removal still between the levees. He was informed that a separate contract will clean out those trees inside the river.
- Brenda Bodefeld from Munster commented on the amount of progress made since the flood but wanted to know who the Corps was accountable to. Mr. McAhron informed her that the Corps is a Federal unit and reports to the President. She expressed concern and/or frustration about slowing down and wants to keep moving forward. Residents will help any way they can.
- Rob Mangus, Munster town councilman, is happy to hear about the A-99 process and hopes that it will work as an interim. Mr. McAhron stated we will keep everyone informed as it moves forward. Councilman Mangus also stated the town of Munster will support the O&M funding bill.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting was scheduled for the second Wednesday of the month, which will be Wednesday, February 9th at the Munster Town Hall at 6:00.