

MINUTES OF THE LITTLE CALUMET RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION HELD AT 6:00 P.M. WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2011

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

Chairman William Baker called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. Pledge of Allegiance was recited. An Executive Session and Work Study Session was held prior to the public meeting. Three Board members were present (one vacancy exists). Quorum was declared.

Development Commissioners:

William Baker, Chairman
Tom Wichlinski, Secretary
Ron McAhron

Executive Director:

Dan Repay

Staff:

Sandy Mordus

Attorney:

John Reed

Visitors:

Rob Mangus – Munster Town Councilman
Steve Caco - Munster
Arnold Schmidt – Hammond
Linda Cook – Griffith
Karen Kroczek - Munster
Leon/Alice Kozlowski – Munster
Stephen Jadrnak – Forest, Hammond
Craig/Bea Hanusin – Munster
Dorothy Pazanin – River Dr. Munster
T. Ahearn - Hammond
John Mulesa - Munster
George Janiec - Hammond
Elizabeth Johnson – Congressman’s Office

Visitors:

Bill Coomes - Munster
John Sowinski - Griffith
Dave Nellans – Munster Town Councilman
Imad Samara – Army Corps
Lynne Whelan – Army Corps
Ruth Mores – Southmoor, Hammond
Fred Baginski - Hammond
Mike Zarantonello – Southmoor, Hammond
John Harrigan – Northcote, Hammond
Joe Simonetto - Munster
John/Laurie Czulno – Forest Ave, Hammond
Don/Josie Seagraves - Munster
Elaine Fay - Munster
Elizabeth Howard - Munster
Joan Zacok - Munster
LuAnn Franklin – The Times
Allen Blocher - Munster
Ken/Bonnie Vavrek - Hammond
Homero “Chico” Hinojosa – Hammond
Councilman 6th District
Tina Kutkoski – Southmoor, Hammond
Laurence Montet – Munster
Kalliope/James Dedelow - Munster
Peter Yackanich - Hammond
Bridget Bodefeld - Munster
T. Cholipski - Munster

Minutes of the June 8, 2011 meeting were approved by a motion from Tom Wichlinski; motion seconded by Ron McAhron; motion passed by a 3-0 roll call vote.

Chairman’s Report – Chairman Bill Baker referred to the major flood event we had in September 2008 and stated that it is the reason we are here. The Commission is charged maintaining a man-made structure and making sure that it works to Army Corps specs.

This is an Army Corps project; when they have finished building the project, they will be gone and we will be charged with maintaining the project. It has been very challenging; it's unfortunate that politics play such a large part in this. The Commission is doing the best that it can for the public good.

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

- Mr. Repay reported after the last meeting on June 8, there was a significant rain event that lasted about 12 hours. The emergency plan was activated about 2:30 a.m. in the morning; by 5 a.m., sand bags were being placed, the water bladder in Munster was put into place, and some streets were closed. By 11 a.m., things were better. Everyone worked together and the emergency plan worked. We are still continuing to take out some trees and debris from the river to allow better flowage.
- We continue to work with the city of Gary for Chase Street closure & culvert replacement.
- Mr. Repay stated that annual inspections of the levees are currently taking place. Highland levees were done yesterday. Hammond levees will be done on Thursday and this is the first time they are having inspections. On Friday, Marshalltown area will be inspected. It will be a couple of months before a final report is submitted by the Army Corps.
- Mr. Repay announced that the first mowing of the levees this year has been completed.
- We are in the process of executing leases with the billboards with the successful bidders.
- Mr. Repay reported that we assembled a list of monies that were spent within the city of Gary for O&M items. The Gary Council had asked him for the costs.
- Discussion ensued on the railroads assuming some of the costs for cleanup of the rivers that they cross. Commissioner McAhron stated that he thought the Federal Transportation Authority expects the railroads to be responsible for at least some of the costs incurred by local entities. He directed staff to write a letter stating such to both NICTD and the Canadian National Railway.

Army Corps report – Project Manager Imad Samara announced that they have now been able to fund the completion of Stages VII and VIII. Contractors have been notified and they are proceeding to mobilize. The Corps has had a walk-thru with Walsh Construction in Stage VIII to identify the remaining items needing completion. They should be back in full force by Monday. A walk-thru with Ceres for Stage VII is scheduled in two weeks. They should be back on site by the first week of August. Imad stated that all work should be totally completed by fall.

Chairman Baker inquired about the cost of inspections. Imad stated that inspections are funded from a separate fund and no costs are incurred by the Commission. Since there will always be inspections, even after the project ends, those costs come out of a separate federal fund. Imad stated that once the levee system is certified, it will have to be re-certified every 10 years. Commissioner McAhron stated that he understood that there would be a cost to the Commission in future years for recertification inspections and asked Mr. Samara to report back on any such cost.

Action Required – Mr. Repay stated that we continue to do some needed maintenance but funds are really limited to continue to do so.

- Mr. Repay reported that we have approval and a signed contract for five billboard agreements with View, all located in Gary. We still have one location in Highland that is pending with Lamar. Commissioner Baker commented that the additional income will help out the Commission. Mr. Repay added that we are still talking to several other entities

regarding sites for cell towers, etc. We continue to explore other areas, especially some wetlands that need some enhancing. Commissioner McAhron also asked Mr. Samara to report back on the status of mitigation projects other than Hobart Marsh in hopes the Commission could explore partnerships with other entities who might wish to enhance and use some of these areas consistent with the habitat that has been created.

- The claims for July were presented in the amount of \$49,037.68. Commissioner Wichlinski made a motion to amend the claims to add an invoice for \$2,494.20 for Abrahamson, Reed & Bilsse; motion seconded by Commissioner McAhron; motion passed with a roll call vote of 3-0. Commissioner Wichlinski proceeded to approve the claims in the amended amount of \$51,531.88; motion seconded by Commissioner McAhron; motion passed with a roll call vote of 3-0. Commissioner McAhron asked about the claim from Garcia Consulting Engineers in the amount of \$11,610. Mr. Repay replied that it was for work done on the Forest Avenue construction plans; those completed plans have now been submitted to the Corps. Commissioner McAhron asked Mr. Samara to report on the status of the Corps review at the next meeting.
- Mr. Repay went over the O&M claims. Commissioner Wichlinski made a motion to amend the O&M claims to withdraw the claim for \$7,410 from OMMYX until several points can be clarified; motion seconded by Commission McAhron; motion passed with a 3-0 roll call vote. He proceeded to make a motion to approve the amended O&M claims in the amount of \$44,709.95; motion seconded by Commissioner McAhron; motion passed with a roll call vote of 3-0.
- Mr. Repay added that he has received a proposal from Austgen to repair Pump 2 at Burr Street in the amount of \$25,495. After discussion, it was determined to table the proposal until the next meeting. The rebuilt Pump 1 at Burr Street is working adequately.

Other Issues/New Business - Discussion ensued on clearing out trees within the levee system. Commissioner Wichlinski made a motion authorizing the Executive Director and attorney to develop a RFP to identify the quantity of trees that need to be removed and the cost to remove them in 3 separate phases/sections of the river. Whenever we have a rain event, the Commission ends up spending higher dollars in removing a single tree that is blocking the flow of the river. We want to explore the idea to see if it would be cheaper to just go ahead and take out those trees at one single time, thus ultimately saving many dollars. The Army Corps has said the removal of those trees would be done as a separate contract once all construction is completed but residents are tired of waiting. Motion to prepare a RFP was seconded by Commissioner McAhron; motion passed with a roll call vote of 3-0.

Statements from the Floor:

- Laurie Czulno from Forest Ave in Hammond asked about the status of the Forest Avenue levee and was told that several are in condemnation so we will have to wait for the courts now.
- John Mulesa questioned the cost of the water bladder compared to sandbagging; the Commission is tracking those costs. He still expressed his concern why Chase Street culverts are not in yet. He also questioned why we wouldn't take out the entire root ball on a tree instead of just cutting down the tree. Commissioner McAhron stated it would require a lengthy permit process if we chose to do that which would cost money that is in short supply right now and besides, the root balls provide some increased stability for the bank.
- Ken Vadrek from State Line in Hammond questioned whether the diverter was working the way

it was suppose to work during the last rainfall. Imad Samara stated he would check and report back.

- John Czulno from Forest Ave in Hammond asked what our plan for funding was versus the plan the County Surveyor is promoting. Chairman Baker stated that it is basically the same plan that failed in this last legislative session. Our plan is based on state statute; we have the authority. The other plan does not. Dan Repay added that we've agreed that the plan could include more of the watershed in Lake County and more parties could be added to the Board but we have no control over that. It is a legislative political process. Commissioner McAhron added that somehow, this will be resolved. It is not unusual that it would take more than one biennium to pass it. You can't build a \$275 million project and then not spend another \$3-4 million to maintain it. The funding issue is there and everyone is aware of it.

- Homero "Chico" Hinojosa, Hammond 6th District Councilman, stated that, with all the news articles regarding a conservancy district, he decided he needed to learn more about this project. He took a land tour; would like a river tour. He talked about rebuilding some of the bridges that are over the river, potential areas for additional storage of water in Gary, and he felt that the homes on Southmoor should be bought out if a levee were built there. Commissioner McAhron related the history of the Southmoor area to him and talked about what we receive credit for and what we don't receive credit for from the Corps. Chairman Baker added that the County is responsible for the bridges.

- John Harrigan from Hammond expressed concern why we would be taking out the trees from inside the river when Imad has stated all along that the Corps would be doing that in a separate contract. Commissioner McAhron explained that it may make more dollar sense to go ahead and do it now instead of us being forced to remove one tree at a time in a flood event, where the cost is higher. We are just exploring the idea right now.

- Bill Coomes from Munster feels that Chase Street culverts are a problem. Commissioner McAhron stated that when the river gets that high at some elevation, if the culverts aren't doing their job, the water will just go over them anyway and flow east; but we are still trying to get new culverts installed there.

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, August 10th at the Munster Town Hall at 6:00.