

MINUTES OF THE LITTLE CALUMET RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION HELD AT 6:00 P.M. WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2011

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

Chairman William Baker called the meeting to order at 6:00 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 (one vacancy exists). Quorum was declared.

Development Commissioners:

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

Executive Director:

Dan Repay

Staff:

Sandy Mordus

Attorney:

Dave Wickland

Visitors:

Rob Mangus – Munster Town Councilman
Steve Caco - Munster
Vanessa Villarreal – Army Corps
Judy Knapp – Forest Ave. Hammond
Leon/Alice Kozlowski – Munster
Stephen Jadrnak – Forest, Hammond
Craig/Bea Hanusin – Munster
Dorothy Pazanin – River Dr. Munster
Sylvia Vucich - Munster
Barbara Whitaker - Munster
John Mulesa - Munster
George Janiec - Hammond
Elizabeth Johnson – Congressman’s Office
Roy Deda – Army Corps

Visitors:

Bill/Bev Coomes - Munster
John Sowinski - Griffith
Ronald Albin - Munster
Dave Nellans – Munster Town Councilman
Imad Samara – Army Corps
Lynne Whelan – Army Corps
Ruth Mores – Southmoor, Hammond
James Batey - Hammond
Robert Leary - Munster
Joe Simonetto - Munster
John/Laurie Czulno – Forest Ave, Hammond
Bob Paulson - Munster
Elaine Fay - Munster
M/M Plusch - Munster
B. Runberg - Munster
LuAnn Franklin – The Times
John Mogle - Munster
Ken/Bonnie Vavrek - Hammond
Col. Vincent Quarles – Army Corps
Tina Kutkoski – Southmoor, Hammond
Mike Zarantonello – Southmoor, Hmd
Demetrio/Consuelo Ornelas - Munster
Peter Yackanich - Hammond
Bridget Bodefled - Munster
T. Cholipski - Munster
Karla Hunt - Munster
Mike Wood - Munster
Dorreen Carey – city of Gary
John Beckman – Lake County Fish & Game
Trudy Wasik – Southmoor, Hammond

Minutes of the May 11, 2011 meeting were approved by a motion from Tom Wichlinski: motion seconded by Anthony Broadnax; motion passed by a 4-0 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. We understand that and want to do it efficiently and in a manner that puts no undue stress on the municipalities or residents in the watershed. People need to educate themselves on this subject; they need to attend the meetings and get involved. This project affects everyone in the watershed. We need to do what's best for the project so it does not happen again.

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

- Mr. Repay reported that the issue of new billboard locations is proceeding. He and the attorney are working on it. The successful bidders should be receiving them shortly.
- We have received the specs for Forest Ave and we are passing that onto the Army Corps.
- Issues with the Chase Street culverts appear to be resolved. We should be on the agenda for the Gary Board of Public Works approval. The city was helpful in identifying problems near Grant Street pump station. Both pumps are in and functioning.
- One of the pumps was removed by Burr Street. The second pump is failing but it is still working. We are using it as needed. Once the first rehabbed pump is re-installed, the second pump will be pulled to identify the problem there.
- A 90' tree uprooted and fell into Hart Ditch in Munster. Access to it was not easy. The town cut away as much of the tree as they could; they were unable to get the root ball out.

Action Required – Mr. Repay stated that we will be sending a letter to the State Budget Agency to be on the agenda for approval of the remaining funds from the original \$14 million 2009/10-2010/11 biennium. We have to show good use and a plan for its use. Mr. Repay will plan to attend the committee meeting and answer any questions that may come up. Commissioner McAhron added that if we do not get on this agenda, we do not have to worry about the monies reverting back to the State. We would be able to get on a future agenda for approval drawdown.

- The claims for June were presented in the amount of \$44,070.22. Attorney Wickland asked that one of the claims for a property owner in the amount of \$7,983.00 be pulled from the Claim Sheet at this point in time; the revised claim sheet now stands at \$36,087.22. Commissioner Broadnax made a motion to approve the revised claims; motion seconded by Ron McAhron; motion passed with a roll call vote of 4-0.
- Discussion was held on the O&M claims. Commissioner Broadnax made a motion to approve the O&M claims in the amount of \$392.08; motion seconded by Commissioner Wichlinski; motion passed with a roll call vote of 4-0.

Land Acquisition/Land Management – Mr. Repay has already reported on the billboard locations. He also stated that he is working with someone who wants to lease some land for a cell tower.

**Project Engineering and
Operation & Maintenance** –

- Mr. Repay has already covered the pump station report.
- Mr. Repay stated they were ready for storms last week but luckily, the storm on Memorial Day weekend missed us. The water levels were elevated but contained; there are no major blockages at this time.

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- Commissioner Wichlinski asked if the pump at Burr Street was back on line. It was reported that it is back and working. Austgen will be pulling the second pump next. It takes about 6-7 weeks for repair. Commissioner McAhron asked whether the website is being utilized in monitoring the gages and water levels. Mr. Repay replied that he has encouraged the public to view them.
- Chairman Baker inquired about an update with NIPSCO. Mr. Repay replied that he is working with the city of Gary and Lake Station to resolve the problem of drainage on NIPSCO easements so they can access their transmission lines. The culverts adjacent to the area are clogged with beaver dams. Whenever the dams are removed, the beavers keep returning to build more.

Legislative Committee - Regarding establishing a Conservancy District, Ex. Director Repay explained that there is another plan circulating about that has been proposed by the Lake County Surveyor. It is similar to a bill that was originally proposed by Representative Soliday, which was defeated because of political opposition. It is the Commission that has the authority by State statute for any and all activity/function. We are already established by State law. The other proposed plan is not; they are elected officials. In a complex watershed like we have, politics should not be playing a part. You do not need an elected official representing a particular district. This Commission has solved a problem when a problem has arisen, in the entire project area. Politics shouldn't be playing a part here. Mr. Repay continued to say that he will gladly work with the Lake County Surveyor to resolve the differences in the plan. He would like the Surveyor to come to a public meeting and make his presentation to the people most directly affected.

- Commissioner Wichlinski commented that the current Kernan Shepard report says there are too many elected officials now; why would you want to create 9 more? Also, the fee that the Commission establishes will stay the same fee and not be increased in the future. There is fear expressed by many that fees would increase under the Surveyor's plan.
- Commissioner Broadnax added that he is very frustrated; it is same people who killed the original bill and now have almost the same plan, except they want to control the money. It sounds as if it should only be an elected official who has any control over money. This Commission has always been transparent. He feels the Surveyor's plan is looking out for themselves and not the community at large.
- It was also clarified that of the 5-member Board, only 2 Board members live in Munster. Mr. Wichlinski stated he lives in Griffith and Mr. McAhron is the DNR member who lives in Indianapolis. The vacancy that exists was an appointment from Highland. Chairman Baker added that this appointment is a community service; he's not in it for the \$50 per meeting he gets. He also went on to say that, in the Surveyor's plan, there would be no checks or balances as to how much money could be collected; and he feels there needs to be a cap. In the Commission's plan, collection of funds would cease once a maximum of dollars was reached. He thanked the town of Munster for allowing us to hold our monthly meetings here so that we are more accessible to those residents who were most affected by the flood of 2008. He thanked Ex. Dir. Dan Repay for doing an outstanding job.
- Commissioner Broadnax added that the Surveyor's Office can take their plan to a judge if they can get only a 5% approval of population. They can get that by either Hammond or Gary officials passing it – not the people themselves.
- Commissioner McAhron gave a history of the progress this Commission has made since the flood. He discussed the interaction between the Commission and the Corps relative to project cost share. They have come to agreement that will allow the contractors back to

work to finish up the remaining items in Stages V-2, VII, and VIII. Commissioner Ron mcMahon explained that the funds to support this agreement were beyond the budgeted amount for local match built into the \$14 million budget that was approved by the general Assembly in 2009. The Commission will have to reprioritize spending to insure the local commitments for upgrades to Forest Avenue and Griffith levees.

The Colonel thanked the Commission and the Congressional leaders and the residents for the support and feedback they have given to him. He went over several fact sheets describing how dollars were spent, how there have been project increases, and how things in general have changed since Katrina. Everyone's goal is still to get this project done and get flood insurance relief/reduction to everyone.

- A discussion also took place on how the Asian carp may affect project dollars. The Chicago District Army Corps is doing a Chicago area study of the problem. Future modifications will come to us first.

Statements from the Floor:

- George Janiec from Hammond, who talked about the Conservancy District proposal by the Lake County Surveyor.
- Laurie Czulno from Forest Avenue in Hammond, who expressed concern about the delay in starting the levee reconstruction on the Forest Avenue levee, and whether there will be money to begin any work there.
- Trudy Wasik from Southmoor Ave. in Hammond, expressed distress in not able to do any work on her property because of the delay of the levee construction on Southmoor.
- Karla Hunt from River Drive in Munster expressed concern why Cabela's was allowed to be built in a floodplain area that previously held water; and any future development there should be deferred.
- Barbara Whitaker from Munster, who is also worried about future development in a flood plain, especially the possibility of a land-based casino to be built in a floodplain.
- Ken Vavrek from State line in Hammond, expressed concern about delay. He was assured that the city of Hammond would flood fight that area if a storm event occurred.
- John Beckman from Lake County Fish & Game talked about the necessity of upland water storage being valuable to the project.
- John Czulno from Forest Avenue in Hammond, questioned overruns on stages of project construction and was assured that, in the future, the Commission will see all overruns before they happen.

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, July 13 at the Munster Town Hall at 6:00.

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