

**MINUTES OF THE LITTLE CALUMET RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**HELD AT 6:00 p.m., WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2021**

**Location: Munster Town Hall**

Chairman Baker called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Pledge of Allegiance was recited. There were eight (8) Commission members present at roll call. Quorum was declared.

**Commissioners Present:**

William Baker, Chairman  
Tom Wichlinski, Vice-Chairman  
Tom Gozdecki, Treasurer  
Levon Whittaker, Secretary  
Anthony Broadnax  
Ron Ware  
Dave Castellanos  
Robert Ochi

**Visitors:**

Laurie Czulno - Hammond  
Ruth Mores - Hammond  
Tim Werner - Ciorba Group  
Ed Hero - Lake Station  
Tony Wolff - Ciorba Group  
John Garcia - Garcia Consulting Engineers  
Tom Silich – Hobart Township Trustee  
Sandy O'Brien - Hobart

**Commissioners Absent:**

Derek Nimetz

**Executive Director:**

Dan Repay

**Attorney:**

David Wickland

**Staff:**

Jodi Lambert

**Approval of Minutes -**

Commissioner Whittaker made a motion to approve the minutes from March 17, 2021 as presented; motion seconded by Commissioner Ochi. Chairman Baker asked if there were any questions and called for a vote. Motion passed with 8 aye votes.

**Chairman's Report –**

Chairman Baker welcomed everyone back to our first in-person meeting since February 2020. As a reminder, USACE inspection reports, minutes and audio recording of our meetings can be found on our website at [www.littlecalriverbasin.org](http://www.littlecalriverbasin.org). The Commission is tasked with the maintenance of a \$275 million man-made flood control project. There are numerous issues with the original design and decades of deferred maintenance that we are completing. The yellowing pictures from the 2008 flood event serve as a reminder of what can happen if maintenance on a man-made flood control project is neglected. However, this Commission is far better prepared than was in the past and we continue to maintain open communication and work with all communities within the watershed.

**Finance –**

Chairman Baker referred to the April claims in the amount of \$1,060,247.54. Commissioner Broadnax made a motion to approve the April claims as presented; motion seconded by Commissioner Castellanos.

Mr. Repay explained a few of the claims starting with payment in the amount of \$6,574.00 to Czaplicki Lopez, PLLC for design of the Burr Street Railroad Closure. We have the final design and have submitted it to Norfolk Southern for their review. Earthwerks submitted a claim in the amount of \$576,225.00 for continued work on the Deep River Rock Riffle Project. The pedestrian bridge was set yesterday and all aspects of the project are moving along. \$108,200.00 was paid to R.A. Oros for clearing Dyer Ditch. This maintenance project cleared approximately 2 miles of bank by taking out dead and leaning trees. National Audubon Society submitted a reimbursement claim in the amount of \$151,302.08 for the Little Calumet Marsh Bird Conservation Area Project. The Audubon will give a presentation later during the meeting. Finally, \$18,000.00 was paid to Evans Tree Care LLC for clearing of dead and dying trees in stage 7. There is very little access to the area, so a crane was needed to lift the trees over the levee wall.

Commissioner Gozdecki felt that the back-up documentation sent by the National Audubon Society was not adequate. He stated that the Commission has heard very little from the Audubon with regards to the project, then received a large invoice. Further discussion was held by the Board regarding the claim and what records should be submitted prior to payment. Commissioner Broadnax motioned to amend his original motion to approve the claims subject to appropriate back-up documentation; motion passed 8-0 with a roll call vote.

Commissioner Broadnax further made a motion to approve the claims as amended; motion seconded by Commissioner Castellanos. Chairman Baker asked if there were any further questions and called for a roll-call vote. Motion passed 8-0.

**Executive Director's Report –**

Mr. Repay gave an update on several of the projects:

- The Lake Station Rock Riffle Project resumed after a break for the winter. The mild weather allowed for a great deal of work to be completed. The contractor was able to set the pedestrian bridge yesterday and the entire project is moving along smoothly.
- The Spring Park Project is expected to be bid out in June with bid openings at our July meeting.
- We have all the permits necessary for the Burr Street Railroad Closure Project. We are currently working with Norfolk Southern Railroad on the contract. This project will make this closure permanent and relieve the City of Gary from installation of the closure during high water events.
- During the last week of March, the USACE conducted its annual inspection of the Cady Marsh Ditch. This project was not built with the participation of the

Commission, but as a large feeder to our project we have partnered with the Town of Griffith to ensure that part of the system is working properly.

- USACE inspections for Gary, Griffith and INDOT begin on April 26<sup>th</sup>. The INDOT segment will start on Monday. The levees, gates and pump stations will be completed during the remainder of the week.
- We started our first cycle of spraying the rip rap as required by the USACE. The first cycle of mowing the levee was also completed this month.
- We are in discussion with the Lake County Drainage Board on the next stage for the bank stabilization along Hart Ditch.
- The Griffith Levee Rehabilitation project is progressing and should be ready to bid out for the 2022 construction season.
- We have submitted an application for federal funding of the Kennedy Avenue Bridge Project. This project has been completely engineered and we have already obtained all the necessary permits.

#### **Presentations –**

Tony Wolff from Ciorba Group gave a presentation on the updated Comprehensive Watershed Plan. This project is an update to the 2013 Comprehensive Watershed Plan of Little Calumet River to account for projects that have been completed, add new projects that would benefit the watershed and develop updated priorities for implementation of projects included in the plan.

Nat Miller from Audubon Great Lakes and Gary Sullivan from The Wetlands Initiative gave an update on the Little Calumet River Marshbird Conservation Area Project. This project, which began in 2019, consists of restoring wetland ecology and hydrologic function to various wetlands on Commission property.

The complete audio of the above presentations can be viewed on our website at [www.littlecalriverbasin.org](http://www.littlecalriverbasin.org).

#### **Other Issues/New Business –**

Commissioner Whittaker made a motion to deny the Lake County Parks Watershed application for the Sarros Land Acquisition at future Lake Hills County Park; motion seconded by Commissioner Broadnax. Chairman Baker asked if there were any questions and called for a roll call vote. Motion passed 8-0.

Commissioner Broadnax made a motion to authorize the Chairman to sign a deed, originally prepared in 2005, to transfer ownership of the Portage Marina to the City of Portage; motion seconded by Commissioner Whittaker. Attorney Wickland explained that the Portage Marina is owned by the Commission. An agreement was made in 2005 to transfer ownership to the City of Portage, however, the deed was never executed. This motion would allow for the Commission to formally transfer ownership to the City of Portage. Chairman Baker asked if there were any questions and called for a roll call vote. Motion passed 8-0.

Commissioner Gozdecki made a motion to approve an extension with the National Audubon Society for the “Little Calumet Marsh Bird Conservation Area” Project until June 30, 2021; motion seconded by Commissioner Ware. Chairman Baker asked if there were any questions and called for a roll call vote. Motion passed 8-0.

**Statements to the Board –**

Sandy O’Brien, Hobart, stated she is thankful that we can now have in-person meetings. She also thanked the Board for their action on the GEO Property acquisition in Hobart.

Ruth Mores, Hammond, said that she is glad to be back in-person and that everything is going well along the river. She thanked Dan for his assistance when she contacted him regarding a cottonwood tree that fell in the river.

Lori Czulno, Hammond, commented on the new logo and thought that we should have stayed with the beaver as it’s a better representation of our area. She also thanked Jodi for all her hard work in running the Commission’s virtual meetings this past year.

**Statements from the Board –**

Commissioner Ware stated he is glad to see everyone in person this month and thanked those for attending.

Commissioner Whittaker thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting. He also commented on the great presentations this evening and asked everyone to stay involved and pray for our country.

Commissioner Wichlinski thanked the presenters from Ciorba Group, Audubon Great Lakes and The Wetlands Initiative on their excellent presentations.

Commissioner Broadnax stated he was happy to see everyone in person at the meeting. He also thanked Jodi for all her assistance in operating the Commission’s virtual meetings this past year.

Commissioner Castellanos thanked Ciorba Group and Audubon for their great presentations.

There being no further business, the next regular meeting was scheduled for 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, May 19, 2021.