

**MINUTES OF THE LITTLE CALUMET RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION HELD AT 6:00 P.M. WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2013**

**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. Five (5) Commission members were present at roll call. Quorum was declared.

Commissioners:

William Baker, Chairman
Tom Wichlinski
Anthony Broadnax
Ron McAhron
Tom Gozdecki

Executive Director:

Dan Repay

Attorney:

Dave Wickland

Staff:

Sandy Mordus
Judy Vamos

Visitors:

Charles Svitko – Howard St, Hammond
Joe Simonetto – Munster Town Council
Col. Frederic Drummond – Army Corps
Steve Jadrnak – Forest, Hammond
Mike Cieply – Mike's Tree & Landscape
Arnold Schmidt - Hammond
Russell Sessions – Russells Tree Care
John Hassiquin – Northcote, Hammond

Visitors:

John & Laurie Czulno – Forest, Hammond
Ruth Mores – Southmoor, Hammond
David Nellans – Munster Town Council
Leon/Alice Kozlowski - Munster
Sandy O'Brien - Hobart
Judy Knapp - Hammond
Joseph Scholtz - Munster
Mark Gordish – City of Hammond
Bonnie Vavrek - Hammond
Mike Echterling – Friends of the Little
Calumet River
Fred Baginski - Hammond
T. Cholipski – River Dr., Munster
Peter Yackanich - Hammond
Bill/Bev Coomes - Munster
John Mulesa - Munster
Emil Poppa – Munster/R.A.Oros Inc.
T. Ahearn – Forest Ave, Hammond
Dave Wellman - RDA
LuAnn Franklin – The Times
Jeff Dekker – Dyer Council
Bob Paulson – Munster
Erik Sprenne – N.W. IN Paddling Assoc.
Gregory Sanchez – Lake Cty Surveyor's Of.
Dan Gardner – Lake Cty Surveyor's Office

Chairman Baker referred to Executive Director Dan Repay to give a report on the pending rain storm coming in. Mr. Repay reported that he meets regularly with the municipalities along the river and other involved agencies once a month. They talk about different scenarios and preparation needs. They have been meeting for 3 years and everybody is ready to do what they have been trained to do. He met today in anticipation of the storm; everyone is at a level of alert. He stated they have people out on the levee from 5 communities starting at 10 pm. If further action is necessary, their first call will be to their corresponding community and their supervisor; they will then call Mr. Repay. Everyone knows what areas to address first and what roads, if any, that would require closing. He informed everyone that communication to the public is done in several ways – WJOB, Times on-line, NIXEL for Highland and Munster and Reverse 911 for Griffith and Hammond.

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Chairman Baker asked about the residents coming out to the Northcote bridge because of their worry about flooding there. Mr. Repay understands residents' concerns but stressed the need for them to stay off the bridge and out of the way in case the bridge would have to be closed off.

Chairman Baker added that the Commission, as well as everyone else, is much more prepared now because of the exercises. He hoped the rain event is not that severe but we will be prepared if need be. With the exercise drills performed in the past and everyone working together, he is significantly more comfortable that flooding that was experienced in 2008 will not happen again. Mr. Repay added that he drove the levee system this morning and found no major obstructions that would cause a problem. All the pumps are working. Chairman Baker added that this is the primary reason we are here and this is why maintenance of the entire levee system is so important. Now that an O&M funding source is in place, the Commission will bring the levee system up to the level it should be. All the deferred maintenance needs to be caught up and that will be done in the next couple of years. Because the levee system is in place, about \$4 million will be saved by lowering flood insurance fees. This is indeed an economic development project that will bring those saved dollars back to the community.

A motion was made by Anthony Broadnax to approve the minutes as presented from the March 13th meeting; motion seconded by Tom Wichlinski; motion passed with a 5-0 roll call vote.

Executive Director's Report – Mr. Repay presented the claims for April and explained several of the large line items. Tom Gozdecki made a motion to approve the April claims in the amount of \$122,245.01; motion seconded by Anthony Broadnax; motion passed with a 5-0 roll call vote.

- Mr. Repay stated that the attorney has made some changes to the farm leases. The attorney is also handling the latest Lamar lease. We are continuing to work with the Lake County Solid Waste Management.
- Mr. Repay reported again that there are no major obstructions in the channel. The pump station at Grant Street had a problem but it was fixed and is now working properly.
- After securing permission for access through a resident's property, a blockage at Deep River was removed with the help of the Hobart public works. Deep River is a part of the overall system. As soon as access is obtained, a large beaver dam will be removed from a ditch in Winfield.
- Mr. Repay reported that the Harrison Street exercise drill for road closure is still scheduled for Friday, the 19th. This is the first time that a drill has been held in Gary for road closure.
- Bids were received on the tree clearing project. We are still working through some technical aspects.
- We are waiting for an IDNR permit for channel clearing.
- Regarding the Lake County watershed study, DLZ/SEH has completed interviews of all 15 communities, as well as the Surveyor's Office. They will be finalizing reports from the meetings with those communities and will ultimately be able to list out small and large projects needed within the communities. Chairman Baker asked when we will be seeing something from them and Mr. Repay answered that we should be receiving something - probably in May.
- Mr. Repay reported that Gary South is still being engineered so it can be bid out for construction. That section is the south levee from Clark to Martin Luther King Drive.

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- Mr. Repay is continuing working with Hammond and Munster, who are continuing their bike trails over the Monon railroad trestle. The trail will use the existing trestle abutments, with only the middle piers being removed so fewer blockages will occur in that area.
- Regarding the Columbia Avenue bridge raising, Lake County Highway Department should be letting bids out in June. It is scheduled for this construction season.
- Commissioner Broadnax inquired whether there are any new Gary people we're working with. Mr. Repay stated that he is now working with the fire chief in Gary, Chief Everett. She will be participating in the Harrison St. road closing exercise as well as some of the Fire Department personnel.
- Discussion was held on how we would be prioritizing what projects and what locations would be done with some of the funding we will be receiving for maintenance. Several commissioners expressed concern that we would receive political pressure to use dollars in certain areas. Mr. Repay stated that there would be an application process and projects would be prioritized. Chairman Baker added that is the reason for the Lake County Watershed study. That report will prioritize those areas that need the most work. Mr. Repay also stated that we will look at how the residents are impacted and would benefit from these improvements. He stated that it would be beneficial for cities/towns to partner up with each other in submitting projects also. Chairman Baker added deferred maintenance of the river itself will be the priority, as well as repaying the RDA for past borrowed funds and then addressing those projects identified in the Watershed Study.

Army Corps Report – Colonel Frederic Drummond reported:

- Col. Drummond stated that his team would be working with us in whatever was needed from them in the pending rain event. He is concentrating his efforts on the Illinois Fox River and upper Des Plaines River, where flooding is occurring. He stated that the Kennedy Avenue road closure exercise was an excellent drill. There is always room for some improvement but it went very well.
- He reported that the President's budget is out and there is \$5 million of Federal funding earmarked for the Little Calumet River project. It calls for authorization of the project up to \$270 million.
- He remains hopeful that we can get caught up on the Commission's cost share of the project.
- Regarding the Pump Station 2B contract, a claim of \$395,974.60 has been settled and the contractor should sign off on that.
- The Corps, as well as the Commission, is continuing to work out some issues with the tie-back design.

Other Business –

- Mr. Repay stated that documentation has been going and forth with the Corps on the Stateline design. The design works but still requires some final touches.
- Commissioner Wichlinski thanked Mr. Repay for organizing and participating in the exercise drill at Kennedy. It is extremely important to be ready in a real event and the practice drills only benefit us. Commissioners agreed that it was a good job. Mr. Repay, in turn, publicly thanked the municipalities and their public works people. They are dedicated employees and we couldn't do anything without them.

Statements from the floor:

- John Mulesa from Munster thanked the Commission for making it possible to now having his flood insurance premiums reduced. He cautioned the Commission in how many trees

that would require being removed from the banks of the river. He believes that some of trees may be holding the levee banks together and they slow the water down and that, in turn, protects the levee. Mr. Repay replied that we will cut down those trees that are already dead or ready to fall into the river. If they were to fall, you have pinch points with a dam in a very bad spot. Leaving the root ball in tact should help with any stability issues.

- Ken Vavrek from Stateline in Hammond was happy to hear that the tieback design sounds like it is getting closer. He asked how the area would be handled today in a flood event. Mr. Repay replied that they would be blocks where blocks could be used and sandbags in tight areas. City of Hammond has the labor and sand bags to do it if needed. He also asked how a blockage about 200' west of Stateline in Illinois could be taken care of. The Colonel replied that Illinois also performs work in the river and he will bring it to their attention.

- Laurie Czulno from Forest Avenue in Hammond reminded those residents who received a letter that they are now out of the floodplain, should contact their lender because their lender will not contact them. She complimented the Commission on the good job that was done on both sides of the river for the Kennedy Ave. road closure exercise. She asked when they could expect a resolution to the Forest Ave. design and Mr. Repay replied that the technical issues should be worked out soon and once it is finalized, we will formally present it to the residents.

- Beverly Coomes from Munster inquired whether south county was also being assessed the maintenance fee and she was informed that they were. She asked if trees block the restrictor area, do we have the capability to unblock it and Mr. Repay informed her that we have a contractor that can do that if needed. Mrs. Coomes stated she would be moving out of the area but thanked the Board members for their help and dedication over these past couple of years since the flooding. Chairman Baker added that Mrs. Coomes also has been very helpful to the Commission and has been a regular attendee at the meetings.

- Sandy O'Brien from Hobart, representing Friends of Robinson Lake in Hobart, announced a free give-away of trees and shrubs in honor of Earth Day that will take place at the park in the Hobart Marsh area. She was glad to see that everyone is ready to flood-fight, if needed. She also stated that she hoped mitigation will be happening soon.

- Erik Sprenne from Highland asked the Commission to give due consideration to recreation features that were originally planned. He stated he sits on several boards that can benefit from the recreation features. He stated that he paddled downstream near Chase Street and there several blockages there. Chairman Baker said that there is an access issue in that area but blockages will be removed as part of the deferred maintenance that needs to be performed and we will continue to do recreation features. Mr. Sprenne also recommended that we update the Commission's website. Mr. Repay answered that we will be updating it soon.

- Fred Baginski from Hammond informed the Board that he received a \$500 adjustment check back from his insurance company for reduced flood insurance.

- Mike Echterling from Friends of the Little Calumet River announced their next meeting date on April 23 at 7 pm at Cabela's. He also stated that he has taken the lead in organizing the next Little Calumet River Festival scheduled for May 18.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. Chairman Baker announced that the next meeting is scheduled for the third Wednesday of the month, which will be Wednesday, May 15th at the Munster Town Hall at 6:00.

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