

**MINUTES OF THE LITTLE CALUMET RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**HELD AT 6:00 p.m., WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2025**  
**Location: LCRBDC OFFICE, Munster, IN**

Chairman Baker presided and called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Pledge of Allegiance was recited. There were seven (7) Commission members present at roll call. Quorum was declared.

**Commissioners Present:**

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

**Visitors:**

Gary Lee – Gary  
Dave Taborski – Gary  
Laurie Czulno – Hammond  
Jake Dammarell – BF&S Engineering  
Paul Daniels – CCxPD LLC  
Lori Lathan – Wessler Engineering  
Linda Cook – Griffith  
Michael Novotney – Wessler Engineering

**Commissioners Absent:**

Anthony Broadnax

**Zoom Participants:**

Luke Sherry – CBBEL  
Jeff Huet – Town of Schererville  
Kristi Johnson - DNR

**Executive Director:**

Dan Repay

**Attorney:**

Nicole Bennett

**Staff:**

Jodi Lambert

**Approval of Minutes -**

Commissioner Gozdecki made a motion to approve the minutes from February 19, 2025, as presented; motion seconded by Commissioner Castellanos. Chairman Baker asked if there were any questions and called for a vote. Motion passed with 7 aye votes.

**Election of Officers -**

The floor was opened for nominations. Commissioner Ware made a motion to renominate the current slate of officers for the upcoming year: William Baker as Chairman, Tom Wichlinski as Vice-Chairman, Tom Gozdecki as Treasurer, and Levon Whittaker as Secretary; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Castellanos. With no other nominations, Chairman Baker called for a roll-call vote. The motion passed with a vote of 7-0.

**Chairman's Report –**

Chairman Baker began the meeting by welcoming everyone and acknowledging his election as Chairman by his fellow Commissioners. He stated that the Commission is responsible for maintaining a \$275 million man-made federal flood control project. He

noted that the historical pictures shown at every meeting serve as a reminder of the importance of maintaining this system to manage natural events. Chairman Baker mentioned that although there are challenges, such as handling excess water, the preparations today are significantly better than before the 2008 flood. He emphasized the importance of remembering this history while addressing new issues. The Chairman highlighted the ongoing collaboration with communities within the watershed to prevent a recurrence of the 2008 events. Additionally, he pointed out the economic benefits of completing and certifying the levee annually, which eliminates mandatory flood insurance for at least 4,000 properties, saving about \$4 million per year for the community.

**Finance –**

Chairman Baker addressed the February 2025 claims totaling \$811,870.48. Commissioner Whittaker moved to approve the claims as presented, and Commissioner Ochi seconded the motion.

Mr. Repay provided an explanation of several claims, starting with a claim amounting to \$511,345.92 from the Town of Griffith for the Wood Street Storm Sewer Improvements Watershed Project. He noted that Griffith initially requested a larger amount, with the Commission committing 60% of the costs. However, the bids were lower than anticipated, and this project is now complete. The Town of Schererville was reimbursed \$40,000.00 for the Grand Canyon Watershed Project, which also came in under budget, with the Commission contributing 80% of the total cost. Our electrical contractor, Great Lakes Electrical Maintenance, submitted claims totaling \$14,214.00 for monthly Pump Station inspection and maintenance, as well as their ongoing work on rewiring the stations for new PLCs. Additionally, \$14,700.00 was paid to Encap, Inc. for maintaining the Chase Street and Black Oak Mitigation sites. Encap has informed us that they will not continue maintenance at these sites due to issues with a burn permit and overall costs. We are currently seeking a different contractor to fulfill the requirement of maintaining these mitigation sites for five years. VVP Enterprises completed the clearing of Cady Marsh Ditch from Hart Ditch to Grant Street, submitting claims totaling \$42,450.00 for the work. This marks the first time the ditch has been completely cleared of blockages and fallen trees. Finally, \$30,025.00 was paid to the U.S. Geological Survey for the quarterly operation and maintenance of multiple streamgages throughout the system.

Chairman Baker requested additional information on the issues related to our contractor maintaining the mitigation site. Mr. Repay stated that the City of Gary is hesitant to issue a burn permit for site maintenance. Commissioner Whittaker inquired whether the change in administration impacted the ability to obtain permits. The discussion continued about exploring other options and finding another vendor who can use alternative methods to control invasive species at the mitigation sites.

Chairman Baker asked if there were any questions and called for a roll-call vote. Motion passed 7-0.

**Executive Director's Report –**

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

- All clearing and snagging operations on Cady Marsh Ditch are complete. We have successfully cleared and removed dead or leaning trees in the ditch from Grant Street to Hart Ditch. We are working with Lake County to determine other areas to be cleared.
- Work is complete on the Wood Street Storm Sewer Project. The Watershed Project from the Town of Griffith came in under budget with our total cost including change orders at \$511,345.92.
- The clearing of woody vegetation from the Grand Canyon has been completed by the Town of Schererville. We initially budgeted \$64,000.00 for the project, however, once completed, our share was only \$40,000.00.
- We have several projects still waiting for 408 permits from the USACE including the Kennedy Sandbar Modification, Bank Stabilization/Highland Access Ramp, Sluice Gate Modification Projects, as well as the required soil borings along the levee necessary for the City of Gary's LOMR application. It has been well over a year since any of our 408 permits were approved by the USACE. Each of these projects are significant in size and cost which makes it challenging to budget and plan as we move forward.
- We were informed by the USACE that there is enough money to complete the inspections for Gary and Griffith. As of now there are no funds to complete inspections in the west reach of the project, however this may change in the upcoming weeks. We continually monitor and check the system to make sure things are working as intended, but we may not get that formal inspection by the USACE in the future.
- Hasse Construction has started the clearing and inspection of the culverts running underneath 80/94. We are coordinating with INDOT as they may inspect the culverts themselves.
- RFP's on the Watershed Study are due March 4<sup>th</sup>. We have been meeting with various engineering firms and answering questions on what we would like to see for the final product.
- Submittals for engineering and conceptual design on the Hobart Dam are due to our office on April 11<sup>th</sup>.
- The deadline to submit Watershed Applications is February 24<sup>th</sup>. Depending on the number of applications received, presentations will be held at the March and potentially April meetings.
- We recently had productive discussions with representatives from the City of Gary regarding the LOMR and other issues facing the city.
- We were formally issued 42 tax sale deeds from the Lake County Circuit Court. We plan to obtain an additional 40-50 parcels in the next round of tax sales.

**Other Issues/New Business –**

Commissioner Ochi made a motion to approve an agreement with HWC Engineering for engineering and design services of the Optimist Lake Boardwalk and other recreational amenities in an amount not to exceed \$303,000.00. Subject to final draft and approval by Attorney, Executive Director and Chairman; motion seconded by Commissioner Castellanos. Mr. Repay stated that this is an important recreational

aspect of the watershed. The City of Hammond, the South Shore Visitors and Convention Authority and the Legacy Foundation are all on board to contribute to the project. Chairman Baker asked if there were any questions and called for a roll-call vote. Motion passed 7-0.

Commissioner Wichlinski made a motion to approve the 9<sup>th</sup> Addendum to the Employment Agreements of the Executive Director and Office Manager pending legal review; motion seconded by Commissioner Castellanos. Chairman Baker stated that this is the annual HR review of the Employment Contracts. Chairman Baker asked if there were any questions and called for a roll-call vote. Motion passed 7-0.

**Statements to the Board –**

No Statements to the Board.

There being no further business, the next regular meeting was scheduled for 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, March 19, 2025.