

NORTHWOODS RAIL TRANSIT COMMISSION

MEETING SUMMARY

Nicolet Technical College - Rhinelander
January 29, 2016

I. Call to Order

Ms. Gehlhoff called the meeting to order at approximately 10:10 am.

II. Introductions and Public Comment Period

Ms. Gehlhoff asked for introductions from around the room. Commissioners in attendance were: Wendy Gehlhoff Florence County Economic Development Corporation, Ed Wenger Florence County Board, *Dale Kupczyk Ashland County Economic Development Corporation*, Angie Close Langlade County Economic Development Corporation, Randy Tatur Rusk County Board Chair, Bob Kopisch Price County Board Chair, Ray Heikkinen Price County Board, Mike Cassidy Marinette County Board, Sherry Abitz Marathon County Board, *Kelly Klein Iron County WI Economic Development Corporation*, *Joe Pinardi Iron County WI Board Chair*, *Tom Laabs Goegbic County*, *Al Koskela Houghton County Board*, and *Scott Erbis Marquette County Administrator*.

Others in attendance were: Steve Kienitz WisDOT, *Jerry Wuorenmaa WUPPDR*, *John Duncan Varda Wisconsin Central Group*, *Dave Simon WisDOT*, Kevin Soucie CN, Pat Snyder Congressman Duffy's Office, *Doug Hill Senator Baldwin's Office*, *Wally Townsend Dickinson County Board*, *Peter Van Steen CUPPAD*, Bill Korrer WI Counties Association, Tom Clauder WI OCR, Dennis Hastreiter, Nick Ghere Niagara Worldwide, Brian Buchanan CN, Tom Klimek E&LS RR, Chris Berry WEDC, Jim Hoppe PCA-Tomahawk, *George Kinsella*, Brian Jopek Lakeland Times, Rick Bliese Lincoln Wood Products, MaryAnn Lippert Governor's Office, *Pete Russo Ashland County*, *Pasi Latula Michigan Tech University*, *Tim Lynott Highland Copper* and Darryl Landeau NCWRPC.

Note: Others may have attended via teleconference but did not check in.

III. Approval of Meeting Notes from September 25, 2015

There was an error in the minutes as presented: the names of Kelly Klein, Joe Pinardi and a representative of Highland Copper who participated in the meeting but were not included in the attendance listing. On a motion by Mr. Kopisch, seconded by Mr. Tatur, the meeting notes of the September 25, 2015 meeting were approved subject to the noted revision with all in favor.

IV. Report on US DOT TIGER VII Debrief

Ms. Gehlhoff handed out a summary of observations from the teleconference with federal transportation officials on our second TIGER Grant application. Only 39 of 620 applications were funded. Some of the factors negatively affecting our application

include: the rolling stock only aspect - TIGER aims to develop the nation's infrastructure; state matching funds were characterized as pending - would need to be more solid; and not clear who would own the rail cars and how the ownership/operations would work.

There was wide ranging discussion on the proposed rail car project and potential funding including TIGER and other sources. The item concluded with consensus that the NRTC would postpone any third attempt at TIGER until some of the main elements of the debrief could be addressed.

V. Possible NRTC Support of WI SB305/AB458

Pending legislative efforts to facilitate state funding for the log car project were discussed. Basically, we all need to promote these efforts with each of our legislators, businesses, loggers, etc. The Chair was authorized to convey NRTC support for these legislative efforts.

VI. Possible Efforts to Stimulate Freight on CN L'Anse-Baraga Branch Line

The increase in service on this line from 3 days per week to 6 per week, is a temporary operational change by CN to move a quantity of waste ties to a power plant. The time frame is not long enough to accommodate an effort to generate more freight. There was general discussion regarding stimulating additional freight volume.

VII. CN Response to Request for Meeting with Senior Management

The NRTC has received a reply to our request for a face-to-face from CN Senior Vice President John Orr, indicating they are willing to meet with us. The Chair was authorized to coordinate this meeting with CN executives.

VIII. CN Request to Prioritize Line Segments

In conjunction with the pending CN executive meeting, CN is interested to know what rail segments we are most interested. This is likely to help them evaluate feasibility. There was general discussion on rail segments in northern Wisconsin and the U.P. This probably will need to be a future action item.

IX. Next Meeting

Scheduling of the next meeting was left at the discretion of the Chair pending scheduling / outcome of CN meeting.

X. Adjourn

On a motion by Ms. Abitz, seconded by Mr. Kopisch, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:30 am with all in favor.