

THE KIRPC NEWS

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WARREN COUNTY IS THE LATEST ADDITION TO KANKAKEE-IROQUOIS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

This past fall, Warren County passed a resolution requesting membership into **KIRPC**. The **KIRPC** board unanimously voted to welcome Warren County into the Regional Planning Commission, which now numbers seven counties in Northwest Indiana.

Warren County has four incorporated towns; namely, Williamsport, West Lebanon, Pine Village, and State Line City.

Williamsport is the Warren Co. seat, and is home to St. Vincent Williamsport Hospital—a 16 bed acute care facility that serves as

a catalyst for the area's continued economic growth and development.

West Lebanon is home to several industries including auto repair, metal fabrication, metal hose manufacturing, and prefabricated garages.

Pine Village is the third largest in Warren County and has a bustling downtown with many businesses, such as a post office, cafes and restaurants, a gas station, and other services.

State Line City has a history as

an important railroad town. A large grain elevator and small businesses have kept the local economy steady through the years.

Prior to the county officially becoming a part of **KIRPC**, discussions were underway with West Lebanon to seek funding for a water, sewer, and drainage planning grant.

Recently, **KIRPC** obtained a \$30,000 planning grant for Pine Village to study issues with their sewer system.

LT. GOVERNOR SKILLMAN AWARDS THE TOWN OF MONON \$500,000

Funding a nearly \$2 million rehabilitation of a Monon wastewater treatment facility will be easier thanks to a grant from the state.

On December 8, 2008, Indiana's Office of Community and Rural Affairs announced a grant of \$500,000 toward the project as part of its Community Focus Fund program.

The fund assists communities with projects aiming to improve infrastructure, health, safety and quality of life. More than two dozen communities divided \$11.5 million in grants during the program's eighth round.

Monon will use the \$500,000—to be dispensed next spring—to act on treatment plant rehabilitation recommendations made in a 2005 study by MD Wessler & Associates.

Bryan Rinker, president of Monon's town council, said the



Representatives from the Town of Monon and KIRPC accept the Award from Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman

population has been stable for about 40 years, but industrial customers have had increased usage needs. "We have been able to safely meet those needs, but we need to expand a bit more if we have more Indus-

trial entities come in," Rinker said. The rehabilitation project should break ground in April. However, there is the remaining \$1.4 million cost which Rinker hopes to cover by selling municipal sewage bonds.

WARREN COUNTY LOOKS TOWARDS ETHANOL FOR FUTURE GROWTH

"Nothing has been finalized at this point"

Steve Eberly

*Director, Warren County
Local Economic
Development Organization*

"By increasing the maximum grant amount for Infrastructure projects, we hope to help our rural communities hold utility costs at a reasonable rate. This measure will be especially beneficial for residents of low to moderate income."

*Kathleen Weissenberger,
Director of Community Affairs,
Indiana Office of Community
and Rural Affairs*

"KIRPC will work with Jasper County EMS and the Polis Center at IUPUI to develop a plan for approval by Homeland Security and FEMA that the county can utilize to react to natural and human-caused hazards."

*Edwin Buswell,
KIRPC Executive Director*

A South Dakota-based company that operates ethanol plants in seven states is in negotiations to build its largest facility yet in Warren County.

The Warren County Board of Zoning Appeals recently voted to grant a special exception to landowners north of West Lebanon, helping clear the way for a proposed \$260 million ethanol plant to be built by Poet LLC.

The 115 million-gallon-per-year facility "would be our largest so far," said Bob Berens, Poet director of site development.

"This would be a big economic stimulus for us," said Mike Jackson, president of the West Lebanon Town Council. The town of about 800 people, 35 miles west of Lafay-

ette, needs an economic shot in the arm, he said.

Poet operates two other facilities in Jay and Madison counties and is constructing a third in Wabash County. This would be the company's fourth in Indiana.

The facility would be constructed on approximately 250 acres in an area bound by Indiana 63 and Indiana 263, just south of Indiana 28 and north of West Lebanon, said Steve Eberly, director of the Warren County Local Economic Development Organization.

But the facility details are still being worked out, Eberly said.

"Nothing has been finalized." If everything goes as planned,

construction could begin in 2009, Berens said.

The completed facility would have 44 to 48 full-time employees, he said.

Eberly said he is eager to move forward. This facility "could become the cornerstone of growth and further economic development for the western edge of Warren County," he said.

Dana Craft, West Lebanon clerk-treasurer, agreed.

"It would be such a boost to our community."

The energy bill passed by Congress in 2007 requires 9 billion gallons of ethanol to be blended into gasoline in 2008, and about 11 billion gallons in 2009.

OCRA ANNOUNCES INCREASE IN MAXIMUM AWARDS FOR THE CDBG GRANT PROGRAM

On December 19, 2008, the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs announced that they will file a modification to the 2008 Annual Consolidated Plan with the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD).

The State provided the opportunity for citizens to comment on the modification, which will be submitted to HUD on or before January 30, 2009.

The 2008 Consolidated Plan

Amendment will set forth the method of distribution of funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.

Specifically, the modification will increase the maximum grant award for Water, Sanitary Sewer, and Storm Drainage from \$500,000 to \$600,000. Other Community Development Projects (including fire stations) can now receive a maximum award of \$500,000, which is an increase from \$350,000 previ-

ously. The maximum award for fire trucks will remain at \$150,000.

From 2002 to 2008, KIRPC has submitted grants for their six county area totaling over \$21 million dollars. The majority of the funding has gone towards infrastructure improvements and upgrades, library construction, downtown revitalizations, community center developments, and fire trucks. Other funding was obtained for planning purposes.

JASPER COUNTY CLOSE TO SUBMITTING THEIR HAZARDOUS MITIGATION PLAN TO FEMA

Over the past six months, KIRPC has been working with the Jasper County Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee and the Polis Center at IUPUI to develop an All Hazard Mitigation Plan for the county. Ultimately, the completed plan will be submitted to FEMA for approval which will open the doors for funding from Homeland Security.

FEMA is requiring each unit

of government in the US to have a FEMA approved plan, as these plans will serve as the framework for developing hazard mitigation projects which will reduce the negative impact of future disasters on the community. Examples of projects that have been completed by some communities include storm shelters, warning sirens, flood walls, and fire protection enhancements.

In 2003, Jasper County completed a Comprehensive Emergency Man-

agement Plan that identified the principle natural hazards to Jasper County including river flooding, flash flooding, severe winter weather, and lightening related to heavy thunderstorms and tornados.

The Steering Committee has been charged with updating previous information as a part of the overall plan.

It is hoped to gain approval from FEMA by early 2009.

POTENTIAL STIMULUS FUNDING GENERATES INTEREST THROUGHOUT REGION

The U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee has released the chamber's proposal for the long anticipated economic recovery legislation. The bill, entitled the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Bill of 2009" seeks to create jobs and stimulate the economy by making immediate investments in the nation's infrastructure and providing a series of tax cuts.

The economic recovery package includes \$550 billion in new spending and \$275 billion in tax cuts. The measure is moving through the House with floor consideration possible by the end of January. Upon passage in the House, this legislation must be approved by the U.S. Senate before it is cleared for the President's signature.

In response, INDOT is soliciting

capital projects from all rural transit systems throughout Indiana, including **KIRPC**. The capital projects must be eligible under the Section 5311 grant program and must be ready for immediate implementation. These funds would be 100 percent federal share with no local match requirement.

The proposed stimulus package would also include a large sum directed towards infrastructure projects. It seems fairly certain that the funds will need to be obligated very quickly, perhaps within a 90 to 180 day time frame. As with transportation, the funding will not require a local match, but the projects will be required to go through normal federal aid procedures, such as environmental approval, right-of-way certification, and design sub-

missions.

In addition to the aforementioned, the bill would allocate funds to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (\$350 million for watershed and flood prevention operations), the U.S. Department of Commerce (\$250 million, of which up to \$50 million may be transferred to federally authorized regional economic development commissions), the Department of Justice (\$3 billion for state and local law enforcement), the Environmental Protection Agency (\$800 million), Education and Workforce (\$4 billion for training and employment services, and Health & Human Services (\$1 billion for low income)

KIRPC will assist the region to acquire funding if passed.

"If approved by Congress, the stimulus package will provide unanticipated funding to our cities, towns, and counties for much needed projects."

Randy Mitchell,
KIRPC Transit Manager

ARROWHEAD COUNTRY PUBLIC TRANSIT FACES SERIOUS CHALLENGES IN 2009

The topic regarding mass transportation presents a "quandary."

Everybody agrees we need it, but how to pay for it remains the big question.

With urban areas like Indianapolis, Gary, and Ft. Wayne feeling the pinch, rural areas trying to deliver demand response service to their customers at affordable rates is approaching a crisis

stage.

Arrowhead Country has been fortunate to receive an increase in funding from federal and state sources over the past three years. For 2009, **Arrowhead Country Public Transit** will receive 5.4% more in funding from 2008 levels. However, the national economic crisis has reached into the rural areas with

projected costs rising 8.9% in 2009 vs. 2008.

Therefore the pressure is on to seek cost reduction avenues without compromising services. One area that may provide some relief is if the current costs of fuel remain stable in 2009.

Hopefully the Indiana Legislature will address this in 2009.

"We must continue to explore new ways to lower costs without compromising our services."

Randy Mitchell
KIRPC Transit Manager

FOWLER, MONTICELLO, AND PINE VILLAGE AWARDED PLANNING GRANTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Towns of Fowler and Pine Village, and the city of Monticello were recently awarded planning grants from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs.

These grants will enable funding for studies to assist in the decisions for how to proceed in the future. **KIRPC** submitted and will administer the grants for each of the recipients.

Fowler received \$50,000 to study the water, wastewater, and storm drainage systems. Key Engineering will evaluate the condition and capacity of the three

systems, and will prepare a Master Utility Plan to describe future improvements needed to meet the short and long term needs of the town.

The Town of Pine Village received \$30,000 to complete a Wastewater System study for the community. The study will focus upon options for the town to meet the requirements of an Agreed Order issued by IDEM. The town does not currently have a wastewater treatment utility and IDEM has identified untreated sanitary sewer discharges to Big Pine

Creek, which runs along the north side of the town.

The City of Monticello received \$50,000 to develop a Comprehensive Plan focusing upon smart growth, economic development, land use, transportation, open space, neighborhoods, the natural environment, infrastructure, and culture and urban design.

The City of Monticello has realized a need to plan for its future. With a new administration, they will need to see long term capabilities for the city.

"The planning grant is a valuable tool for enabling the city to develop priorities for our future development."

Jason Thompson,
Mayor of Monticello

115 East Fourth Street
P.O. Box 127
Monon, Indiana 47959

Phone: 219-253-6658
Fax: 219-253-6659
Email: elb@kirpc.net
Web: www.kirpc.net

SERVING TODAY AND TOMORROW

Administrative Staff

Edwin Buswell, AICP
Executive Director
elb@kirpc.net

Belinda Gutwein
KIRPC Head Start
Director
bgutwein@kirpc.net

Randy Mitchell
Project Development/
Transit Manager
rmitchell@kirpc.net

Kimberly Baker
Grant Administrator
kbaker@kirpc.net

Lynette Carpenter
Financial Manager
lcarpenter@kirpc.net

Laurie Burton
Administrative Asst
lbarton@kirpc.net

KIRPC MISSION STATEMENT

KIRPC is a voluntary public partnership serving Benton, Jasper, Newton, Pulaski, Starke, and White Counties that provides assistance to local units of government to maximize community and economic development opportunities for the benefit of all citizens.

Representation/Governance

The **KIRPC** agency is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of appointees from each member county, city, and incorporated town within the region. At least two-thirds of the membership consists of locally elected officials. While **KIRPC** personnel work in cooperation and coordination with federal, state, and local agencies on behalf of the member units of government, they remain directly responsible to the governing board.

TOWN OF BROOK RECEIVES A CFF GRANT FOR DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS

On December 8, 2008, the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs awarded the Town of Brook \$500,000 to improve their downtown area as part of its Community Focus Fund Program.

The town will utilize these funds to enhance the area along Main Street in downtown Brook, with the intent of eliminating blighted conditions. The town has declared the downtown a blighted area as defined by Indiana Code. The resolution signed by the town declares that 38.5% of the first floor commercial space is vacant. Much of the public improvements such as sidewalks, curbs, and lighting have also deteriorated significantly.

The project will include the removal and replacement of concrete sidewalk from Railroad Street east to Highway Street, including a 4' stamped concrete ribbon. Lights will be replaced from the Post Office to Highway Street alternating sides for light distribution. Benches, trash re-



Representative Donald Lehe, KIRPC, and town council members accept the award from Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman.

ceptacles, planters, and trees will be placed along the new sidewalk for a traditional downtown look. Curb ramps will be placed at walkway crossings for handicap accessibility. The street will be milled and repaved at 1.5 inches from Railroad Street to Highway Street. The only utility lines that will be buried will be those associated

with the new lights. With a more attractive and convenient downtown, additional businesses and consumers will be enticed to the area. The total projected costs for the project is \$658,505. The community is providing a total of \$158,505 for the local match from several sources.

KIRPC wrote and will administer the grant for the Town of Brook.