

CAUSEWAY IMPROVEMENTS REFERENDUM COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Causeway Improvements Referendum Committee, appointed by the North Brevard Commission on Parks and Recreation, an advisory board, held Monday, July 21, 2003, at 6:00 p.m., at the Brevard Room.

Members Present

Eric Dirschka, Chairman
Paul Nydam
Thompson
Captain Mickey Otwell
Dorn Whitmore
Maureen Wright
Ted Beck, Ex-Officio (NBCPR)
Rich Votapka, Ex-Officio (City)

Members Absent

JiJi Connolly
Laurilee

A&E Present

Woody Rice, Honeycutt and Associates

County Staff Present

Charles S. Nelson, Parks & Recreation Director
Cheryl K. Page,
North Area Parks Operations Manager
Chuck Mays, Construction Coordinator
John Denninghoff,
Director of Transportation Engineering
Jill Hill, Recreation Leader

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Eric Dirschka called the meeting to order at approximately 6:10 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve the minutes of June 9, 2003, by Paul Nydam, seconded by Dorn Whitmore.

AYE: Dirschka, Nydam, Otwell, Whitmore, Wright.

NAY: None

Carried: 5-0

III. STAFF REPORTS

Cheryl Page advised the committee that Kathy Keen has resigned from the committee due to outside commitments. Mrs. Page stated that the alternate committee member is Walter Pine, who has to be approved at the parks commission meeting in August, and then he will be sitting in Kathy's place.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Chuck Nelson introduced John Denninghoff who is the Transportation Engineering Director. John Denninghoff gave an overview of the bridge project as it exists. Mr. Denninghoff stated that the bridge is over 50 years old and that the County became the owner of the bridge in 1981. He further advised that DOT, at the request of the County, did a feasibility study in 1997 for a high-rise bridge. Mr. Denninghoff advised the County is currently funding a ~~PDE study~~ Project Development and Environmental Study (PDE) which will conclude in about a month. He then reviewed the following objectives:

- Do not put an unacceptable impact at Sand Point Park, Pier or Parrish Park area.
- Getting the high-rise bridge back down to a grade that is acceptable to the main Parrish Park area will be a problem.
- Create more opportunities for the park. The intent for the old bridge is to preserve it for a pier.
- Allow for a second lane (acceleration lane) out of the park going west towards Titusville. This will allow cars pulling boats to get up to speed.

Mr. Denninghoff stated they have been working with the preliminary plans that were associated with the improvements further to the east of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation offices with parking and driving aisles and structures that might be designed. John Denninghoff advised the bridge has to be constructed offset from the old bridge to keep the existing traffic capacity open. He then added that the diagram he

was sharing with the committee was the preliminary design and that it was the preferred alternative. Mr. Denninghoff advised one of the things that does not show up on the plans is there will be an area beneath the bridge which will be available for parking or park use. Mr. Denninghoff added one thing provided for is a pedestrian feature on both sides of the bridge as well as paved shoulder areas for bicycles without interfering with pedestrians. Mr. Denninghoff stated that Riverwalk walkway will also be incorporated. He advised there has been considerable cooperation from the City of Titusville and Parks and Recreation.

John Denninghoff advised there was a request from the National Marine Fisheries to remove the entire causeway and span the entire river with the bridge. He then advised they gave a second option which would remove Parrish Park and the Fish and Wildlife offices. Mr. Denninghoff stated they then requested moving the bridge from just east of the Fish and Wildlife offices and take out that portion which would eliminate all of the park area that this committee has been working on. He then stated that one of the ideas that is being entertained now is the possibility of a shorter area to the extreme east of the causeway and basically put in a relief bridge structure. Mr. Denninghoff advised that is the only thing the County would consider and they are unsure if they want to consider that because of the impact it would have. Marine Fisheries purpose of that comment was that if the causeway is opened up, the water quality will be improved and wildlife will benefit. Mr. Denninghoff advised the minimum cost to do something like this would add \$5,000,000 to the project. John Denninghoff advised he has been working with Chuck Nelson to explore different options. Mr. Denninghoff advised this is not the preferred option and will not be an option recommended out of the PDE study. He advised that it is probable there will be a commitment to study the last option and try to develop it further to assess the benefits. Discussion ensued regarding different possibilities with Marine Fisheries.

John Denninghoff stated the current bridge is in horrible condition and it will be going to bid for some work in the swing span area of the bridge. He advised there are severe electrical, mechanical, structural and bridge deck problems that will be addressed. Mr. Denninghoff stated the westbound lane of the bridge deck is very rusty and the eastbound is not. He advised the work could stretch into the early part of next year.

John Denninghoff advised there will be a public hearing August 14, or August 16, 2003, at the Brevard Room. He advised it would be advertised. Mr. Denninghoff advised when the PDE is complete and approved by the Federal Highway Administration, the design phase will be initiated. He stated the design phase has been funded by federal dollars and cannot be started until the PDE is approved by the Federal Highway Administration, which enables it to be eligible for federal funding on the design. Mr. Denninghoff stated the consultant has already been selected and is under contract. Rich Votapka advised that on September 4, 2003, DOT is holding its kickoff meeting for the bridge design. John Denninghoff stated that this will get interested parties involved in the process as the design is undertaken. Mr. Denninghoff advised there are a number of commitments made in the PDE study that the design will have to follow. There will be public input on some of the details of the bridge design. He added that many things can be done with lighting that would make the bridge attractive. Mr. Denninghoff advised that at the apex of the high-rise, there will be a 5 foot wide, 20 foot long, area with a railing that will be an observation deck. It will be on the south side of the bridge.

Maureen Wright inquired of the chances that the causeway will disappear. John Denninghoff stated that if he has anything to say about it there will be zero percent chance. He advised there is only one agency pushing for doing away with the causeway. He advised there will be a study done to try and improve water quality and sea grasses.

Eric Dirschka inquired if a large portion of the causeway were to be removed, if there could be accommodations to recover that access at Sand Point Park. John Denninghoff advised that was a possibility. Discussion ensued regarding the National Marine Fisheries Agency.

Dorn Whitmore inquired if the boardwalk and the bicycle/pedestrian path on the bridge would intersect. John Denninghoff stated that they would and he further explained the boardwalk and paths. Captain Otwell inquired about the rise of the bridge and asked what other bridge it is comparable to. John Denninghoff stated it has a 5% rise and it is comparable to the Peoples Bridge and the Hubert Humphrey bridge which is a 6% rise. He also advised the bridge would meet all modern criteria. Captain Otwell inquired where the pedestrian areas would be. John Denninghoff replied they would be on both sides of the bridge. ~~Rich Votapka added there is a 1 foot vertical rise for every 20 feet.~~ Rich Votapka added there is a 5% rise which is equivalent to a 1 foot vertical rise for every 20 feet.

Paul Nydam stated on the slope heading west, he was concerned about a truck pulling big rigged trailers and a boat coming down the 5% grade. At the bottom of the grade there is the pedestrian crossway, he believed this could be disastrous. John Denninghoff stated that the pedestrian area is back approximately 700 feet. Mr. Nydam restated his concern for safety in this area.

John Denninghoff stated the cost of the bridge in 1997 was \$27,000,000 and today's estimate is \$24,000,000 to \$27,000,000. Rich Votapka stated that the original cost estimate included the purchase of the right of way. Mr. Denninghoff added there may be opportunities to trim costs. Rich Votapka stated there was a question at the last meeting regarding public input in design. John Denninghoff stated there will be public input meetings and there will be a design team. Paul Nydam inquired if the meetings would be held locally. John Denninghoff stated they would be at the Brevard Room.

Eric Dirschka stated at the last meeting alternative entrances for Parrish Park had been discussed. He then inquired if this issue should be discussed now or at a future meeting. Chuck Nelson stated that the motion the committee voted on was design issues. Mr. Nelson added if this is a design consideration the committee would like made, John Denninghoff would need to know this now. John Denninghoff stated once public hearing is complete, the final PDE document will be submitted to Federal Highway Administration. Mr. Denninghoff advised he believed they would request some revisions.

V. NEW BUSINESS - None

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

Lisa Neil stated her concern is boating access. She advised there is a need for more boat parking. Chuck Nelson stated there has not been any discussion regarding additional spaces and that the number of spaces currently there would not be reduced. He added that the intent is, if there is additional space, to expand the boat parking. Lisa Neil stated that if there are increased parking areas for cars with curbs, it would eliminate overflow boat parking. She advised the only time the parking is sufficient is about 6:00 p.m. on a weekday. Chuck Nelson stated he understood her concerns and it is an issue that he would like to address but there are also additional uses as well.

Ms. Neil then inquired if there had been any studies as to how many boats and trailers there are on any particular weekend. Chuck Nelson stated that information is being developed. Lisa Neil stated she also had concerns about the people with the hobbies and jet skis. She advised they can launch from the beach now but if parking areas with curbs are put in, it will congest the boat ramps. Chuck Nelson stated that stage of development has not been reached at this point. Eric Dirschka added that on the conceptual plan there will be a ramp for jetskis and hobbies.

Lisa Neil then suggested having a hose bib at the launch area somewhere for rinsing the boats and motors off. Ms. Neil stated she would like the name of the person with Wildlife Fisheries to send public comments to. John Denninghoff stated he would get the information. Paul Nydam stated the boat wash may help. Chuck Nelson stated that cost and space will be factors. Dorn Whitmore stated the availability

of fresh water is an issue. Chuck Nelson stated there is not sufficient water there currently and would like to investigate a directional bore. Mr. Nelson explained the current fresh water problems in the area. Paul Nydam inquired if the utilities would go on the bridge. Chuck Nelson stated typically they will.

Eric Dirschka inquired if the ramp at Sand Point will be improved. Chuck Nelson stated there will not be improvements there. He added he is working with the City on some improvements at Marina.

Thelma Roper stated she would like to see the boating enhanced and would like to see historical markers. She advised the causeway has historic significance and she does not want to see it lost. She advised she would like to see it made obvious to the citizens that it is historical. John Denninghoff stated as a part of the PDE study, the North Brevard Historical Society was approached regarding the bridge. He advised that the historical society requested that a reference center be installed on the west end of the bridge as part of Sand Point or the Pier. That will be done as a commitment of the PDE. Titusville City Council approved the use of a portion of the park for that purpose. Mr. Denninghoff advised that has been built into the cost of the bridge and will be included. He added it will refer to the Walker Bridge and the current bridge.

Walter Pine stated the FWCC building has some major realignment going on now. He advised they will be doing away with all their divisions and consolidating a number of their activities. He stated there has been discussion of doing away with this office and consolidating it with the regional office. Mr. Pine stated that activity may not be there six months to a year from now. He stated dispatch has already been pulled and consolidated so the building is not manned 24/7 as it was at one time. Mr. Pine advised that the committee may want to be aware of this. He advised he is going to a meeting with the FWCC next week.

Mr. Pine stated he is a member of the Veteran Memorial Preservation Society and they were never contacted. He advised the bridge was dedicated by the DAR (Daughters Of The American Revolution), he believed in 1953, to all the fallen soldiers. He advised the old Walker bridge was called that because Mr. Walker pretty much paid for that bridge. He stated there are a number of different stories. Mr. Pine stated a group of soldiers went off the bridge during World War II. He advised several of them got out, one of them went back into the water and did manage to get one other fellow out, but drowned in his attempt to save the other soldier. Mr. Pine advised the soldier that went back into the water was awarded the soldiers medal, which at the time was the highest non-combat medal at that time. He advised there are death certificates for these soldiers and there is evidence that one or possibly two of the bodies may still be there. Mr. Pine stated the bridge was left there by the Corps of Engineers at a later date for the care and maintenance by the City of Titusville. He advised the Walker Bridge then became a veterans' memorial. Mr. Pine stated that it is a fact that six soldiers died there. Maureen Wright inquired what year that occurred. Mr. Pine stated in '42 and he has the dates and would get them for Mrs. Wright if she would like. Walter Pine stated that the Pier is a veterans' memorial and it has been from the date it was left there. He added the causeway was dedicated at a later date, but it is contiguous with a veterans' memorial. Mr. Pine stated research so far has not found another veterans' memorial in the continental United States connected to World War II deaths that is older than that. He advised this could be a significant boom to the community, if it is oldest veterans' memorial connected to World War II deaths, as there may be additional funding sources available to the project as a result of this. He advised the Corps of Engineers can do work and he believed the military could also do some work. Mr. Pine was unsure if this would offset some of the cost but it would be worth finding out. He also advised on occasion reservists on their annual training have done paving projects.

Walter Pine stated the idea of the mitigation for the sea beds. He advised the water used to flow fast enough through the current bridge that the old wooden bridge would vibrate. He advised since they put in the NASA causeway, the Melbourne causeway, and various causeways down south of here that flow has

stopped. Mr. Pine stated the river doesn't flow like a river, it is what they call sheet flow. He advised only the top so many inches of water actually flow and that is based on the wind. He advised it will move only until it reaches an obstruction. Mr. Pine stated once it reaches an obstruction, the vast majority of that water ponds up and that is why you see little wind tides all the time. He advised from a hydrological point of view, he does not know how much a relief span is going to make a difference as far as water movement. He stated there are some very easy formulas to work out such as depth of water, how wide it is, and you will know how much water is going to move through and whether or not it will make a difference. Mr. Pine advised there is going to be a maximum flow through the bridges south of here. He advised that water may just move from one side of the bridge north and south and back and forth. He advised this is a situation that needs to be looked into to see if it has an impact.

Walter Pine stated he would like to see the difference in cost regarding the walkways with and without the separate bicycle path. He stated he fishes on the bridge frequently and there is a small amount of traffic on the bridge. Mr. Pine stated he would question spending \$5,000,000 for 50 people to go across the bridge, however if the traffic is higher than that, he believed a study or survey should be looked at. He advised if the traffic is not there, there is just so much money to work with.

Paul Nydam stated he has bicycled across the current bridge and it is like taking your life in your own hands. Mr. Nydam advised he believed the bike path was critical. He added with the addition of the bike path on the new bridge, he believed there would be more users.

Dorn Whitmore stated there is a lot of pressure from various local bicycle clubs that would like to use the bike path.

Chuck Nelson stated the next public meeting date is August 14, 2003, in the Brevard Room. John Denninghoff explained how the meetings run and that the public portion of the meeting usually runs from 5-6 p.m.

VII. ADJOURN

The next meeting date was set for Monday, September 15, 2003, at 6:00 p.m. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Dirschka
Chairman

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