

## **Joint Kent-Queen Anne's Task Force**

**April 15, 2016**

**Members Present:** Margo Bailey, Foster Beach, Wayne Darrell, Commissioner Ronald H. Fithian, Ken Fry, Paul Hanley, Shelley Herman, Greg Holsey, Joe Holt, Commissioner William A. Short, Lainey Solomon, and Commissioner Jack Wilson

**Member Absent:** Bernadette Bowman, Jack Brosius, Mayor Chris Cerino, Mark Glass, Greg Roby, and Greg Todd

**Also in attendance:** Brian Covington, Covington Machine and Welding; Jared Ferber, Lead Inspector, State Highway Administration; Kay MacIntosh, Economic Development & Marketing Coordinator, Chestertown Arts and Entertainment District/Chestertown Main Street; Kristin McMenamin, Region IV Coordinator, State of Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Bob Rager, Community Liaison, State Highway Administration; and Jamie Williams, Coordinator, Economic Development.

At 9:23 a.m. the meeting convened. Commissioner Short gave opening remarks.

On motion by Mr. Beach, and seconded by Commissioner Wilson, the minutes from the March 18, 2016, meeting were approved.

Mr. Holsey stated that the State Highway Administration (SHA) failed to properly communicate the full impact of the flagging procedures to its customers and expressed his sincere apology on behalf of SHA. A traffic alert was issued on April 12, 2016. SHA planned a more extensive 24-hour flagging operation that minimized the duration of repair work. SHA revised the plan based on community input; extending the length of time for completion of steel beam repairs to the draw span and the removal of daytime lane closures.

Commissioner Short stated that the Commissioners along with many residents, business owners, and the Town of Chestertown wrote letters to the Governor, Comptroller, Treasurer, and Secretary for the State Highway Administration regarding concerns over the full closure of the Bridge scheduled for July. Commissioner Fithian thanked Mr. Holsey for his apology on behalf of SHA and expressed that a one-lane closure on the bridge would create chaos on Washington Avenue. Commissioner Fithian stated that the Task Force attempted to make the best situation for its citizens but was unable to do so because of misleading information.

Ms. Bailey stated that the recent events have led to significant mistrust with SHA and also believes that the full-closure should be postponed.

Commissioner Short stated that the Task Force should revisit ideas that were previously discussed by the Task Force in early 2015 such as a fixed span, and possible winter closing dates. Commissioner Wilson agreed.

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Mr. Beach expressed his disappointment with the loss of the credibility for SHA. Mr. Beach inquired as to what became known that changed the scope of work that needed to be done, specifically the addition of major steel replacement and other work under the deck of the bridge. Mr. Beach agreed that the Task Force should revisit the project. Mr. Beach stated that SHA needs to make more than promises; SHA needs to make commitments whether it be fixes to the bridge, or a bypass. Commissioner Fithian stated that the bridge is critical to citizens and that a bypass is very important. Mr. Beach requested that SHA provide the Task Force with a report at the next meeting of how much sandblasting needs to take place once the structural repairs are made. Mr. Beach has fifty years' experience as an engineer working on major projects across the Nation and with the New York State Department of Transportation. Mr. Beach was involved with inspections and maintenance of all of the bridges in New York.

Mr. Holt reviewed the cost to maintain and operate the draw span. If the draw span was made into a fixed span than perhaps the residents up river could be compensated by the State. Mr. Holt also endorsed putting other alternatives back on the table.

Mr. Hanley asked whether the bridge has to go in the upright position in order to perform the painting work. Mr. Hanley also questioned whether or not there is lead paint on the bridge and if there was a report. For clarification, Mr. Hanley inquired as to what time the bridge would close during the steel replacement. SHA will begin setting up at 8:00 p.m. beginning on April 18, 2016.

Ms. Williams discussed the Chester River Bypass and stated that it is not just a Kent and Queen Anne's County issue; it is a regional issue. The bypass remains a major project and the surrounding counties should be aggressive to move this project forward. The drawspan is merely a temporary solution.

Commissioner Wilson discussed results of current legislation. With legislation recently passed, it will become very difficult to get funding for rural projects approved in the future due to new standards.

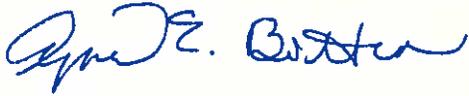
Paula Reeder, Associate Broker, Champion Realty, expressed her concerns of the true conditions of the bridge and the expected lifespan of the bridge. Ms. Reeder also stated that a fixed span bridge would decrease property values.

Jerry Ludey discussed the safety of the narrow walkway over the bridge and suggested that a railing be installed in order to keep pedestrians from falling or being pulled into the roadway.

On motion by Commissioner Short, seconded by Commissioner Wilson, the Task Force agreed to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:21 a.m. The Joint Kent-Queen Anne's Task Force agreed to meet again on May 20, 2016, in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully submitted,



April E. Bitter, Deputy Clerk

Approved:



William A. Short, Member  
The County Commissioners  
Of Kent County, Maryland