

Joint Kent-Queen Anne's Task Force

March 13, 2015

Members Present: Foster Beach, Jack Brosius, Wayne Darrell, Commissioner Ronald Fithian, Ken Fry, Paul Hanley, Commissioner William Short, Ernest Crofoot, Gregg Todd, Greg Holsey, and Greg Roby

Members Absent: Commissioner Mark Anderson, Margo Bailey, Mayor Chris Cerino, Joe Holt, and Mark Glass

Also in attendance: Sheriff John Price and Charlie Brown on behalf of Mark Glass

At 9:00 a.m. the meeting convened. Commissioner Fithian opened the meeting with a brief summary of what has transpired since the last meeting of the Task Force. Mr. Beach gave a report of a meeting held with Mr. Roby, Mr. Brown, and Roy Kirby. The group vetted many construction options that would allow one lane to remain open to traffic during the sandblasting and painting of the Chester River Bridge. At the conclusion of the meeting, the group agreed that the bridge must be closed during painting. Mr. Beach requested that the Task Force now focus its efforts on addressing the impact on emergency services and public safety. Mr. Beach also stated that the community will have to come to a decision concerning the timing of the closure.

Mr. Brosius read a statement into record that emphasized the importance of the future direction of the Task Force. Mr. Brosius shared that the Task Force must focus on concrete written plans to help the public prepare for a closure of the bridge. The most important fact to remember is that sometime in the future, the ability to use the bridge will be impacted as a result of painting, equipment failure, an accident, or a storm. The Task Force has a golden opportunity to work on solutions that address the needs of everyone in both Kent and Queen Anne's Counties.

Commissioner Fithian stated that it is very clear that the Chester River Bridge is the Achilles' heel of Kent County. Everyday life of the citizens of both Kent and Queen Anne's Counties are affected by the ability to travel back and forth across the bridge. Commissioner Fithian stated that one of the biggest problems would be northern Queen Anne's County residents' access to the hospital in Chestertown. Mr. Darrell offered expertise in the area of Emergency Services operations. Mr. Darrell stated that with proper planning most problems can be minimized. Mr. Crofoot stated that given the time period the bridge will be closed Kent and Queen Anne's Counties should work in partnership in relation to logistics and funding personnel stationed on both sides of the bridge. Sheriff Price affirmed that the Sheriff's Office will work in conjunction with Mr. Darrell, Queen Anne's County law enforcement, and the Maryland State Police. Commissioner Fithian also discussed the economic impact on businesses and if there would be a preferred time for the bridge to close.

Mr. Hanley questioned State Highway Officials, as to any new developments in costs or process decisions relating to the Chester River Bridge painting project. Mr. Roby stated that the

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contractor will be given a four week time period to complete the project. Mr. Roby, Mr. Holsey, Mr. Brown, and members of the Task Force engaged in a lengthy discussion about contractor incentives and disincentives in an effort to shorten the time frame of the project. Mr. Roby shared that the project is heavily dependent on weather conditions and suggested the concept of selecting an eight week time period that the community would choose. The time period would allow the contractor to look at the weather, as part of the decision, as to when to start the project. Mr. Roby is looking for feedback on the new eight week time period.

Commissioner Fithian summarized the discussion thus far, and listed the three subcommittees identified. Mr. Darrell will work in conjunction with Queen Anne's County to devise a plan of action for Emergency Services, Fire, Rescue, and Law Enforcement. Mr. Holsey will share the State Highway Administration's traffic plan including traffic diversion and detour routes. Mr. Hanley will speak with Kent and Queen Anne's County businesses regarding the selection of a suitable date range.

Mr. Beach encouraged all citizens to communicate with the Task Force regarding any scenarios they feel are significant. Mr. Beach also stated that it is important to execute a community communication plan amongst all the different parties and sectors working on the project. In order to make this project successful, everyone should be able to access consistent information related to the project's schedule and plans. Members of the Task Force agreed that as the project moves forward, clear and accurate information must be available to all involved.

The Task Force answered questions from the audience relating to the integrity of the roads and bridges that detoured traffic will travel. Rick Koch requested an update on the Sassafras River Bridge painting project. Mr. Roby confirmed that the Sassafras River Bridge project is scheduled for September 19, 2015, through October 9, 2015. The goal is to have the Chester River Bridge painted in the calendar year 2016.

On motion by Mr. Beach and seconded by Mr. Brosius the minutes from the January 21, 2015, meeting were approved.

On motion by Mr. Beach and seconded by Mr. Hanley, the meeting adjourned at 9:51 a.m. The Joint Kent-Queen Anne's Task Force agreed to meet again at later date in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully submitted,



Sondra M. Blackiston, Clerk

Approved:



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