

Attorney Arnette read the following statement:

"GOOD EVENING LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. THIS SPECIAL MEETING IS NOW CALLED TO ORDER. IN LINE WITH THE BOROUGH OF SEA BRIGHT'S LONGSTANDING POLICY OF OPEN GOVERNMENT, AND IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE "OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT", I WISH TO ADVISE YOU THAT ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS SPECIAL MEETING HAS BEEN SENT TO THE COURIER, ASBURY PARK PRESS, TWO RIVER TIMES, THE LINK AND THE ATLANTICVILLE HUB ON JUNE 19, 2007 AND POSTED ON THE BULLETIN BOARD IN THE BOROUGH OFFICE. IN EACH INSTANCE, THE DATE, TIME AND LOCATION OF THIS MEETING WERE PROVIDED IN THE NOTICE. THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC."

3. ROLL CALL:

Present: Councilmembers, Fernandes, Keeler, Kelly, Long,
Mayor Kalaka-Adams
Absent: Bills, Scriven

4. OFFICIALS BRIEFING - HIGHLANDS-SEA BRIGHT BRIDGE

-NJDOT Commissioner Kris Kolluri

Mayor Kalaka-Adams stated that the Governing Body has not proposed having the highway widened on Ocean Avenue. This was not planned for Sea Bright.

Commissioner Kolluri referred to a letter from the Office of Smart Growth which awarded a grant to Sea Bright for the Smart Growth application. The letter, available to the public states that under no uncertain terms does the State support widening Ocean Avenue.

Commissioner Kolluri said that he and Governor Corzine have set several criteria for New Jersey Department of Transportation projects regarding efficiency and safety. Commissioner Kolluri said he has a fiduciary obligation for people's safety on the bridge.

Commissioner Kolluri said that the bridge was built in 1932. The towers are 68 feet high and its height when open is 90 feet. It is one of 23 mobile bridges in the State. Five years ago, there were 28 mobile bridges. Within the next several years, the number will be reduced to 23. The current bridge does not have any shoulder lanes, which poses a problem for disabled vehicles. The bridge is Monmouth County's official evacuation route for eighteen hundred to two thousand residents of Sea Bright and ten thousand visitors during the summer. Emergency Service Responders use the bridge.

Commissioner Kolluri said that NJDOT conducted an inspection report, which has been presented to Sea Bright's Council. The report discloses that the structural condition of the bridge is deteriorated. NJDOT does inspections on bridges once every two years but because of the results of this report, an inspection would be required four times a year. He said that he would have that information made available to Sea Bright's Borough Engineer and Borough Attorney. Commissioner Kolluri said that the terms set by

the Department of Homeland Security bridge inspection reports could not be available to the public.

Commissioner Kolluri stated that this bridge is rated as the worst moveable bridge in the State of New Jersey. Bridges are rated on a scale of one to one hundred. One hundred being the best and one being the worst. This bridge is rated at a two. It was built to last fifty years and it is nearing seventy-five years.

Deputy Commissioner Richard Hammer showed four photographs of the underside of the bridge during his presentation. The first photograph showed the underside of the bridge section where the bridge was losing concrete and the steel mesh reinforcement was lost. Steel was exposed and rusting and was not performing the way it was intended.

The next photograph was of a steel beam and an area of steel web with a hole and around that area was very thin steel. Originally, when the bridge was built the steel was a half of inch thick but during the course of seventy-five years; rusting and corrosion took over.

The next photograph depicts a section of the beam missing and another section shows a beam once an inch thick now is razor thin or missing.

The last picture showed a fixture deteriorating. The concrete is crumbling and this is a typical condition.

Commissioner Kolluri said that within eighteen months, he would make a decision restricting the number and weight of the vehicles that travel the bridge and if the deterioration continues at a faster rate then he would close the bridge.

Commissioner Kolluri said that the NJDOT is required by the Coast Guard to schedule bridge openings for every half hour throughout the summer. This bridge opens about seven hundred times during the summer. During 2006, there were fourteen breakdowns causing the bridge to be stuck in an upright position or locked in place. It takes 4.3 hours to remove a disabled vehicle on the bridge when the typical time statewide is 1.5 hours.

Currently, bridge-operating costs are \$1,400,000 with seven full time bridge operators working on a seven day a week schedule. Emergency repairs cost \$1,500,000. The amount spent over the last ten years was about \$10,000,000 for construction.

Commissioner Kolluri said that option one repairing the bridge would cause a bridge closure for 6-18 months and no traffic permitted. The construction costs for its repair would range between 86 to 96 million dollars. He said he provided a detailed analysis of the inspection report and repair report to Sea Bright's Mayor and Council. Also, it would be posted on the NJDOT website.

Commissioner Kolluri said that regarding option two a moveable bridge, one of the issues that Sea Bright and Highlands have is the impact of the cultural heritage of this area. A moveable bridge at the size of 55 feet would

eliminate property and more importantly will threaten substantially the existence of historic sites cherished in the community.

Deputy Commissioner Richard Hammer showed an artist's rendering comparing the existing bridge with the proposed bridge. The current bridge is 68 feet above the water level. The new bridge is 65 feet from the bottom. The proposed bridge would be using some of the existing lighting. A multi-use bicycle path and shoulder would be provided in each direction of travel on the roadway. The two directions of travel would be separated by a median barrier for safety. There would be a safe haven for disabled vehicles.

Deputy Commissioner Richard Hammer said that the NJDOT would work closely with the State Historic Preservation office as well as people from the community regarding bridge, surface texture, railings and fencing. The proposed bridge's design would replicate the tiling of the current bridge.

Deputy Commissioner Richard Hammer said that the NJDOT bridge project would cost \$124,000,000. Construction costs would be \$100,000,000. The design cost was \$14,000,000 already spent. Necessary purchase of land \$200,000. Construction would take three years with the existing bridge in service for the first eighteen months. During that time, half of the new bridge could be built and traffic could proceed. Route 36 traffic would be maintained throughout the construction and there would be no detour.

Mayor Kalaka-Adams said that they were disappointed in the renditions that were brought to this meeting and did not find them to be accurate. The pedestrian crosswalk that was discussed was not included. The pictures do not depict exiting or entrance ramps to Sandy Hook. This bridge was built in 1932, it is the DOT's responsibility to keep the bridge safe, and it was to be inspected every two years. She said that for 75 years they have inspected the bridge twice a year and now we get a picture of a fenced steel beam that has been attached with plywood.

Mayor Kalaka-Adams welcomed tractor-trailer restrictions and not having a truck route through Sea Bright. She said that the Council has lobbied for lowering the speed on Ocean Avenue for years and the speed for the proposed bridge would be 45 mph and coming down off the bridge vehicles enter into Sea Bright at a higher rate of speed. She said that the Council has repeatedly requested the bridge's speed limit lowered to 35 mph.

Jim Parla of Highlands said that the NJDOT states that the public has been involved but we have not been kept informed.

Susie Markson of Sea Bright said that the pictures do not depict the bridge being twice as high.

Maryann Chevalier of Sea Bright asked the Commissioner to compare the existing bridge when it is open to the proposed bridge.

Commissioner Kolluri said that the new proposed structure from the water surface to the other side of the bridge would be 65 feet. There is no tower on the new bridge.

Commissioner Kolluri said that the current bridge's height to the roadway surface is approximately 40.17 feet and the top of the proposed bridge's roadway surface would be approximately 73 feet.

Mrs. Wolerton of Highlands said that she has not seen pictures of the pedestrian walkway.

Erich Wokas of Highlands said that the Driscoll Bridge is not equipped with a shoulder lane.

Tom Largey of Sea Bright asked if it is safe to drive across the bridge today?

Commissioner Kolluri said it was safe to drive across the bridge.

Sherry Laurelman of Highlands asked where she could get the information about the Sea Bright/Highlands bridge being the worst bridge in the State of New Jersey.

Commissioner Kolluri said he would have that document available to the public.

Sherry Laurelman asked what was the approximate height of the bridge to the roadway surface.

Commissioner Kolluri said that the existing bridge is approximately twelve feet deep and the new structure would be eight feet deep. Overall, it would be a leaner structure.

Sherry Laurelman said she wanted to go on record that this was an insufficient design for the entrance to a National Park.

Dan Ranger of Sea Bright said he did not want the proposed bridge to be a dominant view. There is not one person in the entire room that is here to support this project.

Mr. Anise of Sea Bright asked Commissioner Kolluri to describe the pedestrian walkway.

Commissioner Kolluri said the south sidewalk down the bridge will provide a safe crossing over Route 36.

Alex Muldanado of Congressman Pallone's office said that Congressman Pallone was in Washington and he read the following statement on the Congressman behalf:

As the State Department of Transportation moves forward for the Route 36 Highlands to Sea Bright bridge, I feel it is important for the DOT to pay significant attention to the views of the surrounding communities. Yesterday I sent a

letter to Transportation Commissioner Kris Kolluri asking him to quantify the costs and benefits of renovating the existing structure while replacing the bridge with a similar drawbridge.

Ms. Muldanado read a letter sent by Congressman Pallone to Commissioner Kolluri dated June 20, 2007.

Dear Commissioner Kolluri:

It is my understanding that you will be sponsoring public meetings in the Boroughs of Sea Bright and Highlands on Thursday, June 21 regarding the condition and replacement of the Route 36 Highlands Bridge. I appreciate your willingness to come and address the concerns that are being raised by many in the community about this project.

Numerous constituents have contacted my office wary of replacing the current structure with a fixed span bridge of higher elevation. In addition, the governing bodies of both Sea Bright and Highlands have expressed to me their opposition to the current proposal.

There are concerns about the increased traffic resulting from a larger, fixed span bridge, safety concerns about its steepness, and the effect that the new height will have on the view of the Twin Lights, a site on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Given these concerns, I would like the Department of Transportation to consider again the options for the repair of the current bridge and the possible construction of a similar drawbridge to replace the current structure. I know that you have considered these options in the past, but I believe they need to be raised again because a lot of questions remain, particularly relative to the costs and benefits of these alternatives.

Again, thank you for taking the time to hear the concerns of residents in the communities that surround this bridge. It is my hope that working with the local communities, concerned residents and state officials that we can come up with a mutually agreeable proposal that is safe, reliable and cost effective. I think it is a process step for Commissioner Kolluri to hold these public forums so that the public can have a role in the process. It is important for the outcome of this project to be fiscally responsible, reliable State responsive 59.27 to the opinions to surrounding communities. Thank you very much.

Kate Danberg on behalf of Assemblyman Sean Kean, and member of the Transportation Committee read the following statement from Assemblyman Kean:

I want to thank Commissioner Kolluri for holding a public meeting to assess the Sea Bright's Highlands's bridge project. As many of you are aware I wrote to Commissioner Kolluri of December 19, 2006 in asking him to hold a public meeting in Sea Bright or Highlands so that local residents could voice their opinions about this project. While I am very please that this public meeting is being held I am disappointed that I am unable to attend for I am required to be in Trenton for a General Assembly voting session. The

date of the General Assembly and Senate voting sessions are public knowledge so it is important that this meeting is being held on the same evening that both houses will be voting on the State Legislature and will be stuck in Trenton until later in the evening. I am sure other legislators would have liked to attend this meeting as well.

The safety of the motorists and the pedestrians who utilize this bridge should be the most important concern when creating a design plan. Any plan for the bridge must be taken into account a variety of factors, vehicle capacity and traffic and must consider safety, cost, quality of life concerns and keeping historical treasures.

It is critical that the Department of Transportation does not insist upon its design, as it would impact residents of Highlands and Sea Bright for generations to come.

In conclusion, I am hopeful that the Department of Transportation will take into consideration the views of the residents and the members of the local governments and create a design proposal that is more agreeable to both sides.

Stuart Lieberman, Esq. for Citizens for Rational Coastal said that this is really a very bad plan. It is unfortunate that the State of New Jersey has invested 14 million dollars in this design.

Nancy Burns of Sea Bright said that if they see fit to repair the Rumson drawbridge why not the Highlands.

Franz Von Zeigesar of Sea Bright was concerned with the concrete falling into the water and hitting boats.

Commissioner Kolluri said he does not predict that boats are going to get hit with concrete.

Liz Von Zegazer of Sea Bright felt a pedestrian crosswalk was not needed.

Ira Kornblatt of Sea Bright said that with the new materials available today bridges should last longer.

Ms. Flannery of Highlands said that she did not want to see a new bridge built.

Bob Buhl of Highlands commented about the length of the bridge being too long.

Commissioner Kolluri said that the length of the existing bridge is 1,247 feet the length of the proposed would be 1,605 feet.

Betty Steffer of Sea Bright the Brooklyn Bridge was built in 1883 with 137,000 cars crossing it daily and that bridge is not being taken down.

Mayor Kalaka-Adams asked Commissioner Kolluri for another meeting before making a decision in eighteen months. He replied that there would be plenty of discussions on the topic.

Christine Sinnott of 20 Center Street said the plan is awful and build another drawbridge because it holds a charm for the community.

Dave Carol statement asked who was the firm that designed the bridge.

Commissioner Kolluri replied it was Jacobs.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business before the Governing Body. Councilwoman Long made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 P.M. Second by Councilwoman Keeler and approved upon unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maryann M. Smeltzer
Municipal Clerk