

**LOWER POTTS GROVE TOWNSHIP      BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Special Meeting      June 4, 2009**

The Board of Commissioners of Lower Pottsgrove Township held a duly advertised special meeting on Thursday, June 4, 2009 at the Lower Pottsgrove Township Municipal Building, 2199 Buchert Road, Pottstown, Pennsylvania for the purpose of discussing the E. High Street bridge closure with PennDOT representatives. Meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. The following were in attendance:

The Honorable Thomas J. Quigley, State Representative, 146<sup>th</sup> Legislative District.

**Lower Pottsgrove Township:**

**Board of Commissioners:** Bruce L. Foltz, President and James C. Phillips.

Rodney P. Hawthorne, Manager, Michele Cappelletti, Township Secretary and Chief of Police Michael Shade.

Commissioners Jonathan H. Spadt, Vice President, Stephen Klotz and Anthony Doyle were absent from the meeting.

**Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT):**

Mr. Lester Toaso, District Executive, PennDOT District 6  
 Pete Mazzeo, Project Manager  
 Narayana Velaga

**Traffic Planning & Design, Inc.:**

Matthew Hickson  
 Rob Prophet

Commissioner Phillips opened the meeting by thanking the representatives from PennDOT and Traffic Planning & Design, Inc. for attending the meeting.

Commissioner Phillips said the purpose of the meeting was to find out the following information regarding the closure of the E. High Street Bridge (at Cutillo's Restaurant):

1. Exactly what repair work is being done to the bridge.
2. Why the work has to be done the way it is proposed to be done (closing the bridge completely).
3. Ask if any thought was given as to how the bridge closure will impact the businesses in the affected area.

Commissioner Phillips said that when the bridge was closed in the Summer of 2004, it negatively affected his own business. Given today's economic climate, Commissioner Phillips felt that the impact of completely closing the bridge could be catastrophic to the approximately 50 businesses in that area.

Commissioner Phillips also advised that the Township found out, through a newspaper article, that the project will not start until Spring 2010. Originally the repair work was to commence in the Spring of 2009; the start date was then changed to June 2009 and changed again to August 2009.

Mr. Mazzeo apologized for not formally updating the Township after the initial presentation/meeting in August of 2008. He advised that PennDOT decided to postpone the project primarily because of the concerns they were hearing. It was determined that the impact would be minimized if the construction would be done in the summer; therefore, the project was postponed until next year.

Mr. Toaso advised that there will be incentives with monetary value offered to the contractor based on how quick the contractor can get the work done. If the contractor works double shifts, there could be resident complaints about noise pollution. Commissioner Foltz said the Township is willing to work with PennDOT on getting the job done as quickly as possible. Mr. Toaso said they will provide quarterly updates on the progress of the project to the Township Manager.

Mr. Hickson explained how the bridge will be repaired. Commissioner Phillips asked if it was structurally impossible and unsafe to keep one lane open during the construction. Mr. Hickson explained that with a stone arch bridge, there is overburden on top of the arch. If they remove half of the overburden, the adjacent vehicular loading creates a potential for immediate failure and faster deterioration of the bridge. It is an unsafe condition and something they want to avoid.

Commissioner Foltz said the Township did write letters in an effort to try to maintain the stone arch bridge. Mr. Hickson said they are concerned with maintaining the aesthetics of the existing bridge for the community and the public.

Once the contract is awarded, it is PennDOT's intention to shut the bridge down and get the work completed in three months. Mr. Hickson projected that the work would begin in June 2010 and the bridge would be open by Labor Day 2010. Mr. Toaso added that once the work is done on the retainer walls, the bridge will be open to the public.

Paul Cutillo of Cutillo's Restaurant said the northwest corner is a problem. He asked Mr. Hickson if they were going to attack that (area) while the bridge is open. Mr. Hickson said no because the wall extends all the way to the arch. Mr. Cutillo asked if two lanes of traffic would be open when all stonework is done. Mr. Hickson replied yes. Mr. Cutillo asked about the gas line. Mr. Hickson said the gas line was relocated, as the Verizon lines will be.

Mr. Cutillo said do it (the project) now, it's a bad time. It was his understanding that the veneer work would be done while the bridge is open and the bridge would only be down for 80 days. Mr. Hickson said that is their approach, with the least impact they can provide.

Mr. Cutillo and Mr. Phillips commented that during the last repair of the bridge, the contractor worked a four day work week and the project took longer than originally anticipated. Mr.

Hickson said that was an emergency situation and there were no incentives/disincentives at that time.

Commissioner Foltz, who is also the Township's Emergency Management Coordinator, said the bridge construction will require that changes be made to the evacuation plan for the Power Plant. This matter is being handled by the fire companies and the police chief.

Dana Albitz, Albitz Garage, asked for a worst-case scenario concerning delays. Mr. Toaso said two or three weeks of rain would affect the schedule but, hopefully, there will be no surprises. PennDOT would communicate any delays to the Township through the resident engineer, who will stay in touch with the construction unit and then get in touch with Mr. Hawthorne, the Township's point of contact.

Commissioner Phillips wanted to make it clear that we (the Board) are not structural engineers and they are approaching the situation from a common sense point of view. If PennDOT says something is unsafe, the Board certainly does not want to do anything unsafe.

Mr. Toaso said PennDOT is trying to do what it can and will put out signs, message boards, etc. Mr. Phillips had questions about the detour, and confirmed that traffic will be diverted from the Sanatoga Exit to Armand Hammer Boulevard. He asked about re-routing traffic down Pleasant View Road and up between Cutillo's and Sanatoga Auto Body (both located on Sanatoga Road). Mr. Toaso said they can only put a detour on state-owned roads and Sanatoga Road is not PennDOT's road.

Rob Prophet said there is a plan in place using all state routes: The Sanatoga Exit → Route 422 → Armand Hammer Boulevard is the appropriate detour route. A second detour, which is already pre-approved by PennDOT is the 724 Exit → Linfield Trappe Road → Limerick Exit. The second detour is only for emergencies. Mr. Phillips asked if there was any way we can work with you (on changing the detour). He felt that if somebody is not familiar with the area and may not know where to go, they just won't go. He asked why can't we work with local officials to get the detour more compressed?

Mr. Toaso said the problem is that Pleasant View Road is winding and narrow. He was concerned about trucks making the tight, narrow turn at the Quarry. He was also concerned with Pleasant View Road handling the additional traffic. Mr. Phillips asked about restricting traffic to cars only. Mr. Toaso said that two detours are more confusing and they do not utilize local roads. Commissioner Phillips felt with the detour set up the way it is, business would be lost or there would be a severe economic impact.

Mr. Prophet distributed photographs of signage from other projects to notify motorists. Commissioner Phillips would like inter-municipal cooperation. Mr. Toaso said he would look into other options but he would have to check with counsel about liability issues. He recommended that the Township also check with its Solicitor.

Mr. Hawthorne commented that there would be a tremendous amount of traffic through the secondary roads and was concerned about the bridge near the Quarry. Commissioner Phillips again mentioned detouring trucks onto Route 422.

Commissioner Phillips said that a percentage of business in that area is from people who don't necessarily live locally and these people may not be aware of how to get to the businesses. Mr. Toaso said that they have used electronic message boards saying "road open to local businesses" as an additional help.

Mr. Toaso said he would try to look at it again but the detours always run on state-owned roads. He said the other part of Sanatoga Road is winding and there is a bad intersection with no light. Mr. Hawthorne said it is dangerous to cross from Cutillo's.

Mr. Prophet said the main concern is that we would be putting 14,000 cars a day on roads that are handling substantially less traffic and this would affect residents.

Commissioner Foltz said if there is an accident on the bypass, and flip signs would alert motorists of the emergency route, who would have the authority to flip the sign? The police would handle this situation.

Commissioner Foltz asked if PennDOT had given any consideration about putting a walkway over the bridge. Mr. Hickson said yes, it was considered when we met two years ago but the feedback was that we wanted to rehabilitate and save this bridge because of the aesthetics. Also, the bridge does not have the width for sidewalks. Mr. Hawthorne advised that in 2003-04, the Board voted to go with the Stone Arch Bridge Program to preserve the bridge.

Mr. Mazzeo said this is a bridge repair project. PennDOT was told by the Township and other stakeholders that the preference was to duplicate and preserve the existing bridge. With a replacement bridge, they could add a sidewalk but the feedback was that we wanted to keep the stone arch. Commissioner Foltz asked if they considered cantilevers. Mr. Mazzeo said no, and this would involve more time for construction.

Mr. Mazzeo said it is not just a PennDOT decision; they also are dealing with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC). It is PennDOT's intention to preserve the bridge as close to the original condition as they can.

Barb DeAngelis, Sanatoga Auto Body, asked why PennDOT can't do the project this year. Mr. Mazzeo said they could but they are postponing it so it falls entirely during the summer, which would be the slow period.

Commissioner Phillips said school traffic is one of the main concerns. He commented that summer can be big for some businesses but the bottom line is any time could be bad for someone.

Mr. Toaso said PennDOT will provide a news release and send it to Mr. Hawthorne for his review. Commissioner Phillips asked if the Township could be updated more than quarterly.

Rep. Quigley said the main thing is the communication. He and Senator Rafferty wrote a joint letter to make sure the public and businesses are aware of safety concerns.

Mr. Mazzeo invited all to call PennDOT with questions and concerns about the local detours. He said the extra traffic on the residential streets raised concerns about the roads. Chief Shade felt the detour on back roads would create problems that could result in increased accidents and complaints.

Mr. Toaso reiterated that PennDOT would prepare a press release on the bridge closure.

Mr. Cutillo asked once it is advertised, if we (the business owners) could have a copy of the schedule made up by the contractor. Mr. Toaso said PennDOT will be telling the contractor to close the road and do things prior to the closure. The contract has to be awarded before this occurs and the contractor is given notice to proceed. The construction specifications will be part of the bid documents.

Meeting adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele M. Cappelletti  
Secretary