



Town of Hilton Head Island
TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL WORKSHOP
Monday, June 20, 2024, 3:00 PM
Minutes

Call to Order

Mayor Perry called the workshop to order at 3:00 p.m.

Council Members present: Alan Perry, Mayor, David Ames, Ward 3, Mayor Pro-Tempore; Alex Brown, Ward 1; Patsy Brison, Ward 2; Tammy Becker, Ward 4; Steve Alfred, Ward 5; Glenn Stanford, Ward 6

Also present: Marc Orlando, Town Manager; Kimberly Gammon, Town Clerk

Absent – Curtis Coltrane, Town Attorney

Discussion of the William Hilton Parkway Corridor Project.

Ms. Becker moved to have a 15-minute public comment period before discussion begins. Mr. Ames seconded. Motion carried 7-0.

Richard Bisi addressed Council regarding his opinion that Council did not ask enough questions on Monday and questioned the assumption the additional lanes will reduce traffic congestion.

Ashleigh Phillips addressed Council questioning the aesthetics of the proposed bridge, concern over the character of the Island, voiced her objections to Municipal Consent; expressed concern for the Gullah Community, and her opinion the new bridge will not bring more employees to the Island.

Skip Hoagland addressed Council stating people moved here for Island life – not Myrtle Beach.

Doris Grant addressed Council stating the meeting times are inconvenient for the working people of the Island. She expressed concern and questioned closing the turning land to Squire Pope Road.

Steven Woodall addressed Council stating Council needs to remain in the conversation but doesn't need to approve Municipal Consent. He asked that Council vote no on the matter.

Mayor Perry asked that Shawn Colin address the question of closing the turn lane at Squire Pope Road. Mr. Colin stated there is no discussion of closures but there has been discussion of limiting peak hour left turns within the Stoney Community.

Mayor Perry made a statement regarding the items at hand. He stated that Council

cannot operate by inaction. He stated that over the past seven years there has been great community engagement for this project from the SCDOT, Beaufort County and the Town of Hilton Head Island. He noted it is a difficult decision for Town Council, but it is no reason for hatred. There is an issue of the philosophical question regarding the project and a lot of different answers. He reminded all there is a deadline and stated that after Monday's meeting, they reached out to Secretary Justin Powell to see if an extension could be granted. He proceeded to read a letter he received in return which is below:



Justin P. Powell
Secretary of Transportation
803-737-0874 | 803-737-2038 Fax

June 20, 2024

Mayor Alan Perry
Town of Hilton Head Island
1 Town Center Court
Hilton Head Island, SC 29928

Dear Mayor Perry:

I wanted to follow up on inquiries from the Town of Hilton Head Island as it pertains to the US-278 eastbound bridge over Mackay Creek and the South Carolina Department of Transportation's (SCDOT) plans for it.

The bridge was built by SCDOT in 1956 and was widened in 1984. SCDOT inspects all bridge structures in the state at a minimum of every two years. Due to the age and condition of the bridge, SCDOT inspects it annually. In the last inspection completed on January 12, 2024, the superstructure and substructure of the bridge were rated a four, or poor, on a nine point scale. While the bridge is not load posted and is safe to drive over, it is approaching the end of its design life.

Due to these factors, SCDOT placed the bridge on its statewide priority list. As Beaufort County developed its sales tax project to build a new six-lane bridge between the mainland and Hilton Head Island, SCDOT agreed to contribute \$74,500,000 toward Beaufort County's project. This was in lieu of pursuing a stand-alone project to rebuild the US-278 eastbound bridge over Mackay Creek. This contribution was based on the estimated cost for SCDOT to replace the US-278 eastbound bridge with a new two-lane structure.

The existing Mackay Creek bridge continues to age in a challenging environment with tides and saltwater. While not load posted today, future inspections may necessitate SCDOT putting a load posting on the bridge which could impact the movement of trucks, buses, and emergency vehicles onto Hilton Head Island.

Should the Town not provide municipal consent to the proposed US-278 bridge project in a timely manner, SCDOT will be prepared to use those funds allocated to the project and proceed with a project focused solely on the US-278 eastbound bridge. In initiating a project focused solely on that one structure, SCDOT would first evaluate if rehabilitation or replacement would yield the most cost-effective option and develop a project accordingly. It should be noted that in SC Code Section 57-5-820, SCDOT is not required to obtain municipal consent for construction work on structurally deficient bridges over the Intracoastal Waterway like the US-278 eastbound bridge over Mackay Creek.

I hope this addresses the questions from the Town of Hilton Head Island. Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Justin P. Powell
Secretary of Transportation

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Mayor Perry invited Senator Tom Davis to address Council and provide input from the State's perspective.

Senator Davis explained that the first thing that comes to mind is what does a timely manner mean. He offered his thoughts regarding what he thinks it means. He stated we've been operating under an environmental assessment period for three years, which terminates on June 28, and once that deadline passes it is his understanding that it's possible to obtain an extension of the environmental assessment but that would be up to the Corps of Engineers as to whether to extend it or go back to one of the more beginning processes. He summarized that he doesn't know what would happen if Municipal Consent is not given by June 28. Senator Davis expressed his opinion that Secretary Powell says in a timely manner, he means a decision one way or the other, yes or no affirmatively by that date. He added that from speaking with Secretary Powell that if Municipal Consent is not given that he feels like he has no choice but to go forward and allocate the \$74 million that SCDOT has set aside for that first span and begin the process of deciding whether you're going to rehabilitate it or replace it. He stated that one of the practical consequences of Municipal Consent either not being given by delaying the vote or a no affirmatively would be SCDOT going forward on that Plan B to repair that first span.

He added his thoughts that if the project doesn't go forward, or the project as presented doesn't go forward one question that arises is what happens to the \$80 million that was raised in the penny sales tax in 2018 for the purpose of this project. He reviewed three different scenarios that could take place: 1) the \$80 million raised is what's used first to conduct the repairs in lieu of the \$74 million; 2) if Municipal Consent is not granted it would be difficult to hold on to the \$120 million from the State Infrastructure Bank that was awarded to Beaufort County for the project and 3) the money would be reallocated during the next round of projects.

Senator Davis stated he has been focusing on two things throughout the process. 1) trying to hold in place the funding and cobble together enough money to make the project work; and 2) give the Town enough time so that it becomes a decision they feel comfortable with, which has been a good process.

Senator Davis stated that irrespective of the decision, whether to give Municipal Consent or not give Municipal Consent, he will stand behind the Town of Hilton Head Island and try to help accomplish what the Town wants to accomplish by working with the SCDOT, Federal Government and the General Assembly.

Council members made comments, asked questions and held discussion with Senator Davis regarding: an expression of appreciation from all Council members regarding Senator Davis' hard work that he's done on this project; explanation and pointed out that the penny sales tax was to repair or replace the bridge and the interpretation that nothing was mentioned regarding expansion; confirmation the funding would not go away automatically but the local delegation would have to put on a full court press to keep that \$120 million set aside for the project and it would be difficult to keep that \$120 million set

aside for Hilton Head Island if they move into July without a deciding vote; confirmation from the Senator that if Hilton Head Island would decide they need more time, he would make the best case he could in representing Hilton Head Island and it would be very difficult; confirmation there is approximately \$300 million dollars dedicated to the project and a gap of \$180 million dollars; an explanation of sources to cover the gap in funding which could possibly be: 1) go back to the State Infrastructure Bank and ask for more; 2) approach SCDOT for additional funding and 3) a scenario of Beaufort County obtaining bonding; confirmation that if conditions are required they need to be included in Municipal Consent with the SCDOT as well as the MOU with the County; and an expression of concerns over the Stoney area and plans to make it better.

Mayor Perry invited Mr. Orlando to provide comments and insight as to how we got to this point.

Mr. Orlando expressed appreciation to Senator Davis for his assistance during this process. He reviewed how we got to this point noting the Eastbound Mackey Creek Bridge showed structural damage during a SCDOT inspection in 2015, and then Hurricane Mathew hit in 2016. Following that Beaufort County initiated a Bridge and Corridor Improvement Project through a voter referendum sales tax referendum in 2018. Following the referendum, Hilton Head Island Town Council created a US 278 Corridor Committee in 2019 and a year later subsequently adopted Guiding Principles from the Committee to establish project expectations in 2020. Council adopted the Committee Report but did not endorse an associated proposed mitigation plan at that time. He added that since then, there have been several years of discussions and project assessments with Council, Community Members, affected Community members, and affected property owners, SCDOT and Beaufort County.

He noted the project sponsor is Beaufort County and is being designed by SCDOT and their selected design consultants. Many project alternatives have been presented to the Hilton Head Island Community by Beaufort County and SCDOT over time. He noted that this started well before his time began with the Town of Hilton Head Island as well as before the time of several seated Council members serving. In 2021, Council directed Mr. Orlando to establish a way to best represent Hilton Head Island as this project was being considered. In 2021, Beaufort County presented a project plan with significant impacts in the Stoney Neighborhood. It was a consensus of Council and Hilton Head Island Staff to object to the proposal. The goal was to see if the Town could affect the project positively and bring it back to Council to consider Municipal Consent.

Beaufort County and the Town entered into a mutual agreement in 2022, which included recommendations of Town Council and a commitment to work together to try and achieve those initiatives. The project was further refined, further assessed by several traffic engineers hired by SCDOT, Beaufort County and the Town of Hilton Head Island. The Town separately hired traffic and transportation engineers for input and the project was further enhanced.

Since Council's directive Mr. Orlando has met with SCDOT Secretary Christy Hall (now retired) and the newly appointed Secretary Justin Powell to explain the challenges and to

explain the project challenges for Hilton Head Island. He made it clear that just because these elements were included in the project it didn't mean that he would bring this back for a predetermined Municipal Consent. He suggested discussing the bridge, the corridor, the project and the program and all the variables that go into it and review impacts. He stated he believes staff has done their best to provide Council with as much consultant data and analysis from SCDOT, Beaufort County and from the Town traffic and transportation consultants. He closed by stating that Council's decision whether to support or oppose this major corridor and bridge to and from Hilton Head Island must consider many factors to ensure that the collective decision aligns with the Community's best interest. Mr. Orlando introduced Shawn Colin to conduct a presentation regarding the matter.

Mr. Colin proceeded with his presentation.

Section 57-5-830 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, which he stated was the basis for Municipal Consent and used the term "may".

Mr. Colin reviewed the proposal for New Full Bridge Construction:

- While the Town has requested consideration for a 4-lane bridge, according to SCDOT, if a new bridge is built, it will be built as 3 lanes each way, plus inside and outside shoulders.
- 12-foot travel lanes.
- 1 10-foot outside shoulder and 1 6 foot inside shoulder in each direction.
- 1 span that replaces all 4 current bridges
- Provides uniform 75+ year lifespan for bridge
- Design Speed of 45mph
- Posted speed of 40 mph
- Current bridge widths - 80' and 100'.
- New Bridge is 121' wide which includes 14' to accommodate the pathway.
- New bridge would be 107' wide without the pathway
- Town Council recommendations and MOU requested the additional pathway.
- 1 12-foot shared-use pathway along the southern side of the bridge
- 2 bulb-out refuges, 20 feet wide by 50 feet long, located along the southern shared-use path at Mackay Creek and Skull Creek
- Shared-use pathway to connect to mainland pathway system at Buckingham Planation Road and to pathway system on Jenkins Island
- Construction methods will cause this bridge to shift south within current power line easement.
- Bridge height clearance to remain at 65 feet over Skull Creek
- Bridge height clearance over Pinckney Island minimum of 17.19 feet
- Bridge length is 1.376 miles of the 4.218-mile project
- Seismic and storm impact mitigation elements included in the overall structural design.
- Will meet highest seismic standards
- Designed to withstand Category 5 hurricane

- No at grade intersection on Pinckney Island

Mr. Colin next presented the proposal for the Jenkins Island Section:

- Design Speed of 45mph
- Posted speed of 40 mph
- Bridge landing located within existing right-of-way
- 3 12-foot travel lanes eastbound
- 3 12-foot travel lanes westbound
- All Jenkins Island Traffic consolidated at Windmill Harbour signalized intersection
- Jenkins Road access to William Hilton Parkway is removed
- Access to Hog Island, Mariners Cove, Blue Heron Point, Jenkins Island Cemetery, Hilton Head Harbor RV Resort and Hilton Head Harbor Marina will be from new frontage road on Jenkins Island
- No pedestrian crossings at Windmill Harbour intersection
- Windmill Harbour traffic signal upgraded with Adaptive Traffic Management System and included in Town system with 30 days of MOU
- Shared pathway on northern side of corridor would be located within Town-owned Property along new frontage road connecting to the RV Park, the Marina, and the Jenkins Island Cemetery ~~bridge to mainland and Town of Hilton Head Island pathway system~~
- Shared-use pathway on southern side would connect Windmill Harbour to connect to bridge, as well as connection via to under-bridge connection to the northern side shared-use pathway
- Access to Hog Island, Blue Heron Point, and Mariners Cove moved from southern side to northern side of corridor and maintain the existing connection under the bridge connection
- Landscaped medians with varying widths
- Exterior curbing installed to reduce right-of-way and handle drainage

Next, Mr. Colin described the proposal for the Stoney Neighborhood Section:

- Design Speed of 45mph
- Posted speed of 40 mph
- Within the current ROW for most of the corridor through Stoney neighborhood
- 2 x 11' lanes in each direction
- 1 x 12' lane in each direction
- Additional turn lanes
- Crosswalks at intersections
- 10' wide pathway
- Public open space
- Stormwater mitigation
- Landscaping
- Potential Relocation or Removal of 2 culturally sensitive structures
- Willie Young's Upholstery (formerly Patterson's Store) and the structure which formerly housed Island Psychic

- Removal of curb cut at Memory Matters and William Hilton Parkway
- Total ROW impacts 2.78 acres
- Total ROW impacts on private property 0.89 acres (22 properties)

Overview of SCDOT US 278 Corridor Improvements Environmental Assessment

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider the impacts their projects may have on the environment and to integrate the NEPA process with other environmental law compliance. In association with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Beaufort County, the SCDOT has developed an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with NEPA. The EA includes a review of all proposed alternatives and evaluates potential impacts to the natural and human environment. This EA is the culmination of technical studies and reports, interagency coordination, and community outreach and feedback. The EA documents the purpose and need for the project; presents a discussion of the alternatives and the analysis of them; describes the affected environment, assessment of the environmental, transportation, social, and economic impacts; identifies potential community enhancements; and presents a Recommended Preferred Alternative. It also incorporates analysis and feedback from public and agency sources gathered during the various phases of the EA development. The Table of Contents includes:

- Chapters 1 & 2 (Includes Cover, Table of Contents, and Commitments, Introduction & Purpose and Need)
- Chapters 3(Alternatives Analysis)
- Chapters 4 (Existing Conditions and Environmental Consequences)
- Chapters 5 (Navigation)
- Chapters 6 (Agency Coordination and Public Involvement)
- Appendix A (Agency Coordination Plan)
- Appendix B Phase 1 Traffic Report, Traffic Report Appendices
- Appendix C (Traffic Technical Memorandums: Reversible Lane Analysis and Alternative Intersection Analyses)
- Appendix D (Community Impact Assessment, Visual Impact Assessment, Relocation Impact Study)
- Appendix E (Environmental Justice Analysis)
- Appendix F (Noise Analysis Report)
- Appendix G (Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination)
- Appendix H (Essential Fish Habitat Technical Memorandum)
- Appendix I (SCDOT Bridge Replacement Scoping Trip Risk Assessment Form, Floodplains Checklist, 2-D Hydraulic Analysis)
- Appendix J (Biological Evaluation)
- Appendix K (Marine Mammal Protection Act Technical Memorandum)
- Appendix L Part One, Part Two (Cultural Resources Survey and Section 106 Consultation)
- Appendix M (Traditional Cultural Property Report)
- Appendix N (Cultural Resources Memorandum of Agreement)

- Appendix O (Section 4(f) Coordination)
- Appendix P Part One, Part Two, Part Three (Hazardous Materials Phase I Environmental Site Assessment)
- Appendix Q (QUS Coast Guard Navigation Report)
- Appendix R Part One, Part Two, Part Three, Part Four Part Five (Public Information Meeting Plans and Summaries)
- Appendix S (Website)
- Appendix T (Newsletters)
- Appendix U Part One, Part Two (Community Meeting Plans and Summaries)
- Appendix V Part One, Part Two, Part Three, Part Four (Stakeholder Meeting Plans and Summaries)

US 278 Corridor Improvements Environmental Assessment Expires June 28, 2024

Mr. Colin then noted that the Town Council Approved Guiding Principles on February 18, 2020, as follows:

- Fix the transportation issues in the corridor in a way that improves the safety and quality of life for all residents, workers, and visitors to Hilton Head Island
 - Address transportation needs for natural disasters and resiliency of island access
 - Consider future transportation alternatives
- Improve the safety and quality of life for the residents of the neighborhoods and businesses directly impacted by the US 278 corridor
 - Stoney Community
 - Neighborhoods on Jenkins and Hog Islands (including but not limited to Windmill Harbor)
- Have gateway to and from Hilton Head Island that the region will be proud of:
 - Aesthetically pleasing and reflecting the Hilton Head Island/Lowcountry values
 - Safe and functional pathways for pedestrians and cyclists
 - Minimizes environmental impacts and enhances the national asset of Pinckney Island

Mr. Colin next stated that the Town Council Approved Recommendations on October 12, 2021 as follows:

Corridor Wide Recommendations

1. Reduce lane widths to 11' to calm traffic & reduce property impacts
2. Eliminate raised curbs in medians wherever possible, encourage existing vegetation and natural drainage in these areas
3. Vary median widths and meander roadway alignments where possible for traffic calming and aesthetics
4. Take advantage of Town-owned property for sake of Parkway improvements
5. Utilize ITS smart signal technology throughout

6. Reduce curb cuts & provide for alternative/safer property access throughout
7. Provide trails on both sides of Parkway where possible with sufficient separation from road and in lieu of sidewalks
8. Create a comprehensive system of safe, comfortable, and attractive shared use paths for cyclists and pedestrians
9. Open/encourage views to the water wherever possible, as a part of the Island's "signature"
10. Ensure integration of unique, Hilton Head-specific signage, landscape schemes, public art program, architectural vocabulary, iconic features, and accent lighting that distinguish this parkway from all others
11. Reduce design & posted speeds throughout the corridor
12. Evaluate the island-wide transportation system

Specific Recommendations

1. Encourage Moss Creek area improvements (commercial redevelopment, access/roadway improvements, trail connections)
2. Establish "Gateway Experience" threshold at west end of Mackay Creek bridges (landscape, island "icon", art, lighting)
3. Reduce bridge mass with two separate bridges and Shared-Use Path on south side of eastbound bridge
4. Reduce bridge lane width to 11', reduce shoulder width on left, only one breakdown lane on right.
5. Provide 14' minimum width non-motorized lane on the bridge with multiple viewing areas and protection/screening of vehicles
6. Attention to bridge design/details as viewed from afar and on-deck (parapet, railings, structural forms)
7. Consolidate Jenkins Island access to one signalized location at C. Heinrichs/Windmill Harbour Entrance
8. Provide traditional turn lanes and intuitive intersection configurations throughout Stoney
9. Eliminate confusing SCDOT U-turns
10. Eliminate left turns and traffic introduction onto Old Wild Horse
11. Create new park south of Parkway in Stoney to authentically showcase Gullah Geechee culture/heritage
12. Consider a new Visitors Center as a part of this park that intentionally showcases this heritage while introducing visitors to the Island's offerings
13. Create a Stoney-authored vision plan for the next generation of that neighborhood
14. Create and professionally staff a Development Corporation as a vehicle for Stoney Advancement

Next Mr. Colin outlined the Town of Hilton Head Island/Beaufort County Memorandum of Agreement which was approved on October 4, 2022:

1. The County and the Town agree to advance the Project in a cooperative manner for the entire duration of the Project.

2. The County and the Town mutually agree to work together in good faith to address the feasibility, and merits of recommendations approved by Town Council on October 12, 2021 (as set forth in Exhibit A) (the "Recommendations") and further agree that one bridge will be designed and constructed for the Project.
3. The County will procure an independent consultant (the "Independent Consultant"), (i.e. – one that does not have a previous or current contractual relationship with SCDOT, the County, or the Town) to perform an additional independent review of the project. This Independent Consultant will conduct an end-to-end simulation and study through and beyond the Project limits to include additional intersections materially consistent with the Scope of Work set forth in Exhibit A.
4. The County and the Town will establish a committee (the "Committee") to select the Independent Consultant through a competitive bid process. The following County representatives shall sit on the Committee: (a) the County Administrator or his designee (b) the Assistant County Administrator for Infrastructure; (c) and the County Transportation Program Manager Consultant. The following Town representatives shall sit on the Committee: (d) the Town Manager or his designee; (e) the Assistant Town Manager of Community Development; and (f) the Town Engineer.
5. All recommendations from the independent review for areas within the project boundary will be considered for inclusion in the project. The County and Town agree to pursue the "Finding of No Significant Impacts" (FONSI) from the Federal Highway Administration concurrent with the Independent Review. If any findings from the Independent Review affect environmental documents submitted for the FONSI, those recommendations will be considered, and the environmental documents will be updated and resubmitted as agreed upon by the County and the Town.
6. The County and the Town, as required as part of the NEPA process, will coordinate with SCDOT to perform a value engineering of the project to identify and eliminate unwanted costs, and improve function and quality as well as to optimize initial and long-term investment, ultimately seeking the best value for the lowest cost.
7. The County and the Town mutually agree to work together, along with SCDOT and Lowcountry Area Transportation Study, to design, implement and maintain a connected and synchronized signal system along the entire length of US 278 from I-95 to Sea Pines Circle. The synchronized system will include fiber connectivity, Adaptive Signal technologies and other tools to help maximize flow. The County and the Town mutually agree to work together to seek funds necessary to acquire and implement the proposed improvements.
8. Any signal improvements from the synchronization project which are not already installed within the corridor prior to the construction of the Project, will be incorporated as such.
9. This Agreement does not provide the Town's municipal consent. Such consent may be provided by the Town Council after the Independent Review has been evaluated by the Town and County and before the right-of-way acquisition phase

of the Project begins. Municipal consent by the Town will not be unreasonably withheld.

10. The County and the Town agree that the Independent Review will be the last and final study needed for the Town to make a final decision related to the Project.

Mr. Colin next presented data on the "Traffic Management Assessment" which was prepared by Lochmeuller, the Town's engineering consultant. The data included travel times and performance levels at intersections.

Town Council – Project Considerations were listed by Mr. Colin as follows:

- Project Scope
- Rehabilitate eastbound Mackay Creek Bridge or build new, single 6-lane bridge?
- Shared-use pathway on south side of bridge?
- Meander roadway on Jenkins Island?
- Aesthetics on bridge and through corridor?
- Community Impacts and Improvements?
- Property Impacts and Improvements through Stoney Neighborhood?
- Quality of Life
- Traffic and Transportation
- Traffic Management Level of Service?
- Environmental Impacts?
- Cost, Funding, and Economic Impacts and Benefits?

The Mayor asked for comments from Town Council members. Ms. Brison raised a threshold issue that the Town staff had cited the wrong statute which requires Municipal Consent. She stated that it should be Section 57-5-820 of the South Carolina Code of Laws which provides for mandatory consent instead of Section 57-5-830. She cited the Municipal Consent documents previously required of the Town for the Cross Island Parkway and of the Town of Mount Pleasant for the bridge over the Wando River.

Council members then made comments, asked questions and held discussion regarding: confirmation that SCDOT said the bridge must be six lanes and their authority to do so; confirmation that the position of SCDOT that if it is a single span bridge it needs to be six lanes; confirmation that if the current project is rejected, Council will have to go back and redefine the project and get back in line to obtain funding, etc.; confirmation that if Municipal Consent is not granted to SCDOT and this project is not submitted as defined within the current purpose and need and a solution to this project would die and a new project would have to be defined by going through the full process again; confirmation that if the project doesn't move forward, SCDOT would work to determine which path was most effective and the best use of funds whether it's to rehabilitate or replace the Eastbound Mackey Bridge and it would be replacement with two lanes and if it's a rehab it would not include the seismic upgrades but a replacement would have seismic upgrades; a request to hold off until after the election; a request to ask Senator Davis to

continue good work and obtain an extension on the Environmental Assessment along with funding; confirmation Mackey Creek Bridge replacement is eminent; speculation three lanes offers the opportunity of an HOV lane; expression of the need for a bike lane is necessary; acknowledgement we need to control who we are; acknowledgement Council needs to stay on the topic which is bridges; a suggestion to deal with issues we can control; acknowledgment the County is in charge of the projects; acknowledgement the interests of the Stoney Community are in the forefront; inquiry regarding methods to protect causeways due to possible storm surges and confirmation this will be addressed in future phases of design; inquiry into numbers used regarding correct width of existing bridge to the width of the proposed bridge; clarification on requirements for consent and adding conditions; acknowledgment of the need for conditions to be included in Municipal Consent and the MOU with the County and the need to make it public; request for visuals regarding measurement; request that the pedestrian portion of the proposal needs to be changed; proposal to include pedestrian crossing safety as a condition; concern over SCDOT purpose and need to increase capacity and reduce congestion.

Ms. Brison asked technical questions about plans for the three causeways to address storm surges and the cost of that design and pointed to three options for Municipal Consent: 1) Yes; 2) Yes, with conditions; and 3) No.

Ms. Brison then made remarks about the process she used in leading to her decision and her proposed conditions. Her proposed conditions included:

- (1) a Stoney Improvement Plan which consists of a reduction in the proposed number of lanes, pedestrian and bicyclist overpasses, landscaped medians, improved and safe access to all Gullah properties and businesses, and drainage improvements, with all costs included in the Project budget and secured by at least a \$10 million escrow for the Stoney Improvement Plan;
- (2) a Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety Plan which consist of safe refuges in median areas, separation of pathways from vehicular lanes, overpasses and intersection protections, with all costs included in the Project budget;
- (3) Aesthetic & Design Elements which consists of landscaped medians, incorporation of MKSK designs, reduction in the size of the bridge sections by eliminating one travel lane in each direction, bridge designs and corridor entrance elements completed in accordance with Hilton Head Island Design Review Guidelines and Town Council approval of bridge design and corridor entrance elements;
- (4) Installation of Improved Traffic Management Systems which consists of incorporating the Windmill Harbour traffic signal into the Town's adaptive traffic signal system testing time of day limitations on left turn, closing left turn on Pinckney Island, and reducing the speed limit to 40 mph, all to be done immediately;
- (5) Address storm surges on causeways; and
- (6) address bottlenecked mergers with Cross-Island Parkway.

Council members continued to make comments, ask questions and hold discussion regarding: a suggestion that in conjunction with the project and improvements to the Stoney area there should be address the infrastructure and redevelopment needs along with funding which could possibly include a TIF District in a timely manner; use of Town property within the Stoney area to accomplish the goals suggested; the need for an overpass for crossing US278 in the Stoney Area; inquiry as to what a no vote would do to any enhancements included for Stoney; confirmation the funds could be reallocated; and confirmation that if the current project is able to advance securing the current gap in funding is needed to move forward.

Public Comment

Christopher Cliffe addressed Council regarding his opinion that the proposal doesn't solve traffic problems, and the project will destroy the cache of the Island.

Chris Rates addressed Council expressing her concerns regarding transportation alternatives, the lack of bike paths when expecting people to bike from the mainland, the fact that the proposed project is not saving much travel time; and the need to protect the Stoney Community.

Chris Ruffner addressed Council stating additional lanes does not help reduce traffic congestion as well as speed limits do not assist either.

Mel Campbell addressed Council and stated he was a Native Islander and expressed his opinion that the bridge is needed and the changes that brought Stoney to where it is today were caused by design mistakes.

Ray Deal addressed Council noting the Chamber is a voice for all businesses on the Island. The workforce is top priority for all businesses. He urged Council to approve the project.

William Stewart addressed Council stated financial well and development needs to be addressed in the Stoney Community through partnership. He stated the need for safety to be addressed due to lost lives on US278 of which two of his brothers are included.

Steve Robinson addressed Council stating he couldn't believe that Council has to ask Staff as to what would happen if they voted no and if they knew what the purpose of the question was.

David Johnson addressed Council regarding that citizen comments have assisted in working through the project. Some residents are in favor of the project. He stated safety and traffic is a huge issue.

Frank Babel addressed Council stating Stoney needs revitalized and it is appositive thing to do so, and the traffic problems need fixed along with making the bridge structurally safe. He encouraged approving the project.

Eric Sommerville addressed Council and suggested the project move forward but to take the Stoney Area into consideration and not ruin it.

Peter Kristian addressed Council stating a need for six lanes for employees coming on the Island along with the need for bike lanes.

Cherry Norris addressed Council stating the Island is a special place and encouraged Council not to expand the bridge. Her concern is does a bigger bridge mean more development?

Dale Becker addressed Council stating Ky West has more visitors that Hilton Head Island and they do fine. The Gullah Geechee community needs to be honored and taken care of and we definitely do not need bike lanes on the bridge.

Angie Hutchinson addressed Council stating she likes clapping in meetings. She added that Beaufort County doesn't have a good track record. She stated the proposed bridge is wider than the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges.

Linda Harrington addressed Council inquiring as to the duties of the Town Attorney and asked why he wasn't in attendance at the meeting. She stated her opinion that the study for the proposed project is flawed.

Gray Smith addressed Council stating the Island shouldn't be asked to give up its power to others. Beaufort County is positional to take advantage of Hilton Head Island.

Carol Buxser addressed Council stating her opposition to the proposed bridge and the bike paths. She encouraged Council to celebrate the Gullah Geechee Community.

Mr. Stewart addressed Council stating he is a Stoney resident and does not trust the SCDOT. He spoke of drainage problems and too many tourists.

Lynn Greeley addressed Council stating the need is to beautify and not add a massive bridge and she feels there are too many tourists.

John O'Toole addressed Council saying he supports the bridge project noting that traffic is contributing to pollution. He stated he has confidence in Council and Staff.

Mayor Perry invited Shawn Colin to address a couple of the questions that were asked.

Mr. Colin said that the travel time savings if a new bridge is put in place would be eight minutes and 49 seconds eastbound and 10 minutes and 36 seconds westbound.

He stated the Mackey Bridge was built in 1956, and the other three bridges were built in the early 1980's.

Mr. Colin explained that the purpose and need for the project identified deems a four-lane bridge does not achieve the purpose of reducing congestions, therefore it is rejected by the project.

Mr. Colin informed Council the impervious surface information is on the project website.

Ms. Brison asked that the Town Attorney address the status of the conveyance of Town-owned land to SCDOT for the Project right-of-way. She requested that it not be conveyed until the Town has an agreement with SCDOT.

Council and staff discussed the next steps forward and the process that will take place.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Approved: September 17, 2024



Kimberly Gammon, Town Clerk



Alan R. Perry, Mayor

The recording of this Meeting can be found on the Town's website at www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov