

**CITY OF NORTH MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA**  
**NORTH MYRTLE BEACH CITY HALL**  
**CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP**  
**Monday, December 18, 2023**

**Minutes**

**1. ROLL CALL: 1:30 PM**

Marilyn Hatley called the workshop to order and asked the Clerk to call the roll.

Marilyn Hatley

JO Baldwin

Bubba Collins

Fred Coyne

Nicole Fontana, Absent for roll call only

Trey Skidmore

Hank Thomas, Absent

**2. DISCUSSION:**

Regarding potential sidewalk repairs to the Barefoot Swing Bridge and replacement of the Barefoot Swing Bridge with potential time frames. Mike Mahaney, City Manager, discussed the Barefoot bridge history and options for repairs of the sidewalk and construction of a new bridge. Manager Mahaney presented costs for the best option according to an evaluation by Mead and Hunt and City staff. Mead and Hunt evaluated the sidewalk repair options and reviewed these with local contractors. The lowest estimated cost for replacing the sidewalk was \$750,000. Manager Mahaney added that during the sidewalk repair, the bridge would be one lane and the Coast Guard had approved a modified opening schedule for the 7 week period. He added that regular yearly maintenance would take approximately 4 weeks at a cost of \$100,000 so total completion would take about 12 weeks. Manager Mahaney added the bridge was structurally inadequate to allow the ladder truck to cross and the City was researching reinforcing the bridge to accommodate the ladder truck in 2024 at an additional cost of \$100,000 as well as replacement of the 25 year old electrical system within the next 5 years. Manager Mahaney explained that the RIDE 4/Transportation Tax included a new bridge that was not a swing bridge and the cost would be \$115 million if approved by County Council.

Mayor Hatley asked if the City had only one company bid on the bridge project. Manager Mahaney stated he had talked with three companies but the other two could only do the work in July and August which would not work due to bridge openings and tourist season. Mayor Hatley stated she would like to put this out to bid again in January with the work being done in the fall. She added there was a back entrance on Water Tower Road that could be utilized as well as the one lane bridge. Manager Mahaney asked Kevin Blayton, Public Works Director, if he felt the Coast Guard would approve a modified bridge opening schedule for the fall. Director Blayton stated the Coast Guard would not allow a scheduled opening sequence in October and November and opening on demand would drive the cost up even more. Mayor Hatley stated the original estimate was \$400,000 to \$500,000 and now the cost was considerably more than budgeted at \$750,000 and she felt the project could be rebid in January and construction start in April or May. Director Blayton stated he did not feel the Coast Guard would approve a modified bridge opening in peak boat seasons of April, May, September, October, or November. Councilman Skidmore asked if bids were received from the other 2 companies. Director Blayton stated the companies did not submit bids because they could only perform the work in April, May, June, and July. Mayor Hatley asked if conversation could be opened with the Coast Guard about April, May, June, and July. Director Blayton confirmed the City would ask the Coast Guard but he did not feel they would consider that time frame. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin asked if the other two companies would be interested in bidding in January. Director Blayton stated he felt they would if the start date was deferred.

Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin asked if there had been negotiation on the price increase. Director Blayton stated the cost increase was due to having to remove materials from the bridge onto a barge every time it opened. Mayor Hatley stated all options must be looked at due to funding. She added she felt the Transportation Tax would be approved and would include the new bridge funding. Mayor Hatley asked when the bridge would be completed if the funding was approved. Director Blayton stated the dates had been moved to begin in 2026 and be completed in 2034. Traffic patterns and delays were discussed and Mayor Hatley asked if the swing bridge would be closed down at completion of the new bridge. Director Blayton confirmed that it would be. Councilman Skidmore asked if the sidewalk plan was decided by the contractor or City staff. Director Blayton stated the plan was jointly decided by the contractor, Mead and Hunt, and City staff. Mayor Hatley asked what the staff's recommendation was on this. Director Blayton stated the staff would like the work done now and did not feel postponing would save much but noted that none of the funding was in the current budget. Mayor Hatley stated she was concerned that this would come out of the 2023-2024 General Fund that had already been budgeted.

Manager Mahaney stated he would like to get feedback from the 6,000 Barefoot residents concerning the sidewalk. He added it may be a better solution to leave the sidewalk closed and concentrate on building the new bridge due to the cost. Councilman Collins added the sidewalk would be in use until completion of the new bridge in 2034. Mayor Hatley stated she felt the sidewalk was used and had to be put back in. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated his main concern was the cost increasing if the project was put off. Manager Mahaney added that was the purpose of the workshop to weigh all the options. Director Blayton offered another option of removing the existing sidewalk and replacing it in the following year to cut cost and allow for budgeting. He added the structural work and new sidewalk could be completed together and funded in the next budget. Removal of the sidewalk concrete would, at minimum, remove the immediate hazard. Councilwoman Fontana asked if removal of the sidewalk could be done in January. Director Blayton stated he did not have costs for that but felt it could be done. Councilwoman Fontana added she would like to see a cost itemization and felt this was a good option. Mayor Hatley asked when the regular bridge maintenance was scheduled and Director Blayton advised it would start January 8, 2024.

Councilman Skidmore reiterated that he was concerned that there was only one bid for a \$750,000 project. He added he felt it should be rebid and at least 3 bids considered. Mayor Hatley agreed. Councilwoman Fontana stated she would like to have 3 bids but felt the City should reach out to the Coast Guard first to see what they would approve. She added she also had a problem with investing this amount of money and then tearing it down. Councilman Coyne stated the sidewalk and bridge would actually be used for approximately 10 years during the construction of the new bridge. Mayor Hatley stated she was in agreement that a new sidewalk was needed and that 3 bids were needed. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin added he agreed but time was of the essence and he was concerned with delaying the project. Councilman Coyne added he agreed but did not see the cost being significantly less and he understood why the other contractors did not submit bids. He added he felt the City had made a commitment to replace the sidewalk and it was an amenity to Barefoot Residents and visitors. Mayor Hatley asked Director Blayton to check with the contractor about the removal of the sidewalk to see if that would bring the cost down. And if that brought the cost down, move forward. If it didn't bring the cost down, move forward with rebidding the project. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin asked what time frame the City was looking at. Director Blayton stated if a contract was not agreed upon by the end of this year, he feared construction would not start in January. Mayor Hatley asked Director Blayton to talk with the contractor about the possibility of rebidding. Director Blayton agreed.

After much discussion, the Council decided to research removing the concrete portion of the sidewalk and repairing the bridge with the contractor. The schedule and pricing would take approximately 7 weeks. This would be revisited at a later date in 2024. City staff would discuss a Modified Opening Schedule with the United States Coast Guard. Depending on the answers received from the contractor, the Council may put this project out for rebid.

Mayor Hatley opened the floor for public comment.

Barbara McKowna, Barefoot resident, stated her concern was the danger of an accident during the construction and suggested running a shuttle across the bridge. Councilwoman Fontana stated there was already a shuttle that ran from Barefoot. Ms. McKowna stated it needed to be a shuttle designated just for back and forth across the bridge to avoid 45 minute waits for the Barefoot Shuttle.

Neal Witkin, 3019 Winding River Drive, North Myrtle Beach, stated there had been much interest in the sidewalk repair from Barefoot Residents and there was an urgency to get the repair completed. He asked if the City would consider putting yellow lines down the center of the bridge during winter maintenance to mark the lanes.

Tom Howell, Barefoot resident, asked if steel plates could be welded across the existing sidewalk. Director Blayton explained the structural issue was not just with the concrete but also with the steel beams and metal band that was supporting the concrete and adding more weight would create more safety issues. Mr. Howell added there were many Barefoot residents riding bikes across the bridge to work and were creating hazards as well as some who were jumping over the barriers onto the sidewalk. He asked the City to consider these concerns.

Gerald Russo, 418 Ocean Pointe Court, North Myrtle Beach, suggested going back to the company that originally bid the bridge construction and offer the original price and telling them to take it or leave it. He added bridge parts were going up at 9.1 percent and delaying construction would only increase the cost of the repairs.

Mark Porter, 5718 Herring Gulf Circle, North Myrtle Beach, asked what would have to go in order to fund this project in the coming year instead of postponing. He added that he was not in favor of a fixed bridge which would make Barefoot Landing a thoroughfare for Water Tower Road. He added that other fixed bridges in the area did not have pedestrian sidewalks. He mentioned Ocean Isle did not have pedestrian or bike lanes. He asked that ADA compatibilities be considered in the final bridge plan.

Having no further public comment, Mayor Hatley thanked everyone for coming to the workshop and called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin and seconded by Councilman Skidmore. The motion passed 6-0. Mayor Hatley adjourned the meeting at 2:19 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison K. Galbreath, Clerk to Council

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MARILYN HATLEY, MAYOR

Minutes approved and adopted this 8<sup>th</sup> day of January 2024