Ms. Brown made a motion to move the Annual Bridge Walk item to the first item of business with support from Mr. Steudle. All voted in favor to approve the amended agenda.
Annual Bridge Walk
Mr. Sweeney cited the recommendation of Michigan State Police and U.S. Homeland Security to close the bridge to all public traffic during the Annual Bridge Walk in 2018 and beyond. He highlighted the 2017 successes and discussed the goals for the 2018 event. In addition to the security and safety of participants and motorists, 2018 goals include reducing Mackinac Bridge Authority costs to host the event, opening the bridge to traffic at noon sharp, and ensuring that all walkers can participate. Mr. Sweeney discussed that at the November 20, 2017 meeting the Authority voted to hold the 2018 Annual Bridge Walk on Labor Day and he presented three options for the 2018 walk; walking from both directions (“U-Turn” or “U-Walk”), walking north to south with limited busing at the state dock in Mackinaw City, and walking north to south with maximum busing at the Mackinaw City High School.

The “U-Turn” or “U-Walk” option would improve safety from the 2017 event and meet the three additional goals for 2018. The elimination of buses would provide a safer walk, reduce the costs of the event, allows for opening the bridge at noon, and everyone that wants to participate in the walk could do so. Participants could arrange transportation and walk the full length of the bridge or walk both directions if they start early enough. Local businesses could participate by providing busing in their respective community. Staff recommends this option as they feel it is the safest of the three options, it is the least expensive of the three options, allows for opening the bridge at noon and is the only option that participants will not be limited.

Walking north to south with limited busing at the Mackinaw City state dock is a familiar location to participants as it has been used for over a decade. However, participation would be limited to approximately 25,000 and would cost the Authority around $200,000 more than the non-busing option.

Walking north to south with maximum busing at the Mackinaw City High School would be an ideal bus route and would increase the number of potential participants to approximately 36,000. This option would cost the Authority approximately $500,000 more than the non-busing option and is by far the most expensive. This maximum busing option would create issues at the start area if too many participants were bused before the walk began, therefore, busing may have to be stopped to allow the walk to start and create more space at the Administration Building in St. Ignace.

The estimated costs for the Mackinac Bridge Authority alone, for the three options are $360,000 for the U-Walk option, $560,000 for the walking north to south with limited busing, and $840,000 walking north to south with maximum busing.

Ms. Jamie Mersch presented the Mackinaw City busing proposals. The first proposal suggested changes to the Mackinac Bridge Authority’s current busing plan but did not include a busing option provided by Mackinaw City. The second proposal was supporting the U-Turn should the Authority choose this option. They offered no financial assistance.

Mrs. Quincy Ranville reported that the St. Ignace community would continue to provide busing from the Little Bear East Arena to the staging area and back to the Little Bear as they have in the past.

Public Comment on Agenda Items
Mr. Jim Litzner, a resident of St. Ignace and bus driver for the event suggested leaving Little Bear Arena to Portage Street, taking I-75 and driving south in the northbound passing lane to the bridge and making the return trip through town. He also suggested the handicap bus be loaded in a separate location at Little Bear to transport those participants that need it without interfering with the faster loading of regular buses.
2018 Annual Bridge Walk
Mr. Gnodtke discussed that the Authority would need to choose one of the three options presented for the 2018 event. Mr. Steudle questioned the maximum busing option, and Mr. Sweeney noted that the bus calculations show busing at 4:00 a.m. with all buses at max capacity by 4:30 a.m. Mr. Steudle stated his concern with the busing options as the buses being full at 4:30 a.m. has not been the case in the past and if many participants show up at bus loading at 9:00 a.m. they will not make it to the starting line in time. Mr. Steudle motioned to adopt the U-Turn option for 2018 with support from Mr. Gleason. Mr. Sweeney called the roll and Mr. McLogan, Mr. Musser, Mr. Gleason, and Mr. Steudle all voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Gnodtke and Ms. Brown voted against the motion. The motion carried with a 4-2 vote.

Mr. McLogan stated, “now that this has been adopted, I think it’s important that we as a board respect each other’s votes and decisions and recognize that this was not a unanimous decision, for the very good reason that the tradition of this walk is so important, that we have found it necessary to do it differently, and over the history of the walk there have been variations to it from time to time that have been necessary to accommodate the public that want to walk and the motoring public that had still wanted to use the bridge. Now that we can’t do that anymore, we need to understand that the option that was presented to us today and voted today, is probably the only viable option at this time, in order to preserve the walk. The other option would probably be to not do it because of the safety concern mixing too much vehicular traffic with pedestrians at the same time, and the difficulty in getting people from north to south in order to be able to complete the walk. So this has not been done in any haste, we have all been thinking about this since last November, and now we’ll all work together to ensure its success.”

Mr. Gnodtke stated, “I would just add that I believe this board will respect the opinions and votes of all its members, either yay or nay. I’ll just state for the record, my vote was because of the cost. The Mackinac Bridge Authority and I wasn’t put on the Authority to run a bridge walk. I love the walk; I’ve walked it every year but one since I’ve been on the Authority, its got a great tradition, but the rate payers paid their fare to make sure that this bridge is maintained and preserved and provides a link between the two peninsulas. And because of the wonderful staff we’ve got and the people that work on it, this 60-year-old bridge is in pristine condition, and I just feel that the cost far outweighed, as it relates to the Mackinac Bridge Authority, the benefit. So that’s the reason I voted no, I certainly respect the votes of my fellow Authority members who voted yes, I can assure people that I know every one of us labored long and hard on this and has spent a lot of time. Our staff has spent an incredible amount of time, and I will say, I’m a little disappointed in the reaction of the communities. I’ll take the blame for not having the proper order in which we considered this. Instead of saying yes, we will make the bridge available, and two, we will make it available on Labor Day, and three we will seek input. As Chairman my responsibility should’ve been to say yes, we will go to the communities and ask for input to see if we continue to do this. My lack of action as the Chair put my fellow board members in a position where we had the cart before the horse, and I feel very badly about that. But our decision has been made, we’ve got wonderful employees, and I know that they will work to make this event as successful of an event as humanly possible.”

Approval of Meeting Minutes
Mr. Gnodtke called for any additions or corrections to the minutes of the Special Meeting of November 20, 2017. A motion to approve the four meeting minutes as presented was made by Mr. Musser with support from Mr. McLogan. All voted in favor of the motion.
Traffic Report
Mr. Dean Steiner reported that 2017 traffic was up 2.1% from 2016 and 2017 revenue was up 3.8% from 2016. January 2018 traffic is up 2.0% from January 2017 and January 2018 revenue is up 4.9% from January 2017.

Contractual Projects
North Side Span Liquidated Damages Claim
Ms. Nowack discussed that the judge had granted the motion for summary disposition in March of 2016 in the case against Abhe & Svoboda. Abhe & Svoboda filed an appeal on July 8, 2016. The appeal was heard on June 9, 2017 and the Appeals Court has now affirmed the summary disposition. Abhe & Svoboda has filed an appeal with the Michigan Supreme Court.

South Side Span Suit
Ms. Nowack reported that no developments have taken place since February of 2015 in which the Illinois receiver responded that the November 2014 claim filed with the Director of Insurance in the State of Illinois was timely and will be considered.

Tower Painting Project
Seaway Painting was awarded the two-year painting project that is 55% complete. Ms. Nowack discussed the scaffolding designed by Safway for the project and the moveable platforms designed by Ruby & Associates.

MSP Recommendation for Special Events Involving Pedestrians and Bicycles
Mr. Sweeney discussed that the Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division recommends that mitigation measures, permanent or temporary, that fully protect the pedestrians, be put in place if the special events continue. The Michigan State Police defines pedestrian events to include bicycle events and stated that shutting down traffic for the Annual Bridge Walk was the most appropriate measure.

Special Events Involving Pedestrians and Bicycles
Mr. Sweeney stated that the Mackinac Bridge Authority has seven special events in addition to the Annual Bridge Walk that fall under the Michigan State Police recommendation; the Memorial Bridge Run, the Big Mac Spring Bike Tour, the DALMAC, the Law Enforcement Torch Run, the Bike the Mighty Mac, the Mighty Mac Bridge Race and the Fall Colors Bridge Race. Mr. Sweeney noted that these events occur during low traffic to minimize impacts to traffic with exception of the DALMAC event. The recommendation of the Michigan State Police and the Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division is to close the bridge to traffic during these events or to cancel the events. Mr. McLogan made a motion to cancel the events with support from Mr. Musser. All voted in favor of the motion.

Toll Bridge Software Update
Mr. Litzner reported that the toll software system is in the sixth year of the seven-year contract. The current issues relating to the toll software system include inoperability of video auditing, staff not being trained to provide maintenance to the system, software issues in the toll lanes, traffic and revenue auditing and reporting inaccuracies and untimely lane hardware and system software repairs.

Fagan Consulting Toll Software RFP Status
Mr. Redding discussed that Fagan Consulting had completed their initial assessment of the current toll system and highlighted their assessment and recommendations for the new system. Inefficiencies Fagan found with the current system include insufficient documentation provided by the contractor, testing was not completed, the contractor is often unresponsive and repair times are unacceptable. They recommend replacing the current proximity card system with an RFID system. Phase I of the
The project is currently on budget and on schedule and they have begun writing the new request for proposal. A new contractor should be hired by the end of July 2018. Ms. Brown made a motion to allow the Mackinac Bridge Authority’s Toll Software Committee to review and approve the RFP, have it posted on MDOT’s and other tolling websites, that they be allowed to score the proposals received and make a recommendation on the tolling system vendor to replace the MBA’s current system. Mr. McLogan supported the motion that passed unanimously.

Committee Reports
Ms. Brown reported that on January 24, 2018 the Toll Software Committee had a conference call meeting and most of the information received was also presented today by Fagan Consulting. Mr. Musser reported that the Finance Committee had met the previous day and approved the Audit Report, the Fiscal Year 2019 Business Plan, the continuation of the partnership with Pure Michigan to complete the three-year commitment and approved the recommendation of discontinuing the sale of token rolls. Mr. Gleason moved to accept the Finance Committee report with support from Mr. McLogan. All voted in favor of the motion.

2018 Meeting Schedule
The next official meetings of the Mackinac Bridge Authority will be held on June 26-27, 2018 on Mackinac Island, Michigan. The fall 2018 meeting dates and location will be determined at the June 2018 meeting. Ms. Brown made a motion to accept the 2018 meeting schedule with support from Mr. McLogan. All voted in favor of the motion.

Public Comment
Keegan Hoose from Lake Superior State University asked that the board consider discounting the fare for Lake Superior State University students to $2.00 per crossing. Mr. Hoose stated that bridge fare is expensive for students, especially those who travel downstate on the weekends. Mr. Gnodtke suggested that commuting students can stop into the Mackinac Bridge Authority Administration Building and purchase a Mac Pass, which provides a 50% discount for round trips within 36 hours.

Mr. Gnodtke stated, “I’d just like to take the liberty to make a comment to address last year’s bridge walk. I made a variation of this comment previously, but that was a huge change from the way we’ve done the bridge, and I think its only appropriate to thank for the success that we did have, that we didn’t have the back up at the toll booths. We’ve recognized some of the problems of not everybody being able to get across, but all in all, I think a lot of thank yous are owed to these groups that I’m going to mention. Keith Creagh in the Department of Natural Resources posted information about the closing on all the campsites and they highly advertised it, Ruth Johnson, Secretary of State; there were posters in all the Secretary of State’s offices advising people of that, Kirk Steudle and MDOT did a wonderful job. I got stopped by somebody down in Oakland County and they said, ‘My God, I was driving down the Lodge Expressway and there’s a notice that the Mackinac Bridge will be closed to traffic on Labor Day 6 until noon.’ So thanks Kirk, for all the help that you guys gave. Lt. King and the Michigan State Police; just a wonderful job on all their part, they worked tirelessly and spent literally hundreds and hundreds of hours to make sure this thing was done successfully, and safely. Local law enforcement; the Sheriff’s Department from Emmet, Cheboygan and Mackinaw and others, and the local police from Mackinaw City and St. Ignace worked very, very hard to help this thing be pulled off and we’re very appreciative of that. The Coast Guard; it goes unnoticed, but they provided 6 boats that provided security on Labor Day for 10 hours, making sure nothing dangerous came up underneath the bridge. The local communities and volunteers; this thing wouldn’t be able to be pulled off without cooperation and we appreciate that, and the media, they did a wonderful job. I live in Charlevoix, and 7 & 4, 9 & 10, they gave the fact that the bridge was going to be closed and that there were changes being made on the Labor Day bridge walk an incredible amount of air time. This helped
get the word out that resulted in the bridge walk being as successful as it was. And lastly, our employees; they just did a wonderful job. They don’t have a Labor Day; they’re working. They’re holding up those bridge lanes at 2:00 in the morning and they are tearing down late in the afternoon; so Labor Day is a Labor for them, and we appreciate everything they do for us. So if nobody else has a comment, the meeting will be adjourned.”

Mr. Gnodtke adjourned the meeting at 9:26 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert J. Sweeney, P.E.
Executive Secretary