Mackinac Bridge Authority
Official Meeting
Phone Conference
May 13, 2020

Minutes

(Pursuant to the Open Meetings Act, notification of this meeting was posted on the entrance to the Mackinac Bridge Authority Administration Building, St. Ignace, Michigan, the Michigan Department of Transportation Van Wagoner Building, Lansing, Michigan, on the Mackinac Bridge Authority website, and a press release was sent statewide more than eighteen hours prior to the meeting.)

Members present: Mr. Patrick F. Gleason, Chair
Mr. Matthew E. McLogan, Vice Chair
Mr. Brad Canale
Ms. Tricia Kinley
Ms. Amy L. Trahey
Mr. Kirk T. Steudle
Mr. Paul C. Ajegba, Director – Michigan Department of Transportation
Ms. Rachael Eubanks, State Treasurer – Mackinac Bridge Authority

Also present: Ms. Kim Nowack, Executive Secretary – Mackinac Bridge Authority
Ms. Kathleen Gleeson, Attorney General in Charge – MDOT
Mrs. Melissa DeKeyser, Secretary – Mackinac Bridge
Mr. Jeff Cranson, Director of Communications – MDOT
Mr. James Lake, Communications Representative – MDOT
Ms. Margaret Barondess, Manager, Environmental Section – MDOT
Ms. Monica Monsma, Public Involvement Specialist – MDOT

Mr. Gleason called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. Mr. Gleason stated this is the first virtual meeting of the Authority, due to COVID-19, and in accordance with Governor Whitmer’s Executive Order 2020-75. Mr. Gleason thanked the MBA and MDOT staff for their technical assistance in arranging the meeting. The public had the opportunity to email comments the day prior and up until the start of the meeting and all comments made through email or on the YouTube website will be read during public comment. Mr. Gleason also noted that the decision made for the Annual Bridge Walk event applies only to the event in 2020. Mr. Gleason asked Ms. Nowack to call the roll; Chairman Gleason, Vice Chair McLogan, Director Ajegba, Member Steudle, Member Kinley, Member Canale and Member Trahey, Council Gleeson and Treasurer Eubanks were all present.

Approval of Agenda
A motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Mr. McLogan with support from Ms. Trahey. All voted in favor of the motion.

Changeable Decorative Lighting for Main Cable
Ms. Nowack discussed that prior to the board decision in 2015 to suspend lighting requests, that the lights had been changed a few times for different causes, including Autism Awareness Month, however, changing the globes are costly and time consuming. Chief Engineer Julie Neph
and Engineer Assistant Cole Cavalieri will be researching an automated system for changing the
lights and will report on their findings at the July 2020 meeting.

2020 Annual Bridge Walk
Ms. Nowack discussed the history of the event which started in 1958. Recent safety changes
include prohibiting vehicles on the bridge during the walk excluding buses, law enforcement and
emergency vehicles starting in 2017. In 2018, buses were also prohibited, and the U-turn scheme
was implemented. Also, recently, the Michigan State Police replaced the Army National Guard
and took over crowd control for the event, sending over 260 troopers to the Mackinac Bridge.
Ms. Nowack listed 15 other law enforcement agencies that assist with the Annual Bridge Walk
(ABW) event. Ms. Nowack showed multiple snapshots of crowds from years past which are
typically around 30,000 people. Ms. Nowack highlighted Governor Whitmer’s 6 step plan to re-
engage Michigan’s Economy and stated the state is currently in phase 3 which includes no
gatherings, continued distancing, and increased face coverings. The MBA and MSP are starting
to spend money and time on the planning logistics. The MBA would normally start ordering
posters, flyers, finish line certificates and rental materials. The MSP would begin to reserve
busing and lodging for the event. The 2019 event costs were approximately $335,000 for the
MBA and approximately $154,000 for the MSP. April traffic was down roughly 65%, or
$700,000 in revenue. Ms. Nowack stated that based on the information relating to public
gatherings, lack of vaccines and effective therapies, the inability to test 30,000 participants for
COVID-19 prior to the walk, budget concerns for the MBA and MSP, and the very important
goal of protecting the safety and welfare of the Michiganders and those that visit us, staff
recommendation is to cancel the annual bridge walk for 2020 only.
Mr. Gleason thanked Ms. Nowack for her presentation and noted that the pictures of the crowds
show how difficult it would be to socially distance during the event and that the annual bridge
walk event would fall under phase 6; allowing all events and gatherings of any size. Mr.
Gleason noted that it would be highly unlikely that a vaccine be available in 2020.
Mr. Canale stated that it was very important that all factors are taken into consideration as shown
in Ms. Nowack’s presentation and that this is not an isolated decision for this recommendation.
Mr. McLogan endorsed Ms. Nowack’s concern for the MBA’s revenues and stated that the sole
source of revenue for the Mackinac Bridge Authority is from the tolls, and when revenue is
down, essential expenses must take priority, and that the ABW event is not an essential expense.
Mr. McLogan stated that he is looking forward to the event resuming in 2021.
Mr. Steudle thanked Mr. McLogan for his comments and reiterated that the loss in revenue is an
important piece and that the first and foremost responsibility is the long-term care of the bridge
and that the funding from the toll revenue has to go towards that. While it is not desirable, from
a financial and safety prospective Mr. Steudle agrees with staff recommendation.
Director Ajegba echoed Mr. Steudle’s comments and added that if you look at the Governor’s six
step plan, not voting to cancel the walk would be contradictory to what the Governor is
recommending for gatherings at this time, adding to the safety concerns.
Ms. Kinley discussed that although its painful for members and the citizens that participate in the
event, she agrees with the other member’s comments due to safety and financial reasons. She
noted that even if social distancing was not required in the fall, the participants, staff and law
enforcement agencies involved could not be assured their safety.
Ms. Trahey stated that this is a hard decision but due to safety and financial aspects those reasons
will be the driving factor in the consensus to cancel the event for 2020.
Ms. Kinley made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Executive Secretary to suspend
the 2020 Annual Bridge Walk in light of the COVID-19 virus with support from Ms. Trahey.
Ms. Nowack called the roll; Chairman Gleason, Vice Chair McLogan, Director Ajegba, Member
Steudle, Member Kinley, Member Canale and Member Trahey all voted in favor of the motion that passed unanimously.

**Public Comment**

Ms. Monsma read the following comment received online from Joan VanderZiel: “Please let us cancel all reservations without penalty. What happens if the judges prove the Governor’s Executive Orders are unconstitutional?”

Ms. Barondess read the comments posted on YouTube:
- carole vanhoven: FYI – As a Labor Day Bridge Walker for many years, due to COVID, I will NOT feel safe this year to participate sadly.
- 1120jbm: We are signed up for the run. I feel that we should be given refunds since it is cancelled due to the virus and not by choice on our part.
- irondaisies1: I would not object to paying a few dollars to walk the bridge.

Mr. Lake read the email sent in during the meeting. It read, “When will the decision be made to hold the walk in 2021? Would that be at next summer?”

Hearing no other public comments, Mr. McLogan made a motion to adjourn at 4:36 p.m. with support from Ms. Trahey. All voted in favor of the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Nowack, P.E.
Executive Secretary