

## GIG HARBOR SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF JUNE 19, 2000

**PRESENT:** Councilmembers Ekberg, Young, Robinson, Owel, and Ruffo. Councilmember Picinich acted as Mayor Pro Tem in Mayor Wilbert's absence. Councilmember Dick came later in the meeting.

**CALL TO ORDER:** 6:05 p.m

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Economic Impacts of the Proposed Narrows Bridge project. Mayor Pro Tem Picinich read a prepared memo from Mayor Gretchen Wilbert explaining that she could not be present at the meeting, but wished to make her opinion known. Her memo stated that she believed that the time was right for the voice of the City of Gig Harbor to be heard, and that the elected officials owe it to *their citizens and neighbors to do whatever possible*. She stated that it is unbelievable to continue to anticipate spending \$700 million plus for a bridge that not only won't solve the problems, but also will create more congestion at both ends. She offered to carry any message that the Council may formulate to wherever it may need to go and concluded that an appeal of the FEIS might be one method to approach the issue.

Mark Hoppen, City Administrator, provided a summary presentation of the SR-16 FEIS. He described specific environmental impacts and related mitigations as articulated in the FEIS. He concluded the presentation with estimated costs of an appeal. He said that the wide range reflects the inability to estimate what would actually be involved and added that the city attorney would not be available for a NEPA appeal due to time constraints.

Matthew Warren - 5911 Reid Drive. Mr. Warren talked about the social/economic impacts of the tolls. He said that nowhere within the Executive Summary being distributed could you find what the actual toll would be, making an economic impact analysis impractical. He said the report should include what the toll is going to be; the impact on sales tax; and impact on property values and taxes. He said that this bridge would not solve the congestion problem or improve the air quality. He concluded to say that there has to be a limit on how high the toll can be, and that alone is the basis for an appeal.

Karen Biskey - 4113 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW. Ms. Biskey said that what would be gained from an appeal is a better idea of the economic impact on the citizens of Gig Harbor. She talked about the most recent financial statement estimates, which do not include the cost and maintenance of the existing bridge. She said that the commercial toll rate is equal to 2.5 times the passenger toll rate, affecting the cost of goods and services here. She stressed that more subsidy was needed on this bridge and the only way to achieve this is to take the issue to court. She said that the letter from attorney, Dave Brickland, gave an idea of some pretty good grounds for an appeal and added that although there are no guarantees, it is the right thing to do.

Richard McDonald - 15112 Star Place SE, Olalla. Mr. McDonald said that due to the tolls, it would be hard to sell a school bond issue, which would hurt property taxes in the long run. He

said that the whole populous was depending upon the City Council to do something, and urged the Council to push forward.

Joan McDonald - 15112 Star Place SE, Olalla. Ms. McDonald talked about other appeal efforts that had been successful. She said that the FEIS was incomplete in the area of economic impacts and said that the Council should appeal the FEIS.

Michael Biskey - 4113 35<sup>th</sup> Ave NW. Mr. Biskey talked about the surplus revenue funds mentioned in the Executive Summary Financial Plan. He talked about the social / economic impact on the area Senior Citizens, which make up an average of 50% of the voters in Gig Harbor.

Hank Searles - 4435 Holly Lane. Mr. Searles talked about the increase in the original cost that had been voted upon. He talked about the computation of how much it would cost the average resident over the next 35 years using a \$5 toll average. He said that this project has been coming for over five years, wanted to know why the City Council had not done anything about it. He urged everyone to attend the June 29<sup>th</sup> meeting on the tax-free bonds being held at the Goodman Middle School from 4pm to 8 pm and to voice their opinion.

Judy Olsen - 4417 69<sup>th</sup> St. Ct. Ms. Olsen urged the Council to appeal the FEIS. She said that as a homeowner and mother, she wanted to know how this project would affect her property value and the schools. She added that a study needed to be done to determine what the effect of the tolls would be on the community and services. She talked about the effects on tourism. She added that she knew it would cost the city a lot of money, but the long-term impacts needed to be considered and that it was up to the City Council to stand up and ask that a proper social / economic study be done.

Michael Murphy - 11030 56<sup>th</sup> St. NW. Mr. Murphy talked about attending the Transportation meeting where area representatives Pat Lantz, and Randy Boss, in addition to himself, were not allowed to speak. He called the process one-sided and urged caution in considering any reports coming forth. He said that he applauded the courageous efforts of the City Council in addressing this issue, and promised continued support from the community to help pay the cost of an appeal.

Jack Bujacich - 3607 Ross Avenue. Mr. Bujacich gave a history of the original bridge, and said that he heard many of the same comments back then. He said that an appeal would cost the citizens a great deal of money and asked why the County wasn't involved in the process. He said he agreed that funding should be coming from other sources and added that an appeal would delay the project, increasing the costs even more. He continued to say that the existing bridge was 50 years old and that a solution needed to be found. He discussed the toll committee of which he was a member.

Hank Searles. Mr. Searles spoke again about the attitude of one of the toll board members, Sally Walker, who made the comment that "Those people out there in Gig Harbor live in Camelot." He said that he did not care to have his tolls determined by someone with feels that way.

Michael Murphy. Mr. Murphy asked why there was no Federal Funding for the project. He added that this was the kind of mitigation that the citizens were looking for, and which might be possible with a proper appeal.

Karen Biskey. Ms. Biskey agreed that there was a perception that this was a wealthy community who can afford the \$3 tolls. She said that there are many who did not anticipate these tolls when locating here, or they would have made a different choice. She said that something substantial was needed to take to Congressman Norm Dicks.

Mark Hoppen said that the issues that have seemed to arise during this meeting are economic, which are the most difficult to define. Councilmembers discussed which issues could be the basis for an appeal and what positive outcome, if any, could arise from the expenditure of city funds to appeal the FEIS.

Mayor Pro Tem Picinich spoke of the difficulty of making a decision to spend up to a quarter of a million of the citizens' tax funds to appeal the FEIS when there are plans for those funds.

Councilmember Owel said that she felt there was room for more aggressive representation from the City without committing to an appeal of the FEIS. She said she was unhappy at the way the community had been treated by the DOT and Legislature and added that as a Council, better effort could be made to insist that the citizens be heard. She said that letters could be written both as a Council and individually to request that the EIS address specific economic issues as they affect the community.

Councilmember Young said he would like to clarify Council goals and have an estimate on whether or not an appeal would be won before proceeding.

Councilmember Ruffo said he was interested in how the toll commission was formed. He said he was reluctant to spend a substantial amount of money for a cause for the greater population, when their own representatives do not seem to be willing to do so. He said he would be willing to discuss the issue with the state on an informal basis to assess the situation before spending \$250,000 on something this nebulous.

Councilmember Robinson discussed the money spent toward the Wilkenson property, which would not realize an economic return. He said that he could formulate an outline of issues to pursue. Councilmember Young said that identifying the issues is only one portion of the process. Councilmember Ekberg agreed and added that he came hoping to hear specific areas that would give Council a reason to challenge the FEIS and what expectation there might be for mitigation. He agreed that the social / economic impact is big and that the FEIS has not addressed this issues and added that the first step might be to find out what it would cost the city to look at that specific area. He said that Council should begin efforts at the immediate level to find out where other funds may be available.

**MOTION:** Move we stick to the original schedule and hold the planning meeting on the Narrows Bridge FEIS appeal at the June 26<sup>th</sup>, regular council meeting.  
Ruffo/Robinson -

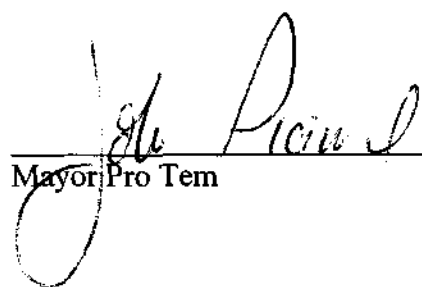
Mark Hoppen offered to prepare a scope of work for an economic study for review. Council agreed that this might be helpful.

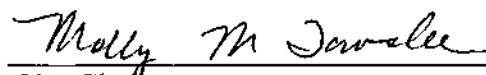
**AMENDED MOTION:** Move that we hold the final meeting on the Narrows Bridge potential appeal of the EIS appeal at the June 26<sup>th</sup>, regular council meeting and consider the scope of work prepared by Mr. Hoppen. Ruffo/Robinson - Councilmembers Ekberg, Young, Robinson, Dick, and Ruffo voted in favor. Councilmember Owel abstained as she would not be in attendance at the meeting.

**ADJOURN:**

**MOTION:** Move to adjourn at 8:05 p.m.  
Ruffo/Owel - unanimously approved.

Cassette recorder utilized.  
Tape 577 Side B 237 - end.  
Tape 578 Both Sides.  
Tape 579 Side A 000 - end.  
Tape 579 Side B 000 - 198.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Pro Tem

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk