

**Commissioners Minutes No. 1 – Delaware County  
Minutes of Special Meeting Held August 31, 1999**

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**Public Hearing – Bellpoint Bridge**

Mr. Wuertz opened the hearing at 7:30 p.m. by thanking the Bellpoint Church for allowing the meeting to be held in their church.

Mr. Bauserman, Delaware County Engineer, presented a report regarding the condition of the bridge.

**General Information About the Bridge**

- ◆ Originally constructed by the State of Ohio around 1913 (probably on existing piers and abutments).
- ◆ Turned over to Delaware County around 1947 (as part of US 42 relocation).
- ◆ Three spans with a total structure length of 274 feet. Deck width of 16 feet
- ◆ Closed to vehicular traffic around 1979.

**Points of Discussion**

- ◆ Condition of Existing Bridge
- ◆ Repair/Replacement Options
- ◆ Cost of Repair/Replacement
- ◆ Possible Funding Sources
- ◆ Future Ownership and Maintenance

**Bridge Superstructure Appraisal**

- ◆ Using the criteria outlined in the ODOT Bridge Inspection Manual, the truss superstructure is in overall critical condition.
- ◆ Entire wood deck and certain steel structural members are severely deteriorated and in some cases completely failed.

**Bridge Substructure Appraisal**

- ◆ Using the criteria outlined in the ODOT Bridge Inspection Manual, the substructure is in overall “imminent failure” condition.
- ◆ All concrete truss bearing seats are severely deteriorated. The southeast corner of the bridge is in the worst condition.

Under any of the following options, the bridge should be closed to all uses immediately. This recommendation is based on:

1. County Engineer’s inspections, August 1999 “
2. Ohio Bridge report dated August 24, 1999: “Due to this condition, I strongly suggest that you securely barricade the bridge in a manner that will prevent anyone from traveling on or under the bridge”.

**Option to Consider**

1. Close Bridge and allow deterioration to continue
  - ◆ Minimal initial cost for barricades
  - ◆ If bridge collapses, extensive removal and cleanup cost
  - ◆ Hazardous material incident-lead paint and cresote timbers in drinking water supply
  - ◆ Even if access onto the bridge is restricted, unsafe conditions remain for anyone under bridge

**Commissioners Minutes No. 1 – Delaware County  
Minutes of Special Meeting Held August 31, 1999**

---

2. Close Bridge and remove existing structure
  - ◆ Remove existing structure and construct permanent barricades: \$50,000
  - ◆ Abutments and piers could be left in place for use in a new structure (if suitable)
  - ◆ Nationwide is willing to remove the structure at no cost to county in exchange for the salvaged trusses
  
3. Rehabilitate existing bridge for pedestrian and recreational use
  - ◆ Remove Trusses repair offsite (due to lead paint, space and steel fabrication limits)
  - ◆ Remove floor beams, stringers and wood flooring and replace with new
  - ◆ Extensive concrete repairs or construction of new concrete piers and abutments
  - ◆ New pedestrian standard railing
  - ◆ New asphalt wearing surface and approaches
  - ◆ Design, Inspection, Permits
  - Total estimated cost:  
\$383,000 to \$438,000  
based on the extent of concrete work required
  
4. Remove existing bridge and replace with new pedestrian structure
  - ◆ Removal of existing bridge (\$50,000)
  - ◆ Extensive concrete repairs or construction of new concrete piers and abutments
  - ◆ Construct new 10 feet wide pedestrian bridge (welded steel truss), wood floor, and asphalt wearing surface
  - ◆ Design, Inspection, Permits
  - Total estimated cost: \$430,000 to \$485,000

#### Possible Funding Sources

- ◆ TEA-21 (Federal Highway funds) for Transportation Enhancement Projects
  - Administered through MORPC
  - Next application June 2000 for funds in FY 2003-2004
  - For improvements on recreational trails
  - Application Deadline – February 2000
  - Marginal applicability to this project
  
- ◆ ODNR – Natureworks
  - Available to governmental entities that provide recreational facilities
  - Each county has an annual allotment on a per-capita basis
  - Allotment cannot be accumulated from year to year
  - Annual allotment likely inadequate to fund this project
  
- ◆ Community Blocks Grants
  - Community must qualify as “low to moderate income” – depending on household size
  - \$100,000 maximum available in infrastructure grant
  
- ◆ Prior to applying for funds for repair or replacement, the following questions should be addressed:
  - What agency or group will assume ownership of the bridge?
  - Who will provide ongoing maintenance and inspection of the structure and how will it be funded?
  - What are the liability implications to the county?

**Commissioners Minutes No. 1 – Delaware County  
Minutes of Special Meeting Held August 31, 1999**

---

Possible Decisions

- ◆ Leave existing bridge in place and pursue rehabilitation funds, hoping that bridge doesn't fail
- ◆ Have bridge removed and pursue funds for replacement structure

Mr. Bauserman presented a letter from Rob LeMaster, P.E. of The Ohio Bridge Corporation as follows:

Re: Closed Bridge over Scioto River at Bellpoint  
Delaware County, Ohio

*Dear Mr. Bauserman:*

*On Wednesday, August 18, 1999 I reviewed the condition of the above mentioned bridge. I understand that the bridge was closed to traffic in 1979. It appears that most of the original sidewalk on the North side of the bridge has been removed. The sidewalk support beams are still attached to the roadway stringers.*

*I also understand that the bridge is being used by pedestrians and bicyclists. The bridge is in a very dangerous condition and should be either completely removed or upgraded to provide a safe structure for the public.*

*The existing wood deck is extremely rotten and has many holes. The stringers are badly deteriorated and unsafe. The webs in some stringers are completely rusted away. The floor beams seem in relatively good shape but I did not have a ladder or any other means to closely inspect the floor beam to truss connections. The upper chords of the trusses looked in good shape but the bottom tension chords had apparent loss of section, deteriorated connection plates, and completely rusted away lattice bracing in some members.*

*My major concern is with the condition of the abutments and piers. The bridge is a steel, three span continuous truss. The truss bears on a steel box frame anchored to the concrete substructures. The concrete under these steel bearing points is dangerously eroded away and many of the anchor bolts originally embedded in the concrete are totally exposed. I think the truss was erected in the 1920's on previously constructed abutments and piers. The steel bearing boxes were used to provide an adequate bearing area for the truss and to adjust the bearing elevation. The concrete was apparently poured without any reinforcing steel and in layers that did not adequately bond together. I suspect that the concrete was mixed using aggregate available in the stream and larger stones appear to have been randomly placed in the forms to reduce the amount of needed concrete. The concrete is weathering badly and in places has spalled off approximately 12 inches from its original form line.*

*The concrete has eroded under the truss bearings at the abutments leaving no direct support of the truss shoes. The steel bearing box at the East abutment has almost rusted through and is partially collapsed. The North truss has noticeably sagged due to this lost support. If the bearing box continues to deteriorate or additional concrete support is lost the truss is imminent danger of collapse. Due to this condition I strongly suggest that you securely barricade the bridge in a manner that will prevent anyone from traveling on or under the bridge.*

*The bridge is located less than a quarter mile upstream from the O'Shaughnessy Reservoir. Work on the bridge will have to proceed carefully to limit the amount of debris falling into the stream that would possibly pollute the Columbus water supply. The structure does not appear to be safe enough to handle any heavy equipment in its present state. Permission to build a causeway or other temporary structure needed to work on the bridge will have to be obtained from the Army*

*Corp of Engineers.*

Commissioners Minutes No. 1 – Delaware County  
Minutes of Special Meeting Held August 31, 1999

---

*The existing bridge can be rehabilitated to carry pedestrian and bicycle traffic or a new structure can be erected using the same alignment. In either case the existing piers and abutments must be encased in steel sheet piling and concrete to prevent further deterioration and to prevent scour. The existing steel trusses can be rehabilitated and all of the floor beams, stringers, and flooring must be replaced. The trusses must be removed from the site for rehabilitation due to the presence of lead paint on the steel. The lead paint can be completely removed offsite to prevent contamination of the river. A new paint system can be added or the bridge can be hot dip galvanized before it is re-erected. A new rail system must also be added that complies with pedestrian and bicycle type access.*

*If you need any additional information we will be happy to provide it.*

Mr. Bauserman then read a letter from Nationwide Realty Investors as follows:

*Dear Mr. Bauserman:*

*I am writing this letter to clarify Nationwide's position regarding the Bellpoint Bridge.*

*It is important to note the background related to Nationwide's involvement with the bridge. Initially, we asked our engineers to locate an abandoned bridge that could be renovated for use as a pedestrian bridge in the Arena District. We believe that a renovated bridge, in lieu of fabricating new trusses, can be slightly less expensive and provide an interesting feature in the Arena District.*

*In discussions with your office, we were pleased to learn that, for safety reasons, the County was considering removal of the Bellpoint Bridge. If Delaware County is still planning on disposing of the bridge, nationwide is willing to remove the bridge at our cost. However, if the County decides not to dispose of the bridge, Nationwide will pursue other alternatives for our pedestrian bridge. Obviously, the disposition of the bridge rests exclusively with Delaware County. We are comfortable you will make a decision that is in the best interest of your citizens.*

Mr. Bauserman recommended that the bridge be closed for safety reasons. The bridge is unsafe and a danger to all those who come close to it both from the bridge itself and from the river underneath.

Mr. Wuertz asked Mr. Bauserman if the monies from the roads and bridges levy monies can be used for this application. He responded that he was personally involved in informing the citizens of the County what the needs were and how the money from the levy would be spent. This application, being a pedestrian bridge was not discussed and was not included in the needs expressed to the public. He stated he would not support using the levy money for this project because of what the public was told about how the levy monies would be spent. The other sources of funding for the county highway system are motor vehicle fees and gasoline tax. Both of these must be spent on the public road system and on open roads.

Mr. Bauserman responded to Mrs. Martin's question that Issue 2 monies are not available for pedestrian structures.

Mr. Ward then commented that the roads and bridges tax monies could be used for this project. Mr. Bauserman responded that decision could be made, but that is not what the voters were told in November when they passed the levy.

Mr. Wuertz commented that the information given to the voters included over 100 bridges for vehicular traffic need repair. There are several bridges in the county that have load limits that require fire trucks and emergency vehicles to use alternate routes which adds to their response time. The public safety is at stake in these instances, and it would not be proper to use money for this project when situations such as that exist.

Mrs. Martin agreed with Mr. Bauserman stating the campaign stated how the money would be used with a time frame of priorities. She added the number one responsibility

**Commissioners Minutes No. 1 – Delaware County  
Minutes of Special Meeting Held August 31, 1999**

---

is to move traffic. However, she feels this bridge is an important link in this community, and she would like to discuss ways to explore funding and find solutions. She has made several calls trying to line up grants and other sources of funding. She noted this community has accomplished much when it takes responsibility for a project and she feels confident working together a solution can be found. Children should not be forced to use Rt. 42 for crossing the Scioto on foot or riding bicycles.

Mr. Ward then commented this community has taxpayers too. He wants to do all the bridges that were promised, but he feels sales tax revenue will be up and there will be an excess amount of money that could be used for this bridge. This bridge is a very important link for Delaware County as well as the Bellpoint community. He looks at this bridge as he did the County Home property—they did not want to put money into it. However, he believes the bridge as it is, presents a safety hazard. He feels the proper way to do it is to take money from the general fund or where ever and take the bridge down until it can be rehabbed and put back up. People will be on the bridge even if a barricade is erected. He wants the bridge taken out ASAP, but he wants it rehabbed and put back in. He stated, “I feel that Delaware County should not be turning over all of our antiques to Columbus. It is not going to cost that much difference in price to save the bridge that is presently there, and I feel it is time we stopped giving away Delaware County”.

Mrs. Martin clarified that revenues from gas sales and motor vehicle registration cannot be used for pedestrian projects. Mr. Bauserman confirmed this. She then asked if the law would permit the roads and bridges levy money to be used for pedestrian projects. Mr. Bauserman again stated the levy money could be used, but he feels that would be betraying the trust of the people of the county because they were told how the levy monies would be spent, and this project was not one of those listed. Mrs. Martin then inquired, Mr. Ward feels there will be an excess of money, when would that be a possibility. Mr. Bauserman responded, “I haven’t seen it yet. It wouldn’t occur until all the projects, the 101 bridges were completed”. Based on the projections at budget time, there is a question if all 101 bridges can be completed in the 10 year life of the sales tax. He added that the possibilities of malls etc. could change that, but that is only speculation. There may be more revenues, but it is important to note that if malls come, they also bring the need for road improvements at an accelerated rate. There may not be an excess of dollars over the needs.

Mrs. Martin then asked Mr. Cannon if there would be general funds available for this project. He responded, this project was not included in the budgeting process. The budget is monitored monthly, and there are other needs in the county that must be addressed. There are software needs, computer needs, additional building needs, and other 20-20 projects. It would be very hard to finance this project in this fiscal year.

Mr. Wuertz added that the needs in the county for roads and bridges are greater than the dollars can fund. The needs were prioritized and top items were included in the list of projects to be addressed with the levy funds. This was known at the time, and the increase in revenue will be needed to address those additional needs that were not on the list.

#### Public Comment

Ms. Sue Watkins of 4676 St. Rt. 257 South presented a petition that had 637 signatures from all over Delaware County and some from Columbus. She stated she feels Mr. Bauserman has not listed all the funding possibilities. She mentioned ODOTs Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator Office, Recreational Trails and Nature Works, and MORPC. She suggested that the removal of the bridge might be within the scope of items that could be included in the roads and bridges sales tax dollars. She mentioned the possibility of Preservation & Parks being of assistance. Mrs. Martin responded that she contacted Ms. Au and she is in attendance. Ms. Watkins noted this bridge is not considered abandoned and unused by the people in the community.

Ms. Jenny Shaffer of 235 Heishman Avenue in Worthington representing an organization called Outdoor Pursuits with a membership of over 2900. She is the

**Commissioners Minutes No. 1 – Delaware County  
Minutes of Special Meeting Held August 31, 1999**

---

bicycle coordinator for several organized bike rides. She emphasized the Bridge is important for pedestrian and bicycle traffic because of the safety issue of traveling on Rt. 42. She asked that the current bridge be repaired or a new structure be erected for the safety of bicyclist and pedestrians.

Mr. Dana Humflet a resident of Bellpoint for 18 years spoke stating he uses the bridge regularly, and he feels the deterioration of the bridge is a slow process and it has not worsened very much in the past few years. He asked for clarification that the cost quoted for repair was for pedestrian not vehicle use. Mr. Bauserman confirmed those figures were for pedestrian and bicycle use only. He spoke in support of keeping the bridge open and repairing it rather than replacing it.

Mr. Jim Denning of ARails to Trails@reported the state of Ohio receives 18 to 19 million dollars in funds. Those are divided with 7 million going to MORPC, 7 million to Rural areas which is not available to this area, and the last part 5 million to Bicycling and Pedestrian projects. The other pot of money that comes to the state is the recreational trails fund which is about \$800,000--some for motorized vehicles and some not motorized. All the monies are very competitive. He feels this project would be eligible, but there are many more requests than funds. The community would have to come up with 20% of the cost for the match. His organization has a real concern for bicycle safety. The busy bridge on Rt. 42 is a real safety issue. There are many bicycle riders in Delaware County, and he hopes a solution can be reached.

Ms. Rita Au, 2656 Hogback Road, of Preservation Parks stated her organization has no funds, but she can assist with grant writing. She added her board has committed that if they are successful with their levy, 10% of those funds would be set aside for county recreation projects. She agreed to work with Ms. Martin to work on finding funding sources. She cautioned all that when talking about grant monies, you are talking about 1 to 2 years out. Grant monies do not come immediately.

Mr. Cliff Marshall of 4320 Newhouse Road commented that he is a member of the Delaware Bicycle Club, and he would like to support saving the bridge. He asked if the county would hire this work done, or do it with county employees. Mr. Bauserman explained it would have to be completed with contractors, because the County can only do jobs that are less than \$40,000.

Mr. Ken Cox of 3246 South Sectionline Road, Township Trustee of Concord Township, speaking as a trustee and as a citizen reported that this bridge in 1923 was the route of a snake dance coming to the church to offer up a prayer when the Bellpoint basketball team went to the state tournamen, which they won two years in a row. He added that it is ironic that this bridge might be moved to an arena area. He noted this bridge was for many years the center of the community. There were dances on it, rallies on it, and church services. It is currently used by the handicapped and by pedestrians and bicyclist. If it must be moved, please see that it retains the name Bellpoint Bridge.

Mr. Fred Stultz, former engineer of Delaware County, commented that he was in office when the bridge was closed. It was discussed at that time that it would have to be closed to pedestrian traffic at some time. He viewed the bridge today, and he too feels it is imperative that the bride be closed as soon as possible.

Mr. Ray Veley of 10349 Watkins Road spoke about there being only one covered bride left, the home of President Hayes is gone, and now possibly the Bellpoint Bridge. He asked, APlease think about it@

Mr. Tom Price of Warrensburg Road spoke saying he feels we have been awakened by Nationwide and we own them a debt for bringing this situation to our attention. This bridge has been abandoned by vehicles but not by bikers, pedestrians, wheelchairs , fishermen, and children. There is a big show of support. He asked the commissioners to give the community time to reach a solution.

**Commissioners Minutes No. 1 – Delaware County  
Minutes of Special Meeting Held August 31, 1999**

---

Ms. Patty Thompson of Klondike Road asked the bridge be saved. She gave an emotional plea stating her parents courted on the bridge, and she used the bridge daily when she was a child.

Ms. Deb Cooper of 4670 St. Rt. 257 asked if the piers would have to be replaced. Mr. Bauserman explained there would have to be testing done to determine that. She presented Mr. Bauserman with some information about fabricated bridges.

Mr. Mark Graham of 6502 Moore Road spoke stating he is new to the community. He appreciates the safety issue, but he would keep the bridge and let Columbus find their own bridge.

Mr. Wuertz asked for commented from the other commissioners regarding Mr. Bauserman's request to close the bridge.

Mrs. Martin commented that she does not want to close the bridge, but she feels the commissioners have an obligation to close the bridge to all traffic. She pledged to work with the community to raise funds to address the issue to try to save the bridge.

Mr. Ward commented that when something has been shown to be unsafe and the engineer has recommend that it be closed, it would be negligent on his part to not close the bridge.

Mr. Wuertz concurred that he does not want to close the bride, but they would be remiss in their responsibility. He has used the bridge in the past couple years, and he too hates to see it closed. It is not only the recommendation of the engineer, it is also the recommendation of the Ohio Bridge Company.

Mr. Ward moved to close the bridge immediately and place proper signage and barricades. Mrs. Martin seconded the motion.

Mr. Ray Blevins commented that he feels the bridge can be repaired, but it would not be inexpensive.

The vote to close the bridge was unanimous.

Mr. Wuertz asked that anyone who is willing to work on a committee to find ways to secure funds for this project sign a signup sheet so that a follow up meeting can be scheduled to move the project forward.

Mr. Bauserman then asked that the issue of whether or not the bridge should be offered to Nationwide be addressed.

Mr. Ward then moved to deny Nationwide's request.

Mrs. Martin noted if Nationwide's request is denied it will mean an additional \$50,000 will have to be raised.

Mr. Ward stated he feels keeping the bridge is worth the \$50,000.

Mr. Wuertz stated keeping the bridge is in line with what has been done in years past such as the Warrensburg Bridge.

Mrs. Martin then seconded the motion.

Mr. Bauserman then commented, without a funding source to address the problem, the option of letting the bridge stand is also letting the bridge deteriorate and becoming more of a hazard each day.

Mr. Wuertz commented that it is not known if funds will be available, or whether the bridge can be saved or if it will have to be replaced. He suggested that more information is needed and requested that Mr. Bauserman do more research on the best

**Commissioners Minutes No. 1 – Delaware County  
Minutes of Special Meeting Held August 31, 1999**

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course of action. Mr. Bauserman then asked if the Commissioners would consider funding to remove the bridge and store it.

Mr. Wuertz commented that Mr. Cannon needs some time to research funding possibilities. He noted that he is aware of the condition of the bridge and that this matter may need resolved before winter.

Mr. Demming commented that he hopes Nationwide is not portrayed as the “bad guys”. They are a very responsible corporation and have been very helpful with community needs.

Mr. Bauserman clarified that he was the one who responded to Nationwide’s request for a bridge from the Central Ohio area. He suggested the Bellpoint Bridge, and Nationwide responded that they were interested. For some time his department was aware that this bridge needed to be removed, and the request from Nationwide brought the issue to the “front burner”.

Mr. John Risky of 6995 Mills Road commented that Nationwide is only interested in the decorative part of the bridge. He wondered if that part could be given to them and still have a structure built to replace the current bridge.

Mr. Bauserman explained the decorative part of the bridge is the trusses of the bridge, and without them there would be no bridge. He noted that new bridges are being built that look like the old bridges.

The vote to decline Nationwide’s request to remove the bridge was unanimous.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

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Debbie Martin

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James D. Ward

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Donald Wuertz

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Letha George, Clerk to the Commissioners