

PROCEEDINGS OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE GREATER NEW ORLEANS EXPRESSWAY COMMISSION HELD ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2011, AT 10:00 A.M., IN THE GNOEC CONFERENCE ROOM, VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA BUILDING, 3939 NORTH CAUSEWAY BOULEVARD, SUITE 400, METAIRIE, LA

PRESENT: Frank L. Levy, Chairman; Lawrence K. Katz, Vice Chairman; Pat Brister, Secretary; Lawrence M. Rase, Treasurer; James E. Ravannack, Assistant Secretary Treasurer

OTHERS: Carlton F. Dufrechou; Debbie Lopreore; Cheryl H. Lambert; Chief Nick Congemi; Melissa M. Phillpott; Eileen Barthe'; Georgie Bagnetto; Perry Daigrepoint; Stacie Heffker; Lt. Carl Lemoine; Philip Meyer, Cary Bourgeois & James Martin, GEC, Inc.; Shelby P. LaSalle, Jr., Steve Phillippi, Bill Haensel & Carmelo Gutierrez, Krebs, LaSalle, LeMieux Consultants; Burgess McCranie, McCranie, Campbell, Sistrunk, Anzelmo, Hardy, McDaniel & Welch; Bill Becknell, The Becknell Law Firm; Patrice McNeal, Chase Bank; Denis Milliner, Bank of New York; Steve Bowes, Sisung Investment Management Services; Sonja Mistretta, Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management; Gavin Gillen, Burk-Kleinpeter, Inc.; Eddie Powell, Kyle Associates; Polly Greene, St. Tammany Farmer; Jeff Adelson, The Times-Picayune

The Chairman called the meeting to order.

On motion by Brister, seconded by Rase, the minutes of the regular meeting held on December 7, 2010 were accepted as written. Mr. Levy, Mr. Katz, Mrs. Brister, Mr. Rase and Mr. Ravannack voted in favor of the motion.

On behalf of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, Mr. Dufrechou reported in December there were two failures to meet primary recreation criteria on the North Shore and one on the South Shore. He added December was a low rainfall month, which is the main reason.

On behalf of the Causeway Police Charitable Foundation, Mr. Gillen stated the Christmas party for the residents of Southeast Hospital in Mandeville was a huge success.

With respect to the bascule, Mr. Dufrechou reported there were five openings last month, two drive fault failures and two gate incidents. He stated on January 3, 2011 the bascule failed requiring repairs by GE technicians. The bascule was closed for about a week but is operational again.

Mr. Dufrechou stated there were fog operations on December 22, 30, 31, January 1 and 5. He

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reported Police and MAP personnel responded to 432 breakdowns on the Causeway Bridge and 14 on the Huey P. Long Bridge. Mr. Dufrechou stated the demolition of the South Toll Plaza buildings began on January 3, 2011 and a time-lapsed video will be shown. Mr. Dufrechou reported on January 4, a sink hole developed adjacent to the catch basin on the west side of the North Approach Road near Brookside Drive. He stated maintenance and engineers think it might have been a failure with some of the construction there and they will contact Barriere Construction to correct the problem. Mr. Dufrechou stated January 5 was the initiation of one traffic lane southbound exiting the Causeway after 9:30 a.m. He stated the longest delay has been about fifteen minutes. On January 6, there began two lanes of traffic exiting the bridge during peak hours. Mr. Dufrechou stated the one incident was when the traffic signal at 6th Street failed; officers responded rapidly to begin waving motorists through.

Mr. Dufrechou reported the Piling Restoration, Part E, project is 99% complete. Mr. Phillippi stated there are four piles remaining; the slow down is the epoxy testing because the water is too cold.

With respect to the Hurricane Protection Project, Mr. Dufrechou stated the road traffic impact is going well. Mr. Levy asked about complaints turning into Lakeway and if the 6th Street light is too long. Mr. Dufrechou stated during the first week there were complaints from folks going into Lakeway that there is not enough green cycle for them and not enough stacking area. He stated since then the stacking area has been increased and Jefferson Parish is manning the traffic signal almost daily. Mr. Dufrechou stated the problem of turning right into Lakeway coming from the North Shore during the first week has been addressed. He added it is a matter of people getting used to the new lane setups. Mrs. Brister asked about the police officer at the site every day. Mr. Dufrechou stated it is a Causeway police officer at the location. In response to Mr. Levy's inquiry as to waiting time

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at the light, Mr. Dufrechou replied the actual time is four minutes.

Mr. Dufrechou stated the Toll Tag and Records Departments have been relocated to Ridgelake. He stated the demolition of the South Toll Plaza is almost complete. The radio tower was taken down Friday evening about 7:00 p.m., which was a last minute request. Mr. Dufrechou complimented Mrs. Lopreore, Chief Congemi, MAP and Dispatch personnel for making it happen. He stated the request came in around 4:59 p.m. on Friday afternoon.

Mr. Dufrechou stated the bridge inspection is complete and the underwater work is being analyzed.

Mr. Dufrechou stated the North Channel Emergency Span Motors project is underway and on schedule for completion in March 2011.

With respect to the VMS/Call Box/HIL Migration project, Mr. Dufrechou stated the plan change for the installation of interim power and fiber optics came in at \$49,691.44.

Mr. Dufrechou stated the Purchase of Spare Structural Components project is the acquisition of pilings and straddle bent caps for the northbound bridge. He stated the engineering estimate was \$393,000. Mr. Dufrechou stated the low bidder was Boh Brothers Construction Co. in the amount of \$525,000 and staff and engineers are recommending approval. Mr. Bourgeois stated originally they thought it could be done as a plan change to the North Shore Merge Lane project, but the price was too high at that time and the acquisition was delayed. Mr. Bourgeois stated the price is a great deal cheaper today than it was four years ago, but not as cheap as they were led to believe it would be. Mr. LaSalle stated when they got prices during the merge lane project, at that time the price was about \$1 million. Mr. Martin and Mr. Bourgeois pointed out barges are needed to take them to the site and cranes are needed to unload them. Mr. Bourgeois stated it is a fixed price no matter how many piles are purchased and they did reduce the quantity in lieu of budget considerations, but the

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price today is still lower than the price when it was initially considered. He mentioned prices have come down, bottomed out six months ago, and now are rising. Mr. LaSalle stated there is only one supplier but there are more than one contractor that could have bid to purchase from the supplier, so apparently other contractors did not think they could do it as cheaply as the one bid submitted. Mr. Rase stated he does this every day and whether it is one ton or eighteen, there is a specific cost for the barge and crane. **On motion by Katz, seconded by Ravannack, based upon the recommendation of the Staff and Consulting Engineers, GEC, Inc./Krebs, LaSalle, LeMieux Consultants, Inc., the project titled Spare Structural Components, GNOEC Project No. 420 was awarded to the low bidder, Boh Brothers Construction Co., LLC, in the amount of \$525,000. The General Manager is hereby authorized to complete the execution of the contract with Boh Brothers Construction Co., LLC pending the review of the bonds and insurance by legal counsel and insurance representatives. Mr. Levy, Mr. Katz, Mrs. Brister, Mr. Rase and Mr. Ravannack voted in favor of the motion.**

Mr. Dufrechou stated the North Channel Bascule - Bascule Span Repairs is the continuation of work being done on the drawbridge. He stated this will include the replacement of a 14 x 28 foot section of the existing grid on the northbound bridge, repair of the sidewalk handrails and associated work. He stated the engineers' estimate was \$395,000. Mr. Dufrechou stated the low bid is from C.E.C, Inc. of Lafayette in the amount of \$150,000. Mrs. Brister asked if the Causeway has done business with C.E.C. before. Mr. Bourgeois replied no, but they have bid on projects before; if they would not have been struck in traffic in Baton Rouge, they would have been the low bidder on the fender job. Mr. Bourgeois stated the engineers are very comfortable with C.E.C. and have dealt with them on numerous projects. He stated the owner is a former bridge design engineer for DOTD. Mr.

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Bourgeois stated this project is one in which C.E.C. specializes; they go after quirky structural things on bridges. He added C.E.C. is currently doing a good job with difficult work on the Mississippi River Bridge in Baton Rouge. Mr. Meyer mentioned when he worked with DOTD, the owner of C.E.C. was his boss and is very professional. Mr. LaSalle stated the owner is excited about getting the work and wants to do a good job. In response to Mrs. Brister's inquiry regarding change orders, Mr. Martin stated the contractor cannot get a change order because he bid low. Mr. Bourgeois added the contractor cannot get a change order unless there is something the engineers request differently or some type of difference in the site condition; he cannot anticipate a change related to the work that has been bid on, other than a unit change of some type. Mr. Ravannack asked if, after getting into the project, the contractor realizes it is not going to work, will he just pull off the job. Mr. Bourgeois replied no, he has submitted a bond and his price. Mr. Bourgeois stated a change can be associated with excavating or tearing down walls where one cannot see what is going on; all of this is on structural steel that is out in the open; there is nothing different as far as the site conditions. Mr. Bourgeois stated the only types of change order that may be issued would be for increased quantity or something requested by the engineers and Commission. **On motion by Rase, seconded by Brister, based upon the recommendation of the Staff and Consulting Engineers, GEC, Inc./Krebs, LaSalle, LeMieux Consultants, Inc., the project titled North Channel Bascule - Bascule Span Repairs, GNOEC Project No. 424 was awarded to the low bidder, C.E.C., Inc., in the amount of \$150,000. The General Manager is hereby authorized to complete the execution of the contract with C.E.C., Inc. pending the review of the bonds and insurance by legal counsel and insurance representatives. Mr. Levy, Mr. Katz, Mrs. Brister, Mr. Rase and Mr. Ravannack voted in favor of the motion.**

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Chief Congemi stated when he started out two years ago they were kind of working in the blind and did not realize where incidents happened or for what reasons, so they started gathering statistics and analyzing them to determine where they should deploy the police officers, not only to just be there but to prevent accidents and to help motorists across the bridge in a more expeditious manner. Chief Congemi stated they wanted to study very closely the minds of these drivers to determine what they were actually doing out there because obviously this is a very unique roadway and he thinks what Lt. Lemoine is going to explain to the Commission will underscore how unique it really is and how good this entire group of people work in order to get people across the bridge expeditiously and in a safe manner. Chief Congemi stated they gather these statistics and distribute them to all ranking officers at the monthly supervisors' meetings and then they, in turn, take them down to the roll call level and explain it to the officers so they can have a better view of what they did that day, week, month and year, and can see the big picture on the bridge and are able to give their input and ideas on how to prevent some of these things from happening. Chief Congemi introduced Lt. Carl Lemoine, who is in charge of technical and support services, for the presentation. Lt. Lemoine stated the department tries to track information to help in its mission to keep traffic safe, with the primary concern being to get traffic from point A to point B safely, but sometimes they have to write tickets and handle accidents. Lt. Lemoine stated they track information to enable them to put the officers in the best position to solve some of the problems. He stated in 2010 there were 142 crashes reported on the Causeway, which is about a 9.5% reduction from 2009 when there were 155. He stated one of the things he thinks is odd is 40% of the crashes are one-vehicle crashes, adding that for no apparent reason drivers run into the rails, the attenuators or something. Lt. Lemoine stated one would normally think that one of the causes of the accidents would be the weather but 75% of

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the crashes occurred on a dry roadway, including a lot of the one-vehicle crashes. Lt. Lemoine stated there were four crashes while fog protocol was being done, convoys and such, but none appear to be related to the visibility in the fog; in most cases it was simply a matter of vehicles following too closely, not paying attention or not recognizing that other vehicles were stopping ahead because of congestion. Lt. Lemoine stated visibility has not been a problem and fog protocol seems to be working very well. Chief Congemi pointed out those are pretty good statistics when they are averaging about twelve accidents a month, so it is pretty good for this bridge and these conditions. Lt. Lemoine stated Mr. Dufrechou had asked about what part speed is playing in most of these accidents. Lt. Lemoine stated because officers really cannot determine if someone was speeding at the time of an accident, and they normally will not to admit to such, officers normally cite the drivers with careless operation, which is more of a catch-all. He added if they can cite drivers with speeding they will, but it is always very difficult to prove. Lt. Lemoine stated of the 142 crashes, 83 were determined to be primarily caused by simple careless operation by the operator; 17 of the accidents involved significant pieces of debris. Lt. Lemoine mentioned on December 15 one of the officers ran into a dual tire assembly from an eighteen-wheeler at about 3:30 a.m.; somebody had called it in but unfortunately the officer found it at about 60 mph. He stated these are the types of issues that officers sometimes have to deal with; people run over lawn mowers, boat covers, etc. He stated State Police classify a debris strike as an accident. He continued 12 crashes were caused by vehicles following too closely; on 6 occasions there were disabled vehicles that were struck in the roadway; only 3 were found to be related to DWI; and, 2 were medical issues in which the operator lost control and struck the rail. Lt. Lemoine presented a graph of the monthly count of accidents showing they go up and down. He stated Mr. Dufrechou asked him why they have accidents and

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he tells him there is no rhyme or reason; there was one month in which every crash on the bridge was a one-car accident; nobody hit anybody else - they just ran into rails or attenuators. Lt. Lemoine stated some months there are a lot of accidents at the toll booths on the North Shore, which cannot be explained. Lt. Lemoine stated in December attenuators were hit three different times; someone tried to turn into a crossover, missed the attenuator but ran into the rail. Lt. Lemoine stated accidents have been down and he would like to think it is somewhat due to their enforcement efforts. Lt. Lemoine stated they have been tracking the locations of where the accidents happen within particular mile markers, pointing out that at the sixteen mile marker, in the area of the drawbridge, there have been a number of problems there. In response to Mr. Ravannack's inquiry, Lt. Lemoine stated most of those at the drawbridge are vehicles going over the grid and for whatever reason unable to maintain control. He stated it is one problem they have stressed to Mr. Dufrechou and he has been very helpful in working with them to see if they can address it and cut some of those accidents. Mrs. Brister asked if they occur generally when the roadway is wet. Lt. Lemoine replied yes, for the most part yes, adding most of them are one-vehicle. Lt. Lemoine stated otherwise the accidents are fairly spread, with some relation to the crossovers where traffic slows down; as most everyone realizes, a lot of the drivers like to "play the crossovers" as the officers call it - slow down at the crossover and then speed up again - so there is some congestion at the crossovers. Lt. Lemoine stated Mr. Dufrechou asked if they could pinpoint some of the hours and days where there are a significant amount of crashes. He stated northbound they are finding that Friday afternoon when people are trying to get home, adding that really it is not a significant number of accidents when one considers how much traffic there is on the bridge; there are about 40 - 45% in that one particular area on Thursday and Friday afternoons. Lt. Lemoine stated

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southbound the crashes are more likely to be in the morning time on Monday and Tuesday. He stated, strangely enough, when the Saints lose there is almost always a crash the next morning. He stated the crashes are not always related to weather; most of the crashes are on dry roadway. Lt. Lemoine stated they have been tracking the average time it takes to clear all lanes, which is a big concern - making sure traffic flows as quickly as possible. He stated they often manage to get at least one lane open within a matter of a couple minutes, but this is to clear all lanes. Lt. Lemoine stated in October there was an average of forty minutes to clear all lanes and there were only six crashes that month, one of which took over an hour to clear. Lt. Lemoine stated they work very hard at clearing the lanes, with their motto being push, pull or drag to get the lanes cleared as quickly as possible. Lt. Lemoine reported the officers wrote over 11,000 total citations in 2010; about half (6,000) were speeding citations. In response to Mrs. Brister's inquiry, Lt. Lemoine stated other citations were for following too close, tailgating, and officers have been asked to emphasize speeding violations, knowing the ability to handle one's vehicle decreases at higher speeds. He stated if they can control speed better, they should be able to cut down on the accidents. Lt. Lemoine stated lane changing is always a concern; tailgating is probably the one thing they would like to emphasize next, adding it is a little difficult to get out there sometimes to enforce that one but they will make an effort at it. Lt. Lemoine stated there were 284 DWI arrests, pointing out that for the last seven or eight years the Causeway has been in the top twenty in the State for DWI arrests; agencies ahead of the Causeway are State Police and some larger agencies; for the Causeway's size, it has quite a record when it comes to DWI arrests. Chief Congemi stated there are 350 law enforcement agencies and the number of DWI arrests are kind of reflective in the amount of DWI accidents the Causeway has because, as he has said before, the Causeway has great DWI

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enforcement officers; they are very unique in what they do and how to observe and catch the vehicles. Chief Congemi stated the officers get a lot of support from the commuters on the bridge too calling constantly about people who are driving erratically and alerting the officers to those things and they respond in turn. He stated there is a sense of ownership and pride of the commuters on the bridge who travel daily. He stated when they see things like this, not only somebody driving erratically but sometimes it is a subtle movement that they see from traveling the bridge so much and watching traffic on a regular basis, they can pick up these subtle things and call, and then the officers respond, investigate and take action - not only DWI enforcement, but for things falling on the bridge, debris on the bridge, people with flat tires, etc - not only does the Causeway have cameras in the office but there is a great group of people who watch. Lt. Lemoine pointed out these statistics are only for the Causeway Bridge, adding that on the Huey P. Long Bridge officers are probably writing about 400 citations a month; on the Causeway Bridge it is about 1,000. Mr. Ravannack asked if there is a pattern for the DWI arrests because there are a lot. Lt. Lemoine stated they have recently started tracking that information, but that is what they have averaged over the last few years. He stated they have started tracking that recently to find out what times they are making the arrests - normally they are on weekends and at night. Mr. Ravannack stated some type of pattern needs to be recognized. Lt. Lemoine stated they have done very well at that and it is one of the things emphasized - making sure all officers are trained in field sobriety testing and the intoxilyzer. Mr. Dufrechou pointed out despite the Causeway being a two-lane bridge without any shoulders, it is still one of the safest roadways in the country, which is a testament to its employees.

Mr. Ravannack asked about addressing the lack of lighting issue at the South Toll Plaza now that the Corps project has demolished the buildings and canopy. The Commission suggested some type

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of temporary lighting or reflectors.

Mr. Dufrechou presented a time-lapsed video of the demolition of the South Toll Plaza, which occurred over about four days.

Mr. Dufrechou recognized Eileen Barthe', adding she looks out for the employees. Mrs. Lopreore stated Ms. Barthe' is the Human Resources Director.

Mr. Levy announced the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 1, at 10:00 a.m.

There being no further business, on motion by Ravannack, seconded by Rase, the meeting was adjourned.


PATRICIA R. BRISTER
SECRETARY


FRANK L. LEVY
CHAIRMAN