

**Belhaven Town Council Meeting
With Department of Transportation
(Elected Officials Meeting)
April 24, 2007 – 4 PM**

The Belhaven Town Council met on Tuesday, April 24, 2007 at 4:00 P.M. in the Council Chambers at Town Hall. The meeting was scheduled by the Department of Transportation to discuss the proposed replacement of Bridge No. 64 over Pungo Creek. Mayor Adam W. O’Neal and Council members: Albert Baker, Dr. Charles O. Boyette, Steve W. Carawan, George R. Ebron, Jr., and Cynthia M. Heath were present. Also present representing the Town of Belhaven was Town Manager Tim M. Johnson and Town Clerk Marie J. Adams. North Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT) representatives conducting the meeting were: Ms. Stacy Oberhauser, Mr. Greg Purvis, Mr. Ahmad Al-Sharawneh and Mr. Ed Eatmon.

Mr. Al-Sharawneh opened the meeting by referring to Alternates A, B, and C for the proposed bridge #64 replacement over Pungo Creek. Mr. Al-Sharawneh stated that the DOT personnel were proposing Alternate A due to that Alternate being the least environmentally evasive. Mr. Purvis further explained that Alternate A would be in the same location as the present bridge therefore closure would be imminent with a detour. Mr. Purvis stated that the bridge would have 12’ lanes and 4’ shoulder for bikes “as the highway is a designated Bicycle Route”. The support structure of the new bridge would be built while the current bridge is still being utilized which will cut down on the amount of the time of the bridge closure and detour. Mr. Purvis stated that Alternate B proposed that the bridge be erected to the east side of the existing bridge at a cost of \$6,022,100 and Alternate C proposed that the bridge be placed on the west side of the existing bridge for a cost of \$6,498,250. Town Manager Johnson asked what would be the time for closure for Alternates A, B, & C. Mr. Purvis stated Alternate A, closure time 6 months; Alternate B – 1 month and Alternate C – 1 month. Town Manager Johnson asked that economic factors be considered to justify Alternate B or C. Mr. Purvis stated that closure time would be minimized as much as possible. Town Manager Johnson stated that area utilizing the bridge to get to Belhaven had grown dramatically in the past twenty years.

Town Manager Johnson expressed the concern of the town and community, by having the bridge closed with a detour, financially on the town and for emergency responses. Town Manager Johnson stressed the hardship that this would cause on the town as a whole. Mr. Purvis stated that the detour time would be minimized. Mr. Purvis stated that if the contractor uses pre-cast sections for the bridge it will make construction progress faster. Mayor O’Neal questions if contractors would be using the pre-cast sections when working on the bridge. Mr. Purvis stated at this time he did not know.

Councilman Boyette asked if any type of way to cross the creek had been reviewed. Mr. Purvis stated that one lane could not be closed while working on the other lane due to the bridge being so narrow. Mr. Eatmon stated that it would be impossible to provide

alternate transportation across the creek. Ms. Oberhauser stated that the canals on either side of the existing bridge would be jeopardized environmentally as they were nursing areas, if Alternate B or C were used.

Mr. Eatmon stated that should the Council not agree with Alternate A and the bridge is damaged or if the condition worsened the bridge would be closed for a longer period in order to rewrite construction plans, etc.

Town Manager Johnson asked if the cost was the only factor DOT reviewed in making their decision for Alternate A. Ms. Oberhauser stated no, the human impact along with environmental impact was reviewed before DOT decided on Alternate A. Mr. Eatmon stated that DOT was looking for the most practical alternate for replacing the bridge not the plan that was \$1,000,000 cheaper.

There was much discussion concerning the impact that closing the bridge with Alternate A for six months being detrimental to the Belhaven Community. Mayor O'Neal stated that if the bridge was closed due to the condition and an alternate had not been agreed upon then the time the bridge closed would be longer than the proposed six months. Mayor O'Neal suggested that other alternatives be reviewed, if the bridge was not failing in two years. Ms. Oberhauser stated that any alternative other than Alternate A would prolong the replacement of the bridge. Councilman Carawan pointed out that when bridges in Hyde County are replaced one lane of traffic is kept open. Councilwoman Heath asked if any incentives were used to reduce the amount of closure time. Working 24 hours a day, seven days a week was discussed; but the noise levels early in the morning and late nights would not be acceptable to the community as the noise travels on the water. Town Manager Johnson questioned who decided that Alternate A was the more practical plan. Ms. Oberhauser stated that the DOT personnel present today and many others made the decision.

Councilman Boyette stated that it seems as though DOT has made the decision that it will be Alternate A regardless of the position of the community and elected officials and the officials may have to resort to Alternate A even though the officials have made their concerns known. Mayor O'Neal stated that he shared those concerns with Councilman Boyette but maybe energies should be spent on lobbying the least amount of closure/detour time and the time of the year in which the bridge is replaced.

Councilwoman Heath stated that she appreciated the professional presentation.

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie J. Adams, CMC
Town Clerk

