

DIFFICULT RUN STREAM CROSSING REPLACEMENT FEASABILITY STUDY UPDATE

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING, DECEMBER 13, 2018
NAVY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A Public Information Meeting was held on the evening of December 13, 2018 to present an update on the Park Authority's Difficult Run Stream Crossing Feasibility Study efforts to the community. The public was then invited to share their comments, both generally and on any aspect of the potential crossing. The meeting was attended by Supervisor Smith (Sully District), Sully District Park Authority Member Maggie Godbold and staff members, the public, and the media.

INTRODUCTIONS AND OPENING REMARKS

Judy Pedersen, the Park Authority's Public Information Officer, introduced the staff members present and provided an overview of the evening's agenda and proceedings.

Supervisor Smith provided opening remarks. The Supervisor noted that this has been a long process, and that her goal is to move forward to get a bridge built. The Supervisor noted that she does have approximately \$100,000 available for the bridge project, and that Chairman Bulova may have more. Supervisor Smith concluded with urging the attendees to ask any questions they may have.

Michael Coyle of the Sully District Supervisors Office also provided some opening remarks. Mr. Coyle provided a brief history of the bridge crossing, and the process that led to its removal. This included background on the original inspection of the bridge in 2016, the unsafe structure notice issued to the private landowners, subsequent appeals and the eventual deeding of the property to the Board of Supervisors in 2018. Mr. Coyle concluded with indicating that, while that was the process that led to removing the bridge, the meeting tonight is the start of the process to replace the bridge.

STAFF PRESENTATION

Paul Shirey, Branch Manager of the Project Management Branch, spoke on the Park Authority's ongoing study of the Difficult Run crossing near Hunters Valley Road, its findings so far, challenges and recommendations.

Click [here](#) to view the presentation.

COMMENTS

Judy Pedersen facilitated the public comment session.

Speaker 1

Representing the Oakton Women's Club, Hunter Valley Association

- Often used crossing
- Important to community and important to the health of the community.
- Urges county to move as quickly as possible.
- Urge county to look at bridge near dressage ring on Hunters Valley Road.

Speaker 2

Representing the Gabrielson Gardens Bridge Coalition

- Lives by Madison HS
- Sent out petition regarding bridge. Easily received 30 responses.
- Asked how much will the bridge cost?
- "Gutted" that he cannot reach the trail.
- Spoke against prioritizing the RPA regulations over people.
- Urges county to move as quickly as possible.

Speaker 3

Representing the Gabrielson Gardens Bridge Coalition

- Lived in neighborhood for about 25 years. Appreciates everyone's support.
- Read a list of supporting organizations
- Bridge meant a lot to the community
- Loss of bridge prevents teaching opportunities.
- Committed to working with the county to make a replacement happen

Speaker 4

Personal Comment

- West bank includes the Cross-County Trail.
- Bridge meant a great deal
- Grateful of the county's efforts
- Concerned that people will cross anyway, risking injury.

Speaker 5

Representing the Hunter Valley Riding Club

- 25 years in area
- Noted that area is served only by Fairfax County, and not the towns of Oakton and Vienna.
- Noted that people will want to drive a horse trailer across the bridge. (The bridge will be for pedestrian and equestrian use only)
- Noted the point load of a bucking horse on the bridge (This is considered as part of the equestrian use criteria).

Speaker 6

HVA President, representing the Hunter Valley Association

- Representing the 200 families in the neighborhood.
- Would like for the access to be restored for both sides.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Judy Pedersen and Dave Bowden answered questions from the public.

Q: What were the details regarding a recent bridge replacement just south of Lawyers Road? Cost? Timeline? Considerations?

FCPA: The bridge south of Lawyers Road was a bridge that was being replaced as part of routine maintenance. The bridge structure was already owned by the Park Authority and was repurposed from another location. Therefore, it did not require a significant cost for the structure, engineering or permitting.

Q: If the Lawyers Road bridge was considered maintenance, what is this bridge replacement considered?

FCPA: This is a completely new structure for the FCPA, rather than a replacement of an existing FCPA structure. Therefore, this would be considered a capital improvement rather than maintenance.

Q: You indicated that land acquisition would be required. Where is that area? What kind of impediment is that?

FCPA: There is a section of property between the existing GCCCT trail easement and the property boundary (on the west side) that would be required for the bridge replacement. This would be where the western bridge foundation would be located. This would be required for construction. Lacking this easement would be a significant impediment.

Q: It appears that the bid process will be completed in 2020. How long after that until completion? Why does it take so long?

FCPA: Once the Feasibility Study is complete, funding will need to be identified. After funding is identified, the design and permitting process can begin. This will be a minimum of 12 months. Design will take approximately six to eight months, and plan approval/permitting will take another six to eight months. This is dictated by county plan review process and state and federal laws pertaining to the needed permits.

Q: Who authorized obtaining the property? Under what authority did the county condemn the bridge? What right did the county have to tell the landowner that they needed to fix the bridge?

FCPA: The property was quit claimed to the county at the request of the landowner. In addition, County Code requires the Building Official to determine if structures are unsafe once reported, regardless of their location or ownership in the county.

Q: Personal Comment: The bridge has served many kids with special needs and scout groups. Speaker noted that oil trucks drove over the bridge, and a crane (excavator) was on or near the bridge during removal. Therefore, the speaker did not understand why the bridge was removed.

FCPA: Thank you for the comment.

Q: Personal Comment: A Structural Engineer spoke regarding his previous experience with constructing a bridge over a tributary near Hunters Valley Road. The speaker did not think it should take 12 months for the design and permitting of this structure, and urged the county to find some way to expedite the design and plan approval process.

FCPA: Thank you for the comment.

Q: Personal Comment: Speaker has lived in the community for many years, and remembers using the bridge as a roadway. The speaker believed that the foundation was in good shape and could have been fixed, and does not understand why the county chose to remove it instead.

FCPA: Thank you for the comment. Comment: The bridge was condemned by the Building Official. In addition, one of the foundations

was cracked in three pieces, the structure itself did not meet any building codes and the narrow constriction of the bridge on Difficult Run was causing significant erosion upstream and downstream. Therefore, it was determined that the bridge was to be removed.

Q: Beverly Dickerson, Personal Comment: Speaker wanted to note that there are many volunteers in the county who would love to help with this work and other work. The speaker urged the county to consider utilizing volunteers to expedite work.

FCPA: Thank you for the comment. Judy Pedersen also noted that the Park Authority does utilize volunteers extensively on a variety of sites, from nature centers to RECenters.

Q: Do you know how much the county spent on the removal of the bridge? Personal Comment: Speaker also noted that he feels the old bridge would have never failed. Speaker felt the abutment was not the issue and that the bridge only required minor repairs. Speaker said that a large span was not desirable, and that something like the old bridge should be installed.

FCPA: The county spent approximately \$112,000 for the removal of the bridge. Comment: The bridge was condemned by the Building Official in 2016. In addition, one of the foundations was cracked in three pieces, the structure itself did not meet any building codes and the narrow constriction of the bridge on Difficult Run was causing significant erosion upstream and downstream. Therefore, it was determined that the bridge was to be removed. To avoid similar issues, any replacement would utilize a wider and higher span to allow for the free flow of Difficult Run under the bridge.

Q: Are any alternatives, such as a fairweather crossing, being considered?

FCPA: While we do have fairweather crossings in appropriate places, this would probably not be a good choice at this crossing due to the volume and nature of the anticipated traffic. Therefore, the only option being considered at this time is an all-weather bridge crossing.

Q: Could the county offer an idea as to the extent of which they are willing to collaborate?

FCPA: We need to get through the feasibility study process first so we can quantify how much work is required. It is possible that the county has the

ability to complete the work with the existing resources available, depending on the result of the study. Therefore, we feel that any collaboration at this point may be a bit premature until the work is more well defined.

Q: Can someone explain what the RPA is has to do with the construction of the bridge? Are you constructing a new path?

FCPA: No, we are not constructing a new path. We are also not anticipating any major impacts to the RPA, but the permit process requires that we study any potential impacts to both the RPA and floodplain. In addition, we must prove to the permitting agencies that we will have no impact on the floodplain elevations on any adjacent landowners. This is done for every bridge we install.

Comment: The Park Authority must comply with all county, state and federal laws/regulations regarding development projects when constructing any structure. In addition, the review of our plans is handled the same as any other developer/construction project, and is subject to the same wait times.

Q: Can someone address the likelihood that funding will be available to complete this project once the study is complete?

Supervisor Smith: We do not know what the cost of the bridge will be. We need to have more information on the cost of the bridge replacement. That being said, the Supervisors are committed to providing a bridge replacement and the required funding once the cost has been defined. There are many opportunities for in-kind donations or assistance that we can consider. Also, the Supervisor noted that a community coming together like this is a great motivator for the Park Authority and county staff to do what needs to be done.

Q: Is there a way for people that are interested in this project to be involved?

FCPA: Yes, we will be setting up a web page and will be posting information as we receive it. In addition, any action on this project, such as a scope approval, will be conducted at meetings open to the public. Anyone who has a specific question can contact Judy Pederson's office at parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov. We will note the large turnout and we understand the passion. Knowing we have the support of the public will go a long way in making our jobs easier.

Q: Will we be able to find the project once it is on the website? What will it be called?

FCPA: The project should be easy to find and will be called "Difficult Run Crossing Study". An email will be sent to everyone who signed in with a link to the page.

Comment: The page is located at:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/difficult-run-crossing-study-underway>

Q: Personal Comment: It appeared, during the removal process, that the connection to a major trail was not considered. Speaker also expressed concern that people will attempt to cross anyway, and that people will get hurt as a result of there being no bridge.

FCPA: We are committed to completing this project in the right way, so it is here for many years to come. We will do all we can to get it done as quickly as possible. Comment: The Park Authority would encourage people to exercise sound judgment in regards to their safety when outdoors, especially around water.

Judy Pedersen thanked everyone for attending, and indicated that staff would stay around after the meeting to answer any questions.