

BRIDGE REPLACEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

MARCH 16, 2026, 10:00AM

PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING CONFERENCE ROOM, 3 BOB SAWYER DR., WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH

The meeting was called to order at 10:00am by Chair Andrew. The following were present:

Committee Members

Neal Andrew, Chair
Joe Brewer
Steve Bright
Kelly Burnette
Carolyn Medley
Hank Miller
Len Anthony (Ex Officio)
Todd Schoen (Ex Officio)

Staff

Bailey Hartsell, Communications Manager
Jason Bishop, Chief of Police
Matt Holland, Fire Chief
Haynes Brigman, Town Manager
Tony Wilson, Director of Planning
Katie Carus-Childers, Parks & Rec. Director
Lance Heater, Town Clerk

Others

Chad Kimes, GFT Engineering
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Jeff DeGroote, Alderman
Greg Grayson, NC Fire Chiefs Consulting

MINUTES

The minutes of the 11/17/25 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Sue Bulluck expressed appreciation to the Committee and asked that it take action to ask the Governor and State Transportation Board to delay the NCDOT project to construct an overpass at the Eastwood Rd./Military Cutoff intersection.

Jim Smith asked if the Committee asked for information regarding the height of the new bridges and construction sequence.

Ellen Gannon, 112 Parmele, asked if there was an approximate starting and end date for the project and if it would include extended work hours in order to be completed sooner.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Andrew reiterated that the role of the Committee was information gathering and assisting the Town in planning in anticipation of the bridge replacement projects and not getting involved in issues that the Committee had not been asked to consider – such as the NCDOT Eastwood/Military Cutoff project.

Andrew reviewed the Committee history as follows: first meeting was February 26, 2024.

- o Successfully lobbied for a CMAR contractor contract to be assigned to this project
- o Transportation consultant / traffic counts and studies
- o Emergency response consultant / study in process
- o Communications manager hired
- o Outside partners added; Novant, Duke Energy, NH County Schools, etc.

- o NCDOT meetings, most recent with most qualified CMAR
- o Outreach to some special event coordinators
- o Created project website, FAQ page, and began town communications to residents

Bright suggested the Town update the Bridge Committee section of the webpage to provide contact information for those who might wish to address the overpass project.

UPDATE SINCE LAST MEETING

Chad Kimes stated that NCDOT had selected Balfour Beatty as the contractor for the project, which is in the process of project planning. It appears that the contractor will be able to begin prior to 2028, with plans at 65% complete. The contractor is conducting an effort to tighten the project timeline. It appears that utility relocation will begin by the end of 2026. The contracting method is CMGC (construction management general contractor), which is a method whereby the contractor is hired to complete the design, and this will accelerate the schedule.

Kimes stated that as the contractor develops the schedule, GFT would be able to input data into its traffic model and assess the impacts. Kimes stated that there would be no in-water restrictions for the project, with work in the water being allowed year-round.

Brigman stated that the Town would update the website once information is confirmed. Currently, the estimate is that actual bridge work could begin following the summer season of 2027.

Grayson reported that his team was assisting Holland and was developing models involving incident data and incident response. The group was developing a risk rating for special events.

Andrew reported that the opening schedule for the Heidi Trask Bridge was being discussed with the Coast Guard and NCDOT to have openings limited to once per hour.

There was a discussion about coordinating traffic signals on the west side of the Heide Trask Bridge with the city of Wilmington to help mitigate traffic impacts caused at those intersections.

BRAINSTORMING AND DISCUSSION

Andrew briefly reviewed the issues that had been identified previously as:

- Emergencies
- Traffic
- Deliveries
- Services
- Evacuation
- Daily life
- School access
- Church services
- Normal events
- Special events
- Boat traffic increase
- Communications

NEXT STEPS AND ACTION ITEMS

Brigman reported that the Town had been having discussions with organizers of large events and stated that the Committee could make a recommendation to the Board of Aldermen regarding such events during the project. Brigman stated that the larger events were the YMCA Triathlon, Ironman Triathlon and Wilmington Marathon. After discussion, Andrew asked if the Town Parks & Recreation staff could work with organizers to develop alternative plans.

CLOSING REMARKS AND ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting was set for June 15, 2026, at 10:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:53am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk

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