

HEALDSBURG AVENUE BRIDGE OVER THE RUSSIAN RIVER

PUBLIC MEETING #3

August 26, 2010 – 6:00 P.M.
Healdsburg City Hall Council Chambers

START OF MEETING 5:59:47 PM

Public Works Director Kirn stated tonight's meeting was the third public meeting on the Healdsburg Avenue Bridge and added Omni Means would be reviewing the various concept analysis and after their presentation public comment would be taken followed by an informal open house to further discuss the recommended alternatives. The next meeting is scheduled for September 7, 2010 at 6:00 P.M. as part of the regular City Council meeting.

PRESENTATION

Mr. Ross Ainsworth, Omni Means, introduced the members of the Omni Means team who have done work on the project. Mr. Ainsworth recalled this is the 5th public meeting on the project (two open houses and three public meetings) and would be presenting the recommendations of the study to the City Council at its September 7, 2010 meeting.

Mr. Ainsworth recapped there were 15 concepts that were developed and 12 of those retain the existing bridge structure.

Public Works Director Kirn reported on the outcome of the meeting with Caltrans representatives regarding funding availability. Staff received confirmation that bridge rehabilitation would qualify for funding because of its historical significance and that a sufficiency rating of 50 was not the final determinant for funding under this program. Additionally Mr. Kirn reported staff met with the Executive Director of the Sonoma County Transportation Authority and they are supportive of improving the bridge and agreed to help the City secure funding for the project.

Director Kirn reported on a meeting with FHWA noting that FHWA concurred with Caltrans sufficiency rating and they affirmed that the sufficiency rating of 50 is not the final determinant in deciding whether replacement of the bridge was fundable. FHWA also confirmed that a bridge with a sufficiency rating between 50 and 80 would be eligible for replacement funding if it was the most cost effective solution and the best use of public funds. The City is working to schedule one more meeting to include both Caltrans and FHWA together to further discuss the funding options.

Mr. Ainsworth clarified that the additional meeting with FHWA may alter some of the cost information as it relates to the City's local funding responsibility; however, he did not anticipate it would have a material effect on the overall ratings of the concepts.

Mr. Ainsworth reported Concept 4A rated the highest throughout the process. In this concept the existing structure is rehabilitated for bicycle and pedestrian use only; and a new vehicle bridge is constructed immediately to the north of the existing structure.

Mr. Doug Ries discussed the key elements of Concept 4A in terms of configuration, right of way needs, and cost estimate.

Mr. Ries added the next highest ranking concept is Concept 5B: Rehabilitate existing structure for bicycle and pedestrian use only and relocate it to the south and construct new vehicle bridge on the existing alignment.

Mr. Ainsworth stated the third highest ranking concept was Concept 3B, which was removal of the existing structure and construction of a new vehicle bridge on the current alignment. This concept is not being recommended to the City Council and has been excluded from the project. Therefore, the third recommended concept is Concept 5A, which is similar to 5B. The new vehicle bridge follows the existing alignment and the historic structure is rehabilitated for bicycle and pedestrian use only and is relocated north of the new bridge.

Mr. Ainsworth discussed the benefits of a roundabout, including increasing capacity, improving motor vehicle safety, traffic calming, and cost savings.

Mr. Ainsworth stated Concept 2A, rehabilitation of the bridge as is, was fourth on the list, and would be presented to the City Council for inclusion in the environmental process.

Mr. Ainsworth reiterated that the recommendation to the City Council would be Concept 4A. Other alternatives that would be included in the study would be Concepts 5A, 5B and 2A.

Mr. Ainsworth reviewed the Concept Selection Analysis Matrix Results Summary dated August 23, 2010 that was prepared for the Healdsburg Avenue Bridge over the Russian River, which would also be presented to the City Council.

PUBLIC COMMENTS 6:30:53 PM

Ms. Laura Tietz stated the total weighted scores for Concepts 2A, 4A, 5A and 5B were all very close and inquired what it meant that they were very close.

Mr. Ainsworth stated the total weighted scoring was the raw score that was given to each concept through the evaluation process and was based on whether the concept met the purpose and need of the project. The scoring determined the four best concepts.

Ron spoke in opposition of having a historic bridge next to a modern bridge and in favor of rehabilitating the existing bridge at its present location.

Mr. Mel Amato pointed out alleged inaccuracies and errors in the Cornerstone Rating Analysis and the Concept Selection Summary. Mr. Amato added that the recommended concepts were selected based on very little public input and the public input on the report was overstated. He stated that the Friends of the Healdsburg Memorial Bridge website has had over 3,000 visitors and 461 (270 Healdsburg residents) of them have signed a petition supporting rehabilitation. The City has also received 360 postcards supporting rehabilitation. Mr. Amato questioned the need for two bridges when the current bridge would be adequate once it is seismically retrofitted. He opined the citizens cannot afford or want to look at two bridges. Mr. Amato urged the Consultant to hear and listen to the voice of the community and recommend rehabilitation to the City Council. He further stated that if a decision to select bridge replacement was made based on the flawed rating analysis and decision process it would not hold up against expert testimony in a CEQA court challenge.

Mr. Warren Watkins opined four bridges in the area are overkill, not necessary and not in tune with the character of a small town. Mr. Watkins stated there was no public safety or capacity issue.

Mr. George Clough, Lincoln Street, opined that statistically numbers could be skewed in any direction and questioned how the reference points were established, noting that in some areas a moderate rating had a point value of 7 and in other areas it had a point value of 4. Mr. Clough opined more input was needed in regards to the point values and who is making the decision so that the point values are consistent and understandable.

Ms. Kate Rogers stated she concurred with all the comments made by the previous speakers, and opined there is no reason why the current bridge cannot be rehabilitated and upgraded. Ms. Rogers added the public wants to keep the bridge and to keep the small town character. She added that she hoped there was no influence by Omni Means to make money for Caltrans.

Mr. Richard Burg stated there was too much information and people had not had the opportunity to study it. The categories have been expanded and there was no public input as to the distribution of the subcategories or consideration of citizen concerns about how they were weighted or distributed in terms of the total assessment. Mr. Burg expressed concern regarding the new purpose and need rating and the notion that the concepts are being evaluated in terms of facilitating goods movement when there is a suitable conveyance for goods via the freeway bridge. Mr. Burg opined the greatest failure of the report is that the qualitative experience of seeing and driving across the bridge is not included in the ranking and this is important in order for Healdsburg to continue to be a destination for visitors. He spoke in opposition of having four bridges.

He also expressed concern about the safety of cyclists in all of the recommended concepts. Mr. Burg reiterated it was difficult to determine/understand where adjustment factors were made to the weighted scores.

Mr. Jim Walters, Dry Creek Road, opined the report should be used as a case study in statistics and to keep the old bridge.

Mr. Jack Russell Stone spoke in favor of keeping the small town atmosphere and of reconstructing the existing bridge.

Mary, University Street, opined a new bridge is not needed and added the current bridge is the soul Healdsburg.

Mr. Jack Soracco opined all that is needed it to retrofit the bridge piers and new paint and added he was in favor of leaving the bridge alone.

Ms. Tara Harold spoke in favor of keeping the bridge.

Ms. Vesna Breznikar, McDonough Heights, stated people visit Healdsburg for its history and spoke against constructing a concrete bridge next to the historic structure. She spoke in support of keeping the historic bridge.

Mr. Shaun McCaffery, North Street, stated he felt blessed to live in a community like Healdsburg and that he had faith that with the community involvement, Healdsburg is going to retain its historic bridge unlike central Florida.

Mr. Ted Robinson, Dry Creek, stated it appears the majority of the people support restoring the old bridge and asked if there was a hidden agenda because the public input is not being taken into consideration. Mr. Robinson inquired where were the people that wanted a new bridge and that if the bridge is in good shape what was the problem with keeping it. If it isn't broken don't try to fix it.

Ms. Deb Viola, Rafanelli Court, stated during the parade only one person in the parade route was in favor of tearing down the bridge. She opined people want to keep the bridge.

Ron (first speaker) opined in Europe they knew the importance of history and that when historic buildings were destroyed during World War II they replaced them with historically accurate buildings.

Mr. Alfredo Garcia, Mason Street, sated he had filed with the City 260 post cards in favor of saving the bridge and inquired how many cards in total had been filed. Mr. Garcia opined there are many residents as well as businesses that are unaware that the

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City is considering constructing a new bridge and added that a concerted effort should be undertaken to inform the community.

City Clerk Curiel noted for the record a total of 360 post cards in support of the bridge were on file in her office.

Ms. Mary Johnson stated people's feelings are missing from the numbers on the report and opined an emotional component should be part of the report.

ADJOURNMENT 7:20:56 PM

Public Works Director Kirn reiterated that the next meeting is scheduled for September 7, 2010 at 6:00 P.M. before the City Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21:25 PM.