

# YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER ADVISORY BOARD

## Youghiogheny River Advisory Board

Draft Public Meeting Minutes- August 1, 2023

# Pending Approval

Members Present: Jeff McCauley, Seth Metheny, Molly Rikhye, Randy Rodeheaver, Don Sebold, Roger Zbel, Siera Wigfield

The meeting was called to order by Don Sebold, Chairman at 9:02am.

Siera Wigfield read the minutes from the previous meeting.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Randy Rodeheaver made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Roger Zbel. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Public Comments:**

- Suggestion that the Board thoroughly review the 1996 Management plan, Law, and regulations about the limitations of activities in the Wild and Scenic Corridor.
- Highlighted the Yough River's economic impact, resource for fly fishing, and use for trails. Recommendation for a smaller bridge with bike and pedestrian facilities.
- Various concerns were raised about tourism, sediment control, improvements to fish habitat outdoor activities, and the impact on businesses due to the proposed bridge.
- The bridge violates the wild and scenic regulations, but the board should consider a design to conform to the management plan, specifically to the easement needed for the bridge construction.
- EMS zones do not cross the bridge so shutting it down would not drastically alter response times.

### **Unfinished Business:**

- Siera Wigfield discussed importance to provide bike and pedestrian facilities on the bridge and crossing the parking lot.
- Don Sebold noted the 25-mph speed limit and the fact the bridge is an exception because it was in the corridor before the Wild and Scenic designation. He also noted that ultimately DNR makes the decision regarding the design of the bridge.
- The Board's intention to build a bridge was discussed, with emphasis on minimizing its size and impact.
- Kyle Smith from GPI presented aesthetic options for the bridge, including steel railings and concrete barriers. Concerns were raised about maintenance and impact on trees. He added construction can take 3 to 6 months.
- Seth Metheny brought up that constructing during the winter months could mean less impact to run off since things are frozen and a waiver for MDE could be obtained to construct during the period. On the other side of the coin construction during typical season could be drier.
- The existing bridge was replaced in 2011.
- There was discussion about reducing the impacts on farmers and school buses during potential road closures based on when construction takes place.

### **Bridge Recommendations:**

- Molly Rikhye made a motion to close the road for construction and keep the alignment the same for the bridge replacement. The motion was seconded by Roger Zbel and passed unanimously.

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- Randy Rodeheaver made a motion for the bridge to be as narrow as possible but not greater than 28'. The motion was seconded by Roger Zbel. The motion passed 6-1, with Molly Rikhye voting no, due to concerns about the impact differences between a 24ft and 28ft bridge.
- Seth Metheny suggested to have a 2ft shoulder, 2- 10ft wide lanes and a 6ft shoulder for bike and ped access.
- A motion was made by Seth Metheny to recommend the bridge's railing be concrete, to maximize the durability and reduce the potential future impacts of repairing the bridge. The motion was seconded by Roger Zbel. A unanimous decision was made to use concrete for the bridge.
- A motion was made by Seth Metheny to recommend construction begin in May and take place during the following 3 to 6 months. Motion seconded by Siera Wigfield; the motion passed unanimously.

**Future Meetings:**

- Don Sebold discussed the need to meet more regularly than the "as needed basis". A motion made by Siera Wigfield to meet at least once annually was seconded by Randy Rodeheaver and passed unanimously.
- There was discussion on who can call a meeting to order if the need arises. A motion was made by Siera Wigfield to allow for the County Commissioners, Chairman, and DNR to call for the Board to meet. The motion was seconded by Randy Rodeheaver and passed unanimously.

**Public Comment**

- Concerns were raised about the design and aesthetics of the bridge.
- Kyle Smith with GPI noted that he has listened to the public and has a better understanding why they were dissatisfied with the renderings presented on July 10. He will offer better recommendations, like barrier with gaps, to see the river, and use other molds for concrete to better match the character of the area.
- Suggestion that current and former DNR mangers of the area brief the Board on historic and current activities in the corridor.
- Concerns about limiting public input with only one meeting per year.

**Adjournment:**

On a motion by Randy Rodeheaver, which was seconded by Seth Metheny and passed unanimously the Board adjourned the meeting at 11:11 a.m.

**Attest:**

**By Order of the Board,**

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**KEVIN G. NULL**

County Administrator

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**Don Sebold, Chairman**

Youghiogheny River Advisory Board

Date \_\_\_\_\_