

PROCEEDINGS OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE GREATER NEW ORLEANS
EXPRESSWAY COMMISSION, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2016, 6:00 P.M., ST.
TAMMANY PARISH COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 21490 KOOP DRIVE, MANDEVILLE, LA
70471

PRESENT: Shelby P. LaSalle, Jr., Vice Chairman; Joseph A. Jaeger Jr., Treasurer;
Stephen G. Romig, Secretary

ABSENT: Anthony V. Ligi, Jr., Chairman

OTHERS: Carlton Dufrechou; Chief Nick Congemi; Melissa M. Phillpott; Stacie
Heffker; Robert Graham; Red Thompson; Crystal Scott; Kim Bertucci;
Michelle Halder; Councilman Rykert Toledano; Councilman Mike Lorinio;
Cpl. Mikel, Serena, Avery and Aiden Melton; Sgt. Mike Kelly; Ofc. Shawn
Rice; Craig Watson, Blue Williams; Cary Bourgeois, GEC, Inc.; Dean
Duplantier, Broadmoor Design Group; Robert Rhoden, Times Picayune;
James Digby; Bill Murhammer; Gary Leonard; Walford Pelto; Pat Hihar;
Joseph Quilio; John Basilica; Charlie Pausina; Rick Franzo; Alan
Zaunbrecker; Bob Gedaci; Darrius Gordin; Clay Sharp; Lee Mathes;
Michael Pulaski; Carl Ernst; Michelle LeBlanc; Kristin LeBlanc; Dr. Sue
LeBlanc; Carol Geraci; Becky Jaeger; Leslie Durio; Trey Spencer; Lisa
Serio; Sara Wood; James Fabacher; John Poche; Del McNealy; Steve
Tubbs; Mark Allbritton; Bill Brown; Robert Cuppay; Leon Smith; Rene
Chopin; David Noble; Mike Lopez; Ken Ross; Kim Chatalain; Don
Thompson; Terri Lopez; LeDoux Gaust; Cindy Restor; Frank Bianchini;
Jules Galiouras; Carlo Hernandez; Henry Bellamey; Brad Groce; Charles
Goodwin; Terry Breaud; Kyle Wild; Matthew Cruz; Samantha Meyer; Trey
Meyer; Donavin Drewer; John Liggio; Margaret Broaud; Deanna Burchill;
Laura Pennino

The Chairman called the meeting to order.

**On the motion by Mr. Romig, seconded by Mr. LaSalle, the minutes of the regular
meeting held on July 20, 2016 were accepted as written. Mr. LaSalle, Mr. Jaeger
and Mr. Romig voted in favor of the motion.**

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

Chief Nick Congemi stated that today it is his proud honor to introduce Cpl. Mikel Melton, his wife Serena and their children Avery and Aiden. Cpl. Melton is credited in performing a lifesaving action. Chief Congemi also introduced Sgt. Mike Kelly and Ofc. Shawn Rice. He stated they were a part of Cpl. Melton's team and aided with the rescue. Chief Congemi reported the Joey LeBlanc, the gentleman that was saved, could not be there but he is honored to introduce Dr. Sue LeBlanc (his mother), Kristen LeBlanc (his wife) and Michelle LeBlanc (his sister). Chief Congemi presented Cpl. Mikel Melton with a lifesaving award and read the following: On August 8, 2016 at 0815 hours, Causeway Police Officers were dispatched to a two car crash which occurred on the Causeway Bridge at the 10.7 mile marker on the southbound span. One of the vehicles involved had plunged over the rail into Lake Pontchartrain. The vehicle disappeared from view beneath the surface, along with the lone occupant. Vial Joseph "Joey" LeBlanc III. Mr. LeBlanc exited the vehicle and resurfaced same 90 seconds later. Three lawmen who witnessed the incident, from the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's office, Harahan Police Department and the Department of Justice, responded by tossing a rope to Mr. LeBlanc. Corporal Mikel Melton and Officer Shawn Rice quickly arrived on scene and discovered Mr. LeBlanc treading water. A rescue rope ladder was deployed, which Mr. LeBlanc was able to reach and hold. It was obvious that Mr. LeBlanc had begun to experience fatigue and distress while holding on to the ladder. Corporal Melton hurled a standard life ring into the lake, providing a lifeline and preventing Mr. LeBlanc from being swept away. After donning his personnel flotation vest, Corporal Melton descended the rope ladder, entered the water, and stabilized Mr. LeBlanc in a flotation ring. Upon the arrival of Motorist Assistance Officer Ryan Robertson and Officer Gary

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

Allen, Corporal Melton assisted Mr. LeBlanc into a rescue basket and lifted him to the bridge. Finally, with Mr. LeBlanc moved to the safety of the bridge, Corporal Melton ascended via the rope ladder. On this day, Corporal Mikel Melton, without regard for his own well-being and safety, calmly and decisively executed his sworn duties in order to rescue Mr. LeBlanc from Lake Pontchartrain. On behalf of the Causeway Police Department and the Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission, we commend Corporal Melton for his heroic actions of August 8, 2016. Corporal Melton's actions are indicative of his outstanding abilities as a police officer and are in keeping with the fines traditional of the Causeway Police Department. In light of his actions, he is hereby presented with the Class "C" Life Saving Award. Chief Congemi stated Joey LeBlanc's family requested to say a few words. Kristen LeBlanc stated her husband would not be here if it were not for these heroic actions. She stated they would not be celebrating her daughter's one year old birthday today. Michelle LeBlanc stated all of the water rescue training paid off and she is proud to live in this great state of Louisiana. It is wonderful to have these fine gentlemen watching over us while we drive over the Causeway and taking care of us each and every day. Ms. LeBlanc stated this is what being American and being in this wonderful state is all about. She thanked everyone involved. Dr. Sue LeBlanc stated she is a dentist and her son is a freshman dental student. She explained that because he is studying for a test he missed, he was unable to attend this meeting. Dr. LeBlanc further explained the Causeway Police Department offered to call the Dean and ask to give him the day off. She thanked Cpl. Melton for saving her son. Dr. LeBlanc stated the facts show an 80% chance her son would not have survived and it

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

was only because of the Police doing what they are trained to do and doing it effectively that her son is alive today.

Mr. Shelby LaSalle then asked Mr. Dufrechou to read a letter that was received by email from Mr. Tommy Lofton. Mr. Lofton was on the bridge at the time of the incident. Mr. Dufrechou read the following: Mr. Dufrechou and members of GNOEC, My colleague and I were on the way to work at the National WWII Museum yesterday morning when just a few vehicles ahead of me the white Chevy truck, not a Ford as the news reported, was hit and bounced along the railing and then over the Causeway at around the 10 mile mark. I was in the left lane, but dodged debris to move into the right and put on emergency flashers to slow down the traffic behind me. Thankfully, I recalled that I had an old 75 foot purple rappelling rope of mine in the trunk of my gray Camry and jumped out for it as I told my passenger to call 911. I raced over to the edge in time to see the gentleman in the water, Joe or Joey I believe was his name and he was headed to LSU Dental School. As a gentleman tossed him a line from a black rope that he had in his truck I tied my rope to the nearest stable piece of guard rail and then quickly tied a bowline knot like I learned in the Boy Scouts to toss him to put on his body until officers could respond. He was clearly shaken and seemed to be going into a state of shock. I recall a State Police officer arriving and moving my car further back so that responding vehicles could get closer to the scene. While I held this rope with the man attached and the other gentleman kept his rope in there for him to hold on to, we did our best to calm him as he worried about getting word to his wife and kept saying he just wanted to go home to his wife and daughter. We repeatedly asked him if he had passengers in the truck and tried our best to keep him calm until help arrived. I was standing right there

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

when Cpl. Melton arrived and handed me the life buoy/ring to throw down to the gentleman. I did so while also holding on to the initial rope that I tossed him until he was safely in the buoy. During this time, Cpl. Melton lowered the rope ladder and prepared to go into the water without any hesitation and was constantly of calm demeanor. I did my best to help him and when the basket arrived I helped to lower it and as it arrived carrying the gentleman, I helped to pull it into a parallel position to not hit the bridge while the rescue crew raised it. Not forgetting that now we still had Cpl. Melton in the water, I did my best to remain there until he was safely up the ladder and helped him to climb onto the bridge, while I seem to remember a comment he made about getting older or something. I send this not wanting any recognition at all, but to prove that I was there and saw first-hand the need to improve our bridge. I know that this will cost money and I know that others are torn about the issue and admittedly I did not know how I felt until yesterday morning. I fully support your efforts to adapt and change the bridge. I feel that while it would be good to widen the bridge to add shoulders, I also know that the cost is not feasible at this time and that something has to change instead of sitting idle and taking a chance that others will go over the bridge. I send this email because I had to travel to St Louis today for work and will not be able to attend tonight's meeting, but wanted to send this in hopes that it will help in some way to make our Causeway safe for all that travel it each day. I'm willing to pay a higher toll if that is what it takes to improve our bridge. I never again want to hear the screams and pleas for help from anyone in that water like I did yesterday and was haunted by again last night. Hearing the cry of someone fearing for their life, someone who clearly had his wife and child (or children, not sure) on his mind could be something that we can avoid in the future with

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

more improvements to the bridge. Nobody should have to go through what that gentleman went through, no officer should have to risk his life like that, even though they are trained and willing to do so. I am willing to do whatever I can to shout it from the rooftops in the New Orleans area to improve that bridge and make it safe. Again, I don't want any recognition for my small part in a group effort yesterday, but I do want to applaud Cpl. Melton for his work. I don't know what you pay him, but I support giving that man a raise or a few days off. If I ever see him again I would like to buy him a beer! (off duty of course) If I were ever in an emergency situation on that bridge, or anywhere else frankly, I would want him there along with the other officers that supported him yesterday. Good luck with the meeting tonight and with your vote tomorrow. I am sorry that I could not attend, but I felt like I needed to send something your way just to show my support for making the Causeway safe, even if it costs motorists a few more dollars. The email closed with Tommy Lofton, Covington resident and daily Causeway driver. Mr. LaSalle thanked Mr. Dufrechou for reading Mr. Lofton's email.

Mr. LaSalle also recognized and thanked Councilman Rykert Toledano, Councilman Mike Lorino and Councilman Red Thompson for attend the meeting. He also thanked St. Tammany Parish for use of their Council facility.

Mr. LaSalle addressed the audience to see if anyone had any comments or questions for the Commission about any issues other than the safety improvements. There were no comments or questions. Mr. LaSalle stated they would call out names of the people requesting to speak but asked if everyone could keep their comments to two minutes to insure everybody gets a chance to have their turn.

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

Mr. Dufrechou stated that since the last meeting on July 20, 2016 to 2pm today, the Causeway has received a total of sixty four comments by email or telephone calls. Of those forty four were opposed to the toll increase, nine supported it and eleven had questions or no position listed. Mr. LaSalle asked how many email went out to commuters. Mr. Dufrechou stated thirty two thousand last month and another thirty two thousand this month.

Public Commentary Addressing Safety Improvements and Toll Increases: Recorded for record and available by audio or transcription upon request.

Mr. Joseph Jaeger addressed the crowd and stated this is not something that is taken lightly. He stated at the end of the day, the Commission's job is to provide safe passage. Mr. Jaeger stated in 1956 it was \$2 to cross the Causeway and it is still \$2 with a toll tag. He stated looking at the fact that there are one hundred and seventy eight accidents a year, one every other day, 35% of those are from someone being broken down and people are running into the back of them at a high speed. He stated the idea of the safety bays is to create some type of environment to get people off of the roadway if they break down. Mr. Jaeger said in the Commission's minds, it is a no brainer. He stated that they might not be qualified but \$7,000 was spent in experts to research not just what is needed to create a safe environment but also what is needed to meet the current codes and standards. Mr. Jaeger reported with an 85% chance of dying if you go overboard, you just have to look at the statistics. He questioned what is a life worth to you. Mr. Jaeger reported that the Commission's responsibility is to do everything in their power to make the bridge safe.

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

Mr. Stephen Romig addressed the crowd and stated that the Commission has worked hard and long to come up with a solution. He reported there have been two years and thirteen meetings where these safety issues have been discussed in detail. He stated five of those meetings have taken place on the Northshore. Mr. Romig stated that every expense category in the GNOEC budget, except repairs and improvements to the bridge, is less than it was the year before. He stated his one duty coming on to the Commission was to run the bridge as safe as possible in the most cost effective manner. Mr. Romig stated the budget this year is less than it was ten years ago. He reported that bridge need to be maintained. He stated as one link to Jefferson and St. Tammany Parish, the bridge is extremely important. Mr. Romig stated the Commission made recommendations as part of their duties. Mr. Romig reported that he will be voting yes because of that responsibility. He stated that they have been to Washington more than once and were told they are user fees. Mr. Romig stated they also applied for grants with no luck.

Mr. Shelby LaSalle addressed the crowd and stated during this two year process of public input, it has been the Commission's obligation and pleasure to receive and respond to hundreds of questions regarding safety improvements. He stated that to his knowledge, the GNOEC has responded to each and every one and will continue to do so moving forward. Mr. LaSalle stated he wanted to recognize our staff, lead by Carlton Dufrechou, for their diligent work in responding to so many important questions from the public and the media. Mr. LaSalle reported that one wonderful consequence of this period of public input has been the offer by many of the community to help find additional funding for these improvements. He stated one way in which the community

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

has offered to help is by encouraging your elected officials in the legislature to make changes to current law that govern how some of our resources are used, a lobbying effort that we as a public entity are not legally allowed to conduct. Mr. LaSalle thanked everyone for that offer, and formally accepted the offer. He stated he proposes a special resolution to dedicate any additional funds garnered by the community efforts to retiring safety improvement bonds as early as possible. As a national highway, the Commission can and will dedicate all of those funds and other appropriate federal funds to this specific project. Mr. LaSalle reported the Causeway has always been a family of sorts, all of us contributing in one way or another to keeping our bridge safe and efficient. He hoped this special resolution will help to further solidify that partnership. Mr. LaSalle stated after more than two years of planning, engineering, design, public input and careful consideration, it's time to move on to a vote. Before we begin that vote, he wanted to read a statement of support for these safety improvements from the Commission Chairman, Tony Ligi, who is out with an illness.

Mr. LaSalle read the following statement from Mr. Ligi: I apologize for not being in attendance this evening. As late as Monday, I had no idea that I would not be able to attend this very important meeting due to treatment of a major health issue. Although I am not able to cast my vote, I wanted to express and go on record with my views of the issues of bridge safety enhancements and toll increases needed to do so far. I am specifically addressing the proposal of adding six safety bays on both spans and rail enhancements on the southbound span. Let me first address the southbound span rail enhancements. It is clear that, not do to anyone's fault, the southbound span, even though built to codes in existence in the mid-1950's, was not built to contain vehicles

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

that are so prevalent today, vehicles with high centers of gravity. Many of these high center of gravity vehicles are purchased because of the safety factor they provide. Families gravitate toward the purchase of SUV's because of size and safety factors. More personal usage trucks are purchased than ever before. These are exactly the types of vehicles that are prone to going overboard on the southbound span. Action needs to be taken before we have another tragedy that will strike to the hearts of everyone and which will beg the question of why we did not act. I am very convinced that the advice that has been provided by acknowledge the bridge safety experts is sound advice. There is no funding available to build a new bridge, cost of which would run into the billions and result in tolls that would greatly exceed what is being proposed. We can only improve what we have based on the expert advice we have received. The cost of the rail enhancement is roughly 40% of the total project cost. Relative to the safety bays, I have heard many users of the bridge praise that proposed enhancement. Getting breakdowns and accidents off the bridge will no doubt provide a safer driving environment. The number of rear end collisions that are the result of a stoppage of traffic clearly reflects the danger of an impacted roadway. I have heard no convincing argument against the safety bays which will cost roughly 60% of the total projected cost of \$103 million. Some folks have argued that we are penalizing drivers for the negligence of others. The problem is that negligence of others places innocent persons in peril, just as we saw with the accident that occurred this week and others in the past. In my mind whether or not there is negligence is irrelevant. The end result, whether negligence of another is involved or no, is what is relevant. It is the end result of someone dying a terrible death by drowning or someone being plowed into and

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

receiving terrible injury that concerns me. It is providing a bridge that has features that will provide enhancement safety features to its users that is relevant to me. I appreciate the suggestions of various individuals and organizations relative to alternative funding sources, but we have been there and checked under every cushion to no avail. I would welcome and participate in continued efforts to bring in funds to pay for these enhancements, but would not hold off on moving forward. I would welcome state legislation making available other funds to pay for use in this endeavor if such can be successfully accomplished, but again cannot agree to hold off on moving forward. Any funds that can be found or made available at any time can be dedicated to pay down the debt incurred. I am totally supportive of this proposal. I believe that many users of the bridge will come to realize the importance of these enhancements in the future if they do not already. I am confident many do and will gladly pay for this project.

On the Drawbridge operations, Mr. Dufrechou reported there were 12 vessel openings, 2 test openings and 1 incident.

Mr. Dufrechou reported that Police and MAP responded to 129 breakdowns on the Causeway Bridge and 17 breakdowns on the Huey P. Long Bridge for a total of 146. He reported 12 accidents on the Causeway Bridge and 9 accidents occurred on the Huey P. Long Bridge.

On the Safety Improvements, Mr. LaSalle presented a special resolution. **On motion by Mr. LaSalle, seconded by Mr. Jaeger, The GNOEC has undertaken the study of safety improvements to the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway Expressway. Based on recommendations of staff and consulting engineers, and pursuant to the GNOEC's authority to construct, acquire, improve and maintain the Expressway**

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

under Article V, Section 4 of its Articles of Incorporation, the GNOEC hereby adopts, approves, and authorizes its General Manager to initiate the process, including seeking concurrence of the governing bodies of Jefferson and St. Tammany Parish, for the implementation of construction of six sets (Northbound and Southbound) of Safety Shoulders, and construction of bridge rail improvements to the Southbound Expressway. Mr. LaSalle, Mr. Jaeger and Mr. Romig voted in favor of the motion.

On the approval to issue Toll Revenue Bonds, Mr. LaSalle presented the following. On motion by Mr. Romig, seconded by Mr. Jaeger, A resolution granting preliminary approval to issue not exceeding \$133,000,000 of Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission Toll Revenue Bonds, in one or more series, on a taxable or tax-exempt basis; providing certain terms of said bonds; authorizing application to the Louisiana State Bond Commission for approval of the issuance of said bonds; providing certain details with the respect to the bonds; employing professionals; and other matters in connection therewith, including the issuance of Toll Bond Anticipation Notes if deemed necessary by the Commission. Mr. LaSalle, Mr. Jaeger and Mr. Romig voted in favor of the motion.

On the approval for increasing in tolls, Mr. LaSalle presented the following. On motion by Mr. Jaeger, seconded by Mr. Romig, A resolution granting an increase in tolls for transit over or use of the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway to pay for the principal and interest on bonds and other capital expenditures. The GNOEC hereby approves and authorizes its General Manager to proceed with implementation of toll increase. Mr. LaSalle, Mr. Jaeger and Mr. Romig voted in favor of the motion.

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

On the Retirement of Bonds, Mr. LaSalle presented the following special resolution. **On motion by Mr. LaSalle, seconded by Mr. Romig, Subject to any and all laws and authorization that may be required by the State Legislature or governing parishes, this resolution expresses this Commission's intent to dedicate funds garnered from the community's success with; 1) acquiring applicable Federal and State funds, and 2) with the State Legislature regarding GNOEC funding for the Huey P. Long, to parishes, and/or from citations to the retirement of revenue bonds for proposed safety improvements. Mr. LaSalle, Mr. Jaeger and Mr. Romig voted in favor of the motion.**

On approval of the South Channel Fender Repair and Structural Improvements, Mr. Dufrechou presented Plan Change number 2. **On motion by Mr. Jaeger, seconded by Mr. Romig, Plan Change number 2 provides for adjustments in plan quantities to match field quantities in the amount of \$147,615.90 and no additional working days. Based upon the recommendation of the Staff and its Consulting Engineers, the GNOEC authorizes the General Manager to complete the execution of Plan Change number 2. Mr. LaSalle, Mr. Jaeger and Mr. Romig voted in favor of the motion.**

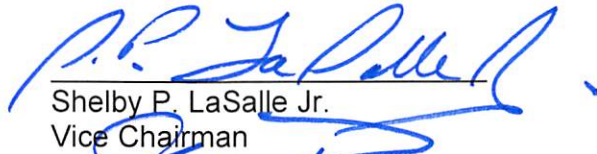
On the budget approval, Mr. Dufrechou presented the following. **On motion by Mr. Romig, seconded by Mr. LaSalle, The Commission accepts and approves the Amended Budget for fiscal year November 1, 2015 to October 31, 2016 and the Proposed Budget for fiscal year November 1, 2016 to October 31, 2017 as presented with toll increase. The Commission also accepts and approves the Toll Covenant calculations made of the new worth requirements in accordance with**

**Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission
Regular Meeting – August 10, 2016**

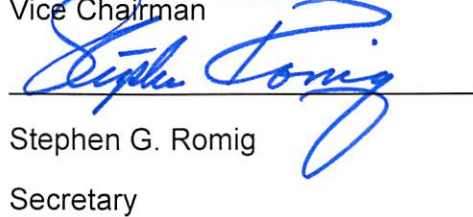
Section 6.15 of the Bond Indenture. Mr. LaSalle, Mr. Jaeger and Mr. Romig voted in favor of the motion.

Mr. LaSalle reminded everyone the next meeting is tentatively scheduled September 7, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. at the VOA building on the South Shore.

There being no further business, the meeting was be adjourned.



Shelby P. LaSalle Jr.
Vice Chairman



Stephen G. Romig
Secretary