

**Meeting Minutes
Hightstown Borough Council
February 1, 2022 – Special Meeting
6:30 p.m.**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Quattrone at 6:30 p.m. and he read the Open Public Meetings Act statement which stated, “Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, pursuant to Public Law 1975, Chapter 231. Said notice was sent to the *Trenton Times* and the *Windsor-Hights Herald*, and is posted on the Borough website.” Do to COVID-19 and self-distancing protocols, this meeting was held remotely through www.zoom.com.

The flag salute followed Roll Call.

	PRESENT	ABSENT
<i>Councilmember Susan Bluth</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Joseph Cicalese</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Cristina Fowler</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Joshua Jackson</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Steven Misiura</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Frederick Montferrat</i>	✓	
<i>Mayor Quattrone</i>	✓	

Also in attendance: Margaret (Peggy) Riggio, Borough Clerk and Dimitri Musing, Borough Administrator

The Flag Salute followed roll call.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Councilmember Cicalese; Seconded by Councilmember Jackson.

Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Bluth, Cicalese, Fowler, Jackson, Misiura and Montferrat

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Quattrone opened the public comment period and the following individuals spoke:

Eugene Sarafin, 628 South Main Street - Spoke about the history of the East Ward Street Bridge. As historic as the bridge is, he feels that it should be replaced.

Phillipe Cardoso, 149 South Main Street - Commented that many events are taking place now, stadiums are being filled to capacity. Why is this meeting not in person? Feels that the public does not have an opportunity to express themselves because they may not have known about this zoom meeting.

There being further comments, Mayor Quattrone closed the public comment period.

EAST WARD STREET BRIDGE

Mayor Quattrone introduced Basit A. Muzaffar, Mercer County Engineer and Gregory Bitsko of Traffic Planning and Design, Inc.

Mr. Muzaffar, County Engineer - Stated that this is the second public meeting on this subject. The County is here to listen to questions and answer the best they can. Gregory Bitsko, the bridge designer, is also here and will answer questions.

Gregory Bitsko, Traffic Planning and Design, Inc. - reviewed the previous presentation and explained why the bridge needs to be renovated. The bridge is signed as a 3-ton weight limit. The bridge was built with 184 trusses. 180 of those trusses are not capable of carrying legal loads. Bridges have a sufficiency ratings of 0 - 100. The sufficiency rating on this bridge is an 11.7, very critical. Structural rating is on a scall of 0 - 9. This bridge currently rated is a 2. The new bridge will be 32-feet wide to accommodate both Hightstown Borough and Mercer County's Complete Streets Policy which include a pedestrian walkway and bicycle lanes.

Mr. Muzaffar - Stated that the County's only choice is to bring the bridge up to code and able to carry a legal load.

At this time, Mayor Quattrone opened a Public Comment for comments regarding the East Ward Street Bridge.

Charles Stults, 408 South Main Street - He is a lifelong resident, business owner and President of the Historical Society. He thanked the County for all their work. He stated that the residents need to be engaged more. Urged Council to reconsider supporting the 32-foot bridge.

Nancy Laudenberg, 632 South Main Street - Thanked Council for scheduling this meeting. Asked Council to rescind Resolution 2021-183 and is advocating for a 28-foot bridge. Feels that the historic district will be impacted by the bridge. Spoke about the master plan.

Wendy McDade - Asked that the report sent to SHIPO be made public. Mr. Muzaffar stated that an OPRA request can be filed with the County to receive that report.

Lee Stults, 117 Taylor Avenue and owner of Old Hights Brewing Company - Thanked Council for this meeting. Applauded the County for coming back to Hightstown to answer questions. He fully supports a 28-foot bridge, but not a 32-foot bridge. He appreciates the installation of bicycle lanes but does not understand my bicycles can't use the pedestrian walk for 200 feet. He would like to see Council rescind the Resolution and build a 28-foot bridge. Council needs to control truck traffic. Hightstown can control the roads on either side of the bridge to limit the load.

Jane Cox, East Ward Street - Stated that we are losing 1 square mile of paradise. Residents do not want to be a traffic circle. We do not need or want a big traffic bridge.

Eugene Sarafin, 628 South Main Street - Stated that residents use this bridge to bypass downtown. Council did the right thing.

Clare Lumkong, 118 Etra Road - Questioned, just because the bridge needs to be built to carry all legal loads, do we have to allow all legal loads? Gregory Bitsko stated that the bridge cannot be posted with limitations, but the surrounding roads can be posted.

Kathy Zaiser, 402 South Main Street – Asked if we are mandated to build a bridge to carry all legal loads. Mr. Muzaffar stated that we are using state funds so we must build it to carry all legal loads.

Bob Murdoch, 128 South Street - Asked Council to reconsider their support and build the 28-foot bridge.

Jim McDade, 128 South Street - Supports a 28-foot bridge. Questioned if there was any consideration of alternatives that will not require extension of the bridge on the east side. Also asked what the bridge would be faced with and if residents will be consulted before it is done. The County Engineer stated that this will be decided further down the road and that residents will be consulted. We will make sure it keeps the historic character.

Leanne Trent, 567 South Main Street - Asked that we please preserve as much of this town as possible. There are preservation grant programs available. We should see what monies are available.

Vladimir Aituaganov, 161 East Ward Street - Stated that his house is 2- feet from bridge. How will his home be protected during construction? Gregory Bitsko stated that a vibration monitoring program will be done pre and post construction. They will survey the property and record the condition of the house to see if any damage was incurred during construction. If damage is found, it will be corrected.

Phillippe Cardoso, 149 South Main Street - Stated that we are trying to promote Hightstown as a historic destination and we are getting rid of one of our assets. Why can't the bridge be replaced in kind. Mr. Bitsko answered that the bridge cannot be replaced in kind because it would not carry all live loads. The bridge will not lose its historic aspect. The trusses will be put back. We are trying to preserve the historic nature of the bridge while making it safe.

Wendy McDade, 125 South Street - Stated that the problem will be enforcement of the speed and load for Ward Street. Would like to see a formal report from the Police departments capacity for enforcement.

Jeff Bond, 210 South Main Street - Stated that he feels the bridge should be built to 28-feet and eliminate the bike lanes. We do not need bike lanes.

Councilmember Montferrat - Thanked the County for being present tonight. The residents brought up good points. He would like to see a small steering committee in place that can review details moving forward. The bridge is in need of repair. Hightstown cannot be responsible if something tragic were to happen.

Councilmember Misiura - Thanked the County for their time. This is a County bridge. We have no intention of taking ownership of the bridge. The Borough does not have the resources to keep the bridge safe. The County did their due diligence. They looked at every option and are preserving the historic portions of the bridge. The Borough can and will control the weight limits on the roads.

Mayor Quattrone - Thanked the residents for their comments and thanked the County representatives for being present.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Misiura moved to adjourn at 8:35 p.m.; Councilmember Montferrat seconded. All ayes.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Riggio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and 'R'.

Margaret M. Riggio
Borough Clerk

Approved by Hightstown Borough Council: May 2, 2022