

Attendees:

Judge Pape	Jeremiah Jarvis	Mark Ferguson
Commissioner Snowden	Dale Stock	Debra Ferguson
Carolyn Dill	Georgina Ngozi	Ernie Nance
Adena Lewis	Brigham Stock	Angie Moore
Duncan Charlton	Linda Nance	Kay Wesson
Grace Stock	Randi Fishbeck	

The meeting regarding the future of the Lower Elgin Road Bridge (LERB) began with local residents presenting a very nice, bound comprehensive report by Ernie Nance and Debra Ferguson concerning the history and significance of the LERB.

Judge Pape facilitated the meeting and led the discussion centered around two questions:

- What can you expect from the County concerning the LERB?

As the County moves toward a new fiscal year, it may be reasonable to invest in this bridge from a recreational stand point and for the County to ensure maintenance of the grounds around the bridge and some level of security on a continual basis as part of the County's growing park system. Commissioner Snowden of Precinct 4 has agreed to use some road and bridge resources for debris clean-up, extension of a guard rail or bollard fencing and improve the parking area. However this would not be a Precinct 4 Project, it would be a County project. It would be unreasonable to ask the Court to fund on-going maintenance of the surrounding area until there is a clear plan for the bridge. The restoration and repair of the bridge will require a strong friends group with large fundraising capacity. We must be realistic in our expectations of what the County can do. We must also weigh the challenges of preservation and sustainability of an asset such as the LERB.

- What can the County expect from the concerned citizens of the LERB?

One of the most important things concerned citizens can do is to organize themselves into a friends group and apply for non-profit status. This will allow tax deductible donations to be made to the effort. It will facilitate the County working with the friends group through Inter-local agreements and contracts. It will also give credibility to the cause as you move forward to pursue funding.

Other topics of discussion ensued including obtaining a Historical Designation (HD). We know the LERB was commissioned by the Bastrop County Commissioner's Court in 1887. We know it is one of the few historically significant assets located outside city limits in Bastrop County and was important in the development of Elgin and the surrounding area.

Kay Wesson helped us understand some of the aspects involved in applying for a Historical Designation. An official application must be submitted (Kay and Adena are researching to see if that application must come from the County since the bridge is County owned). An informal request has already been submitted by Debra Ferguson to see if the group may proceed with the formal application. The cost of the application is \$125. If approved, the County must also purchase the Historical Marker (cost unknown). The "benefits" of an HD are not overwhelming. It does call attention to the area and is listed

in a Historical Atlas. There also may be an avenue to access engineers and restoration experts through the Texas Historical Commission (THC). An HD does not limit repairs or require approval of any group prior to work. It also does not provide access to any funding.

Discussion continued around these questions:

- Is it an asset worth saving?
- Is it an asset that can be saved?

Consensus of the group based on physical presence and historical significance is that the LERB is an asset worth saving. The second question is not as easy to answer. At this time it is unknown if it is economically feasible to repair and restore the LERB.

Judge Pape stated that “do nothing” is generally an option, but not in this case. We must move forward with a plan for repair and restoration to secure the bridge and the area or we must make decision to decommission and demolish the LERB because of the liability and danger it presents to the public in its present state.

Duncan Charlton indicated that one of the landowners, Jesse Banda, who owns property adjacent to the bridge, might be open to working with the County regarding adding ROW around the bridge.

Brigham Stock from Troop 188 volunteered his services and would like to take on a project concerning the bridge to complete his Eagle Scout Certification.

Carolyn Dill, County Engineer, reported the last TxDot inspection on the LERB was in 2002. The sub-structure was rated as poor and the super structure was rated fair. We must consider that aging another 14 years and at least 2 major flood events have heavily impacted the structure of the bridge for the worse. Also because of its age there is a possibility of lead based paint. Carolyn strongly recommends another bridge inspection be done by a certified bridge engineer. The cost is unknown but likely \$10,000 and up. It was reported another engineering report was done by a movie company but that is not available.

Adena Lewis, Bastrop Co. Tourism Director, researched the possibility of using HOT tax funds for a project of this kind. The rules are very stringent for use of this money and this project would not be eligible. She also reported the legislature has not funded motion picture incentives for Texas in the last 2 sessions and revenue from the movie industry should not be counted on.

Kay named some sources of possible funds such as National Trust (a preservation group), Friends of the Texas Historical Commission (THC), other private groups and the DAR.

Adena and Kay will check with THC about resources for inspection.

Next meeting is tentatively set for Wednesday, Sept. 21 at 10:00 am.