

BOSSIER PARISH POLICE JURY
ROAD/SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES

Mr. Philip Rodgers, Chairman
Mr. Bob Brotherton, Co-Chairman
October 2, 2024

The Road/Subdivision Regulations Committee of the Bossier Parish Police Jury met on this 2nd day of October, 2024, at 11:00 a.m., in the Police Jury Conference Room, Bossier Parish Courthouse, Benton, Louisiana. Mr. Philip Rodgers, Chairman, called the meeting to order, with the following members present:

Mr. Philip Rodgers, Chairman, Mr. Bob Brotherton, Co-Chairman, Mr. Glenn Benton, Ms. Pam Glorioso, Mr. John Ed Jordan, Mr. Chris Marsiglia, Ms. Julianna Parks, Mr. Doug Rimmer.

Others present for the meeting:

Mr. Jimmy Cochran
Ms. Ashley Ezell
Ms. Stacie Fernandez
Mr. Jim Firth
Mr. Butch Ford
Ms. Julie Gill
Ms. Rachael Graves

Mr. Eric Hudson
Ms. Megan Ramos
Mr. Matt Redmon
Mr. Tom Salzer
Dr. Ken Ward
Mr. Rod White

Mr. Eric Hudson, Parish Engineer, stated that fee negotiations with the selected consultant for the East/West Corridor Project have reached an impasse due to the high cost of survey fees. He stated that he, along with Mr. Butch Ford, Parish Administrator, and Dr. Ken Ward, Assistant Parish Administrator, held a conference call with the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) on Friday, September 27, 2024. He further stated that the secretary advised that these survey fees are acceptable, and that the only two options available to the parish are either accept the fees or readvertise and rebid the project. Mr. Hudson stated that he believes the solution is to rescope and rebid the project, upon approval by the police jury. He stated that he believes the parish should be allowed to go to the next available firm, but advised that the secretary is not in agreement.

Mr. Philip Rodgers asked Mr. Hudson if there is an option to allow the parish to go to the second firm. Mr. Hudson stated that he has asked for the parish to be allowed to go to the next available firm, advising that the parish recommended selection of Neel-Schaffer, Inc., because they are familiar with this project. He further stated that Neel-Schaffer, Inc., is the number two firm. Mr. Hudson stated that when the negotiations reached an impasse, he requested approval to go to the number one firm, which is the normal process, but DOTD will not approve this request.

Mr. Tom Salzer asked what will change in the scope of the project. Mr. Ford stated that

there will be different teams in the new bids. Mr. Rodgers asked if the project will be bid out to different teams. Mr. Hudson stated that all consultants selected through federal government projects follow the Brooks Act, are qualifications-based and the fees are negotiated. Mr. Ford advised that the state put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) at a cost of \$1.643 million dollars and sent the parish a short list of three firms with teams. He stated that Neel-Schaffer, Inc., was selected due to their experience with this job. He further stated that in July, a member of the Neel-Schaffer, Inc., staff contacted Mr. Hudson and advised him that the cost had increased to \$3.42 million dollars. Mr. Ford stated that Mr. Hudson requested a breakdown of fees at that time, and upon receipt, discovered that the surveying costs are twice the amount expected. He stated that the parish has spoken to DOTD regarding these concerns and advised that according to DOTD, these costs are acceptable. Mr. Ford further stated that the surveying fees are within \$50,000 of the design fees for the project.

Mr. Ford stated that other large projects were reviewed, comparing them with the proposed fees, and advised that even in larger projects, the surveying fees were much less. He stated that the chief engineer advised the parish to negotiate the fees directly with Neel-Schaffer, Inc. He further stated that the staff has attempted to do so but Neel-Schaffer, Inc., has refused to reduce the surveying costs. Mr. Ford stated as a result, the parish requested approval to move to the next available firm. He stated that he has spoken with the former secretary of the DOTD regarding this issue, and she advised to hold a video conference with DOTD. He further stated that during the video conference, the new secretary advised that he is comfortable with the surveying costs and the parish has the option to either accept the fees or rescope and rebid the project. Mr. Ford stated that the parish has waited five years to start this project and advised that he agrees with Mr. Hudson that the parish can wait an additional six months to reduce the surveying costs.

Mr. Ford asked Mr. Hudson for an estimate of surveying costs for this project. Mr. Hudson stated that approximately \$2,000,000 for the entire project is appropriate. Mr. Ford stated he believes the project costs should be in the range of \$1,800,000 to \$2,000,000. Mr. Glenn Benton asked why the proposed surveying costs are so high. Mr. Ford stated that according to the topographic survey, the team's proposal is to complete 78 feet per day. He stated that Mr. Hudson advised Neel-Schaffer, Inc., that approximately 500-1,000 feet can be surveyed per day. He further stated that the local representative for the surveying company has advised that he cannot assist the parish in this matter. Mr. Ford stated that with the new secretary at DOTD, processes have changed,

and the parish will put the project back out for bid.

Mr. Glenn Benton stated that Mr. Ford was recently selected to serve on the committee to revamp the DOTD, and perhaps this is one area that should be explored. He further stated that he was advised that Mr. Ford's submission to the committee is one of the best submittals, as it not only details problems, but offers solutions. Mr. Ford stated that this situation is the top issue covered in his submission to the committee.

Mr. Hudson stated that he was able to negotiate the fees down to the \$2,100,000 range, but that involved a substitute for surveying and a reduction in submittals through the DOTD. He stated that the secretary did not agree with that negotiation. Mr. Salzer stated that he wants to ensure that no corners are cut in the process.

Mr. Benton asked if any matching state funds are included in this project. Mr. Hudson stated that there is no match money for this project from DOTD, advising that this project is an 80% federal and 20% parish split. Mr. Benton asked for clarification that the state is attempting to control how the parish is spending money on this project. Mr. Ford confirmed that is the situation.

Mr. Ford stated that on the seven miles of the North/South Corridor project with three and a half miles of existing roadway widening and three and a half miles of new roadway, the parish's all in cost for design and surveying is approximately \$1,500,000-\$1,600,000. He stated that the East/West Corridor is approximately four and a half miles in length, but the fees are twice the cost of the North/South Corridor. He further expressed thanks to Mr. Hudson for his attention to detail in his review of the plans and cost estimate.

Mr. Rodgers stated that local engineers have likely surveyed all the area of the East/West Corridor project. Mr. Benton confirmed the area of the project is from Benton Road to Swan Lake Road, instead of Winfield Road as originally planned. Mr. Ford stated that the road extends from Benton Road to Swan Lake Road.

Mr. Benton asked if obtaining right of way is an issue for this project. Mr. Ford stated that at a total project cost of \$3,200,000, once right of way is purchased, the parish will not have the funds to complete the project. He stated the project was shortened to end at Swan Lake Road to ensure the road can be built. He further stated that any time design fees increase, it causes a decrease in the construction budget.

Mr. Benton stated he is concerned that other development in the area will hinder the parish's ability to complete the project given the delays we have experienced. Mr. Ford stated that

the developers are aware that the project is slated to begin as soon as possible, and he expects it to start by next summer.

Mr. Ford stated that representatives of APTIM attended a recent police jury meeting regarding outstanding invoices. He stated that since that time, two project works (PWs) have completed and closed out. He further stated that upon notice of the closing of the two PWs, APTIM responded requesting that FEMA delay the closing due to additional fees not yet paid. Mr. Ford stated this matter was closed in 2019, at which point the parish paid APTIM their additional fees. He stated that he met with Ms. Tina Emerson with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) in Baton Rouge last week concerning this issue. He further stated that Ms. Emerson advised that her office is working diligently to close these matters out and she hopes to have all but two PWs closed by the end of November. Mr. Ford stated that he is confident with their support, all matters will be closed out in early 2025. He stated at that time the parish will receive its 25% match from the Louisiana Community Development Block Grant (LCDBG), which will be used to pay off the loan secured to perform all work under these PWs. He further stated that it was a great meeting, and he extended gratitude to Ms. Emerson and GOHSEP on behalf of the parish for their continued efforts to close out these projects.

Mr. Ford stated that the parish will have the ability to pay off the balance of the loan when all PWs close, which will clear that outstanding debt. There was a brief discussion regarding the budget for the FEMA projects covered in the PWs and the projected total final cost.

Mr. Rimmer discussed the shortening of the original East/West Corridor project to end at Swan Lake Road instead Winfield Road. Mr. Ford stated that an additional \$50,000,000 is needed to complete the East/West Corridor to Winfield Road.

Mr. Hudson stated that at the recent parish engineer's meeting, representatives of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) were in attendance discussing discretionary grants available. He stated that these grants do not go through DOTD, but instead are administered directly through the FHWA. He further stated that he is working to apply for funds for the East/West Corridor project, which may require some assistance from our local legislative delegation. Mr. Hudson stated that another option is to request an earmark from our legislative delegation in Washington, DC, and advised that the City of Ruston recently received \$50,000,000 in a congressional earmark.

Mr. Ford stated that there are still multiple avenues to obtain infrastructure funding with new programs coming online soon, which were discussed at the parish engineer's meeting. He stated that the parish has applied for funding sources in the past, but did not get approved. He further stated that he, along with the engineering department, will research new funding sources and make applications as they become available. Mr. Ford advised that we will contact our local and congressional legislative delegates when submitting applications for funding, depending on the source.

Mr. Benton stated that because this is a congestion relief project, funding must be available. Mr. Ford stated that the East/West Corridor is already a federally approved project, and our focus now is locating and securing any available funding sources. He stated that applications will be submitted as early as this fall.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:22 a.m. by the Chairman.

MEGAN C. RAMOS
INTERIM PARISH SECRETARY

PHILIP RODGERS, CHAIRMAN
BOSSIER PARISH POLICE JURY