



Agenda Report

2725 Judge Fran Jamieson
Way
Viera, FL 32940

New Business - Miscellaneous

J.4.

11/9/2021

Subject:

Adopt Resolution supporting Brevard County's preference of maintenance and operation policy of Mathers Bridge

Fiscal Impact:

None

Dept/Office:

District 4

Requested Action:

It is requested that the Board of County Commissioners approve and authorize the Chair to execute the resolution and direct staff to prepare a letter to the United States Coast Guard requesting modification of the deck opening schedule for Mathers Bridge.

Summary Explanation and Background:

Mathers Bridge is a swing span bridge which connects the southern end of South Tropical Trail on Merritt Island to the western end of Banana River Drive in the Town of Indian Harbor Beach.

The bridge deck opening schedule for Mathers Bridge to accommodate boat (vessel) traffic is normally on an on-demand basis. As a study and at the request of the County, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) previously permitted a deviation to the regular schedule between February 5, 2018 and August 4, 2018 allowing for openings on the hour and half hour as opposed to on-demand. Upon completion of the study, the Coast Guard accepted the results of their survey of users (overwhelmingly boaters responded) and directed the County to revert back to the on-demand bridge opening schedule.

The principal reasons the County requested to go to a scheduled bridge opening arrangement rather than on demand opening were; One, to reduce wear and tear on the bridge and two, provide predictability for both boat and vehicular traffic including emergency response. Further, it is important to know that the bridge is faithfully maintained in accordance with best practices including; but not limited to; lubrication, clearance adjustments, etc.

Currently, due to an unforeseeable mechanical failure, due to wear related issues, the bridge is disabled and cannot automatically be opened for waterway traffic. After repairs are completed, staff believes by returning to opening the bridge on a set time schedule will reduce the wear and tear on the bridge's operating mechanisms; thereby, reducing costs and downtime.

It is recommended that the Board authorize the Public Works Director to send a request to the USCG for the

operational schedule change from on-demand to a set schedule.

Additionally, the Public Works Department will seek concurrence from the City of Indian Harbour Beach in the form of a letter or adopted resolution, similar to the County's resolution in support of the operational schedule change at Mathers Bridge. Should the City of Indian Harbour Beach approve, the letter of support or resolution would be included with the County's letter to the United States Coast Guard.

Clerk to the Board Instructions:

None



November 10, 2021

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Curt Smith, Commissioner District 4

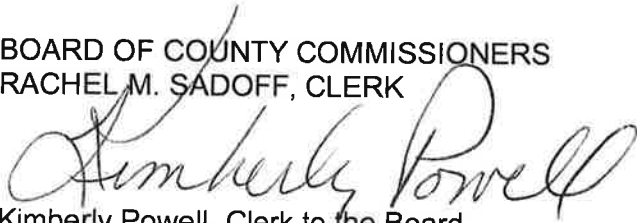
RE: Item J.4., Adopt Resolution Supporting Brevard County's Preference of Maintenance and Operation Policy of Mathers Bridge

The Board of County Commissioners, in regular session on November 9, 2021, approved and authorized the Chair to execute Resolution 2021-162 supporting the County's preference of maintenance and operation policy of Mathers Bridge; and directed staff to prepare a letter to the United States Coast Guard requesting modification of the deck opening schedule for Mathers Bridge. Enclosed is a fully-executed Resolution.

Your continued cooperation is always appreciated.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
RACHEL M. SADOFF, CLERK


Kimberly Powell, Clerk to the Board

/sm

Encl.(1)

cc: County Manager
County Attorney
Public Works

RESOLUTION 21- 162

**A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING BREVARD COUNTY'S PREFERENCE OF
MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION POLICY OF MATHERS BRIDGE**

WHEREAS, on January 12, 2017, the Brevard County Public Works Department, requested the United States Coast Guard (Coast Guard) to consider allowing Mathers Bridge to not open for vessels except every 30 minutes on the hour and half hour; and

WHEREAS, the County requested this action in order to reduce traffic delays caused by the numerous openings of the bridge and to reduce wear and tear on the bridge operating mechanisms; and

WHEREAS, on April 24, 2017, the Coast Guard published a notice of proposed rule-making (NPRM) entitled Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Banana River, Indian Harbour Beach, FL in the Federal Register (82 FR 18877) and received minimal comments; and

WHEREAS, the City of Indian Harbour Beach, FL requested to have the comment period re-opened as they believed their constituency did not have awareness of the initial notice and comment period; and

WHEREAS, on October 23, 2017, a notice of proposed rule-making was published; reopening comment period entitled Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Banana River, Indian Harbour Beach, FL in the Federal Register (82 FR 48939); and

WHEREAS, due to the numerous comments received both for and against the proposed rule, the Coast Guard published a temporary deviation to test the proposed schedule change to determine whether a permanent change is appropriate to better balance the needs of maritime and vehicle traffic; and

WHEREAS, the Coast Guard conducted a test deviation, from 6 a.m. on February 5, 2018 to 6 a.m. on August 4, 2018. The bridge was open for vessels requesting passage on the hour and half hour, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sunday through Thursday. On Friday, Saturday, and all Federal holidays, 24 hours a day, the bridge was open for vessels on the hour and half hour. At all other times, the bridge was open on signal if at least two hours' notice was given, but only for emergencies; and

WHEREAS, following the test deviation, the operational schedule reverted back to the on-demand basis due to results of a majority rules survey influenced by the boating community; and

WHEREAS, the frequency of repairs to the bridge's equipment is steadily on the rise and the bridge has experienced numerous issues since. It was inoperable from August 30, 2021 to

August 31, 2021 and was inoperable from October 13, 2021 to November 4, 2021 due to necessary repairs; and

WHEREAS, through cooperation with the Coast Guard, the potential exists to reduce bridge openings by reporting unauthorized activities; and

WHEREAS, this body of water is not tidal, is relatively sheltered, is not adversely affected by wind, and is not shallow or shoaled, therefore maritime safety is not an issue; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of Brevard County taxpayers, motorists and boaters alike, to reduce the increased frequency of mechanical breakdowns, high cost and inconvenience associated with the maintenance and operation of this critical piece of infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, it is requested that the City of Indian Harbour Beach adopt a similar resolution or provide a letter of support to the Coast Guard in favor of the operational schedule change; and

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Board of County Commissioners of Brevard County, Florida that Board supports and encourages the Coast Guard to approve the permanent change to the operational schedule of Mathers Bridge to a set time schedule. This schedule will provide for a cost-effective operation, reduce wear and tear on the operating mechanisms, and provide for a predictable transportation environment.

DONE, ORDERED, AND ADOPTED in Regular Session the 9th day of November 2021.

ATTEST:


Rachel Sadoff, Clerk of the Court

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: 

Rita Pritchett, Chair

As approved by the Board on November 9, 2021