

**FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 28, 2003**

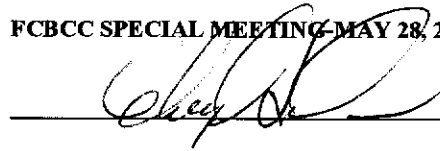
OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE: Cheryl Sanders, Chairman; Jimmy Mosconis, Bevin Putnal, Clarence Williams and Eddie Creamer, Commissioners. Kendall Wade, Clerk; Amelia Varnes, Deputy Clerk.

11:00 A.M. Chairman Sanders called the meeting to order.

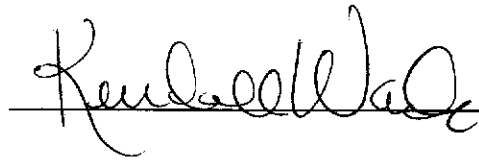
(Tape 1-5) Alan Pierce, Director of Administrative Services, said he would open the discussion regarding the demolition of the old SGI Bridge. He stated Harry Buzzett, SGI, has started a campaign of sorts to try and keep the old bridge intact for fishing, picnicking, etc. He informed the Board there were several representatives of FDOT present this morning and asked Steve Benak, P. E., District Construction Engineer, FDOT Chipley Office to introduce the other people he had with him to discuss this issue with the Board. Keith Hinson, Regina Battles, Frank Roberts, Brent Edwards, and John Kemp were introduced to the Board. Mr. Pierce explained the agreement the County signed with FDOT dated October 19, 1999 gives the County six-tenths (.6) mile on each end of the existing Bryant Patton Bridge and \$1,520,000.00 to the County to assume full responsibility for maintenance of those portions of the bridge being transferred as well as the County assuming sole liability for the said portions immediately upon transfer. He stated this, according to the Agreement would be within thirty days of completion of all matters necessary to lawfully transfer said portions of the Bryant Patton Bridge to the County. Commissioner Mosconis said he thought the State Park Service should take over the bridge area if it is left intact. Harry Buzzett, SGI, gave a presentation on the status of the request he has made about saving the bridge. Mr. Benak informed the Board the old bridge is badly deteriorated and soon will be unsafe for traffic. He stated this is why FDOT is building a new bridge to begin with. He said, at this moment, it would take approximately 5 million dollars to bring the bridge up to standards. He explained there are just too many liability issues involved in this situation. He said the permitting the FDOT had had to secure took approximately two years. He stated all of the permits are now in place for the bridge demolition and all subsequent projects concerning the bridge destruction. Chairman Sanders said she wanted to make sure the 1.5 million dollars had been appropriated for this project. Mr. Benak said he believed it was and had been appropriated since the agreement was signed on October 19, 1999. Patty Durham and Rose Drye, real estate agents, said if the FDOT did decide to leave the bridge intact then they, SGI residents, would like to ask the portion of the bridge from SGI be demolished to allow for parking. Mr. Kemp said FDOT was going to furnish parking areas when the temporary bridge was removed from the SGI side. Commissioner Creamer said he would like to see the State form a "Cat Point Park" on the Eastpoint side of the bridge and furnish parking, etc. for the pier and bridge. Mr. Benak reminded the Board again the bridge was unsafe for vehicular traffic. He also reminded the Board the bridge would have to be maintained, inspected, etc. for which the County would have to budget for yearly. Ms. Battles said she is one of the environmental specialists on the bridge project and has spent two years getting these permits processed. She stated the Submerged Land

Easement granted in 1963 for the bridge specifically states the bridge would be used for transportation only. She said once the bridge is no longer used for transportation or traffic purposes, which a fishing pier or public recreation area is not considered transportation, the causeway in that area reverts automatically to DEP jurisdiction. She stated they are just one of the entities that wanted traffic kept off the causeway because of the nesting birds. She said there are many species of birds that use the causeway as a nesting area. She stated the permits specifically state the FDOT will shore up this area so the causeway can be left free standing with no vehicular or pedestrian traffic. She said there has already been two years of environmental studies, public meetings held in this very Courthouse, etc. about this proposal. She stated FDOT had to meet all of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970. She said the Federal funding for the new bridge came from federal funds based on the environmental assessment completed on this project, which reflects FDOT would leave six-tens mile on each end of the existing bridge and the shoring up of the causeway. She stated all of this has been documented through the process with the County and FDOT. She said there are more issues involved in this matter than whether FDOT can allow the County to pursue this request. She explained the once the bridge is no longer used for transportation FDOT no longer has the final say on what the property can be used for, since there are several more entities who would have an opinion on the matter. Commissioner Putnal expressed his concern about the demolition project and what affect it would have on the oysters in the Bay. He said the more the pilings, etc. are disturbed the more it would affect the oysters. He said he didn't want anything done to cause any disturbance to the Bay bottom. Mr. Buzzett said the sea gulls are eating all of the birds and eggs and he stated he feels they would take over the causeway. Don Ashley, Florida Wildlife Federation, said he asked his group to canvas their members in the North West Region about this matter. He informed the Board their opinion is there can be a balance struck between the birds, fishermen, etc. to utilize that island. He said he agrees with Commissioner Putnal and what impact removing the bridge is going to have on the Bay and the oyster population. He stated he would like to have a meeting with the preliminary entities and stakeholders in this project to see what, if anything, could be done to change or amend the agreement the County has with FDOT. He suggested the Board schedule such a meeting as soon as possible. Kendall Wade, the Clerk, said he would call Escambia County and Bay County to see if they own or operate such a pier, etc. Commissioner Williams said he agreed and wanted Mr. Pierce to schedule a meeting with all of the groups involved with this matter as soon as he could. Mr. Pierce said he would ask Mr. Buzzett and Mr. Ashley to furnish him the names and addresses of all these groups so he could attempt to set up such a meeting. Mr. Benak reminded the Board that time is of the essence because FDOT has a contract with the new bridge construction group and the taxpayers cannot afford to have any overruns on this project. He said any delays would cost money. Commissioner Creamer stated he did not want the County to get involved with what he would describe as a "money pit" if they didn't have to. He said he could foresee future problems with funding for maintenance and repairs to this pier-causeway, etc. and did not want the taxpayers of this County burdened with this project.

FCBCC SPECIAL MEETING MAY 28, 2003



CHERYL SANDERS, CHAIRMAN



KENDALL WADE, CLERK