

Brownlow, Kellie

From: Brownlow, Kellie
Sent: Thursday, October 01, 2015 12:00 PM
To: 'Klepal, Dan (CMG-Atlanta)'; Kell, Sheri; DiMassimo, Faye; Chapman, Leroy (CMG-Atlanta)
Cc: Lee, Tim; lee8007@bellsouth.net; Duncan, Todd (CMG-Atlanta); Hankerson, David
Subject: RE: bridge questions

Dan

Please see below from Chairman Lee.

Kellie

Kellie Brownlow
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From: Klepal, Dan (CMG-Atlanta) [mailto:Dan.Klepal@ajc.com]
Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2015 7:01 PM
To: Kell, Sheri; DiMassimo, Faye; Chapman, Leroy (CMG-Atlanta)
Cc: Brownlow, Kellie; Lee, Tim; lee8007@bellsouth.net; Duncan, Todd (CMG-Atlanta); Hankerson, David
Subject: RE: bridge questions

Faye, et al:

Here are our questions for the DOT director:

- Is the \$2.2 million cost estimate for Bridge 2, the pedestrian-only span over Circle 75, Cobb County taxpayers' responsibility?
- Why did a county spokeswoman say the county would not answer this question because the project has been "placed on hold." What does the current status of the project have to do with answer to this question?
- There is a cost estimate for utility line relocation at \$500,000. Is that still accurate? Are there more lines that need to be moved or reinforced? Could the cost go higher?
- Is the ROW estimate you provided to the newspaper months ago of \$2 million still valid?
- Is the \$3.5 million cost estimate for the Galleria parking deck reinforcement still valid.
- When all expenses are added together -- \$9 million for Bridge 1 (estimated); \$2.2 million for Bridge 2 (estimated); \$3.5 million for the deck reinforcement (estimated); \$2 million for ROW (estimated) \$900,000 for engineering; \$500,000 for utility relocation (estimated) – the total price tag for county taxpayers appears to be \$18 million. Is any of that incorrect?
- How many additional cost estimates of the project must be provided to GDOT as it proceeds?

Dan,

Part of every good planning process is gathering facts and that is what AECOM has been hired to do. This is the phase of this project we are in. In fact, I recently recommended we delay moving forward so our partners at the Galleria can do the same. No final recommendations have been presented to the Board and there have been no decisions made about design, funding or timeline in regard to the bridge. You are writing a story about “what ifs.”

- Why does county staff refuse to answer basic questions about the cost of the bridge and whose funding responsibility it will be?

As you know Cobb is a County Manager form of government. As such it is not the role of the Chairman to direct or manage county staff. Therefore this is a question for the county manager.

- Why did you release a statement Sept. 16 with the \$9 million cost estimate for the bridge when the county provided a new cost estimate that was \$2.2 million higher to GDOT in late August? Were you unaware of the higher cost?

A final cost estimate has not been presented to the Board.

My understanding of the documents you are reviewing is that the \$2.2 million figure to which you are referring is the estimated cost of the landing outside the perimeter. The Atlanta Braves will be funding this portion of the bridge, not Cobb County.

- Are you aware of other new costs, such as the \$500,000 estimated cost of utility relocation?
- Will the ultimate cost of the bridge -- \$18 million when all combined – have a bearing on whether you decide to proceed with the project? Or are you committed to building it regardless of cost?

No and my understanding is that this cost no longer exists.

Your assumption that the bridge will cost Cobb County taxpayers \$18 million is wrong. I have made it clear that I will recommend to the Board that we delay the project until we have all the information necessary for Cobb County and our partners at the Galleria to move forward together.

I have consistently stated that the Cobb County funding commitment to this project will not exceed \$9 million. I stand firmly by this statement.

- Your Sept. 16 statement said \$9 million in combined SPLOST and FTA money would be used to pay for bridge construction. How will the additional \$2.2 million be covered? How will the \$3.5 million for parking deck reinforcement be funded?

The \$3.5 million estimate for reconstruction of the deck is now an irrelevant number. When the Galleria Authority decided to move forward with the hotel feasibility study, this estimate became invalid. The proposed hotel will also impact the deck. Reconstruction to accommodate a circulator makes no sense when we know it will have to be reconstructed again to house a convention hotel.

The \$2.2 million figure to which you are referring is the estimated cost of the landing outside the perimeter. The Atlanta Braves will be funding this portion of the bridge, not Cobb County.

Thank you both for considering these questions. You should know that we reached out to county staff Wednesday morning, in an abundance of caution and in an effort to be fair to the county and to make sure that readership of the state’s largest newspaper does not receive inaccurate information about this project, and the additional costs we have uncovered in our document search.

The county spokeswoman has informed us that staff will not answer the question because the "project is on hold and under review." I have discussed that response with editors here, and the newspaper's senior leadership agrees that the two issues are unrelated, that the question is fair and legitimate, and that if we do not get responses to our questions by our noon deadline we will proceed with the story saying that it appears the additional cost is to be borne by county taxpayers, and explain that the county is refusing to answer the question and the reason stated for the refusal (see below). We will also most likely publish all of the questions the county chooses to ignore.

We would certainly prefer to have a conversation with the county about this important project so that we can relay the best and most accurate information to our readers, and so we can incorporate the county's point of view into it. Please consider responding.

Thanks! And have a great evening!

Dan Klepal

From: Kell, Sheri [<mailto:Sheri.Kell@cobbcounty.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2015 4:12 PM
To: Klepal, Dan (CMG-Atlanta); DiMassimo, Faye
Subject: RE: bridge question

Dan: Faye is out of the office today so I am replying. Assuming you are referring to the final segment of the pedestrian bridge, as you know, the whole project is on hold and under review. Therefore, we can't provide an answer to your question at this time.

Thank you, Sheri

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From: Klepal, Dan (CMG-Atlanta) [<mailto:Dan.Klepal@ajc.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2015 10:52 AM
To: DiMassimo, Faye
Cc: Kell, Sheri
Subject: bridge question

Faye:

Can you tell me, who is paying for Bridge #2, the pedestrian-only bridge over Circle 75 to the Braves plaza. County or Braves?

Thanks,

Dan Klepal
Cobb County government reporter
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
223 Perimeter Center Parkway