

UPDATE re AUGUST 5, 2019 MEETING RE LONGBRIDGE CLOSURE
Report from Dave Spitler, Pentwater Township Supervisor

A meeting on August 5, 2019 was held at Oceana County offices in Hart, attended by: Dennis Powers (chair of the Oceana County Board of Commissioners), Dean Gustafson (County Commissioner representing Pentwater Township residents), Jim Duram (Emergency Manager for Oceana County), Oceana County Sheriff Craig Mast, Mark Timmer (Managing Director of the Oceana County Road Commission), Dave Spitler (Pentwater Township Supervisor), Lisa McKinney (Deputy Supervisor), Amy LaBarge (citizen), and Danielle Yoon (professional engineer, FTCH commenting on funding options). Here are the highlights:

Some Pentwater Township/Village “improved residential property” data was noted:

- There are 1,810 such properties in Pentwater Twp (includes the Village). Slightly more than half (52.5%) are in the Village; slightly less than half (47.5%) are in the Twp. (but outside the Village).
- 502 of these 1,810 properties – or slightly more than one-quarter (27.7%) of these properties -- are adversely affected by the closure.
- 99 of these 502 adversely affected properties (20%) are in the Village; 403 (80%) are in the Twp. (but outside the Village).
- Another way to look at it is that 10 percent of such property owners in the Village are affected, and almost half (47%) of such property owners in the Township are affected.
- Accordingly, **Dave Spitler offered to assume responsible for providing more frequent communications to residents and the community at large. With the posting of this report, the pentwatertwp.org Website homepage will now be the source of the latest news, as new developments occur.**

It was noted that under Michigan Law, the Village of Pentwater cannot contribute any monies to any remedy since the Longbridge roadway/causeway is outside of the Village boundaries.

It was noted by the Road Commission that it receives all revenue from the State (from motor vehicle fees, and taxes on fuels) -- not from Oceana County taxpayers (so there's no way to attribute a portion of the OCRC's revenue as coming from Pentwater Township taxpayers).

As was reported by the Oceana County Road Commission on its Facebook page on June 20, a May 24 examination by engineers of the bridge showed it to be in good condition, several stretches of the detour have been improved. This is timely because Sheriff Mast reported that an average of 1,100 vehicles per day traveled the route between July 19 and July 23.

It was reiterated that the “bridge” is fine; the problem is with the short, saturated and often submerged stretch of road surface between Monroe Road and the bridge.

The current proposed remedy involves either (1) boring deep holes with an auger, injecting them with grout, and then driving pilings through an estimated 30-foot layer of peat, or (2) driving pilings into bedrock. Then, a “geo tech grid” (i.e., the structure of a new road surface)

would be attached to the pilings above the water. High water could continue to flow underneath so it wouldn't be obstructed and instead flow sideways across Monroe Road.

Soil borings are being taken August 6-8 to get a better sense of what's below the surface. Results are expected to be known in approximately three weeks. Based on the depths that are expected to be measured, the total cost of repair is thought to be about \$815K. The results of the soil borings will revise this figure up or down.

The Road Commission reiterated that it has considered an array of temporary fixes, with downsides to each. For example, it was suggested that several inches of limestone could be temporarily spread across the soggy stretch of roadway, but that doesn't contemplate the need to engage state environmental authorities in a lengthy process because of nearby wetlands and wildlife.

The relevancy of Oceana County's Hazard Management Plan is being researched. See: (<https://oceana.mi.us/government/departments/emergency-management/hazard-management-plan/> and https://oceana.mi.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Oceana_hmp-update_adopted-03.12.15.pdf).

The current Road Commission estimate for mitigation of the road is \$950K based on the data it has so far. This number will be firmed up as information from soil borings etc. comes in. The 2020 budget of the Road Commission has publicly committed \$300K and the Township will also be discussing a contribution as well in the future.

The State of Michigan's Emergency Management Act 390 was discussed at length. This involves the governor issuing a state of emergency that could possibly make available monies in a state disaster and emergency contingency fund. But it was concluded that a specific incident needed to trigger this; our flooding circumstance occurred over time.

So, what's now being looked at closely is the applicability of a Federal Program -- FEMA's "Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDM), which provides grants to help plan and direct hazard mitigation (the action of reducing the severity, seriousness or painfulness of something). Funds exist to reduce overall risk to populations, and it's now thought that this fits the Longbridge circumstance because the proposed remedy is not a repair per se, but rather a mitigation step to solve any future problems.

Other ways being explored to make up the estimated shortfall of funds include (1) a loan obtained by the Township, (2) a special asset millage, which would require a vote in the next regular election (August of 2020) or a special election (added cost), (3) a fundraising drive where contributions would be sought from individuals (and eligible for favorable federal tax treatment depending on their personal tax circumstances), or (4) a combination of the above.