

December 20, 2005
From The Morning Call

Bridge commission adds jobs to its administration

Joint panel also allots grants to boost traffic and pedestrian safety.

By Joe McDermott
Of The Morning Call

For the second time in two months, the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission has created two new positions that officers say are aimed at streamlining its administration.

Commissioners at Monday's monthly meeting also doled out more money from a community grants program to Lower Mount Bethel Township in Pennsylvania, Pohatcong Township in New Jersey, and several other municipalities who sought funds for projects aimed at vehicular and pedestrian traffic improvements.

The new positions are the director of security, safety and training and the director of planning and policy.

The security position combines two jobs eliminated last month along with three commission employees. It also redirects duties to reflect a commission contract with the Pennsylvania and New Jersey state police departments to provide security for the toll bridges, said Chairman Philip Mugavero.

In November, John Redos, director of public safety and Maryanne Prunetti, director of safety and training, were fired.

The planning and policy job was formerly at the level of assistant executive director, but was downgraded as part of a staff realignment, said commission spokesman Pete Peterson.

Mugavero said the person who fills the job will represent the commission with regional planning agencies as well as local and federal organizations.

Roger Sager, former deputy executive director of policy development, was also dismissed last month.

The commission last month created the positions of chief financial officer and deputy director for communications, but none of the four new jobs have been filled, Peterson said.

The board, which includes representatives from both states, empowered Executive Director Frank McCartney to interview and hire candidates who will later be ratified by the full commission.

The commission also awarded a third round of grants Monday from its \$40 million community economic development fund, bringing the total allocated to \$27 million.

Lower Mount Bethel will receive \$1.175 million from the commission program to build a park-and-ride lot for motor vehicles and bicycles as well as an 8-mile pedestrian path between Riverton and Martins Creek.

The vehicle lot cost is estimated at \$511,942 and the pedestrian path that will pass the township recreational fields is expected to cost about \$657,532.

Pohatcong will receive \$798,000 for traffic flow improvements at the intersection of the Route 627 spur and beautification projects near the Reigelsville toll bridge.

Also winning a grant was Solebury Township in Bucks County, which received \$1.755 million for a new bicycle and pedestrian path on the east side of Route 32 near the commission headquarters, and traffic improvements on Route 179 and Sugan Road near the Route 202 toll bridge.

Milford, N.J., received \$1.552 million for sidewalk replacement and the removal of railroad tracks and Frenchtown, N.J., received \$795,000 for a park-and-ride lot and improved lighting and pedestrian safety measures.

All of the projects are expected to be done by 2008. This fall, commission approved about \$21 million in grants to 15 other communities, including Easton and Phillipsburg.

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