



**OFFICE OF
BAY COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

James A. Barcia
County Executive

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December 18, 2017

Andrew Niedzinski
Bay City Commission President

RE: Independence Bridge

Dear Mr. Niedzinski:

The Bay County Commissioners and Bay County Executive strive to be good stewards of the County taxpayers' dollars. We remain committed to ensuring that any request for increased taxes is vigorously examined before it is placed on any County-wide ballot.

The Bay City Commission has not, to date, presented the County Board of Commissioners with any concrete proposal to repair or replace the Independence Bridge through either a county-wide millage or issuance of bonds backed by the County's full faith and credit.

Construction of the \$16 million dollar Independence Bridge in the early 1970s was originally financed through a county-wide, voter approved \$7 million dollar bond, \$3 million in City funds, and \$6 million in federal grant dollars. The City agreed, as part of its contribution to the bridge project, that it would pay all costs of operation, administration and maintenance of the bridge as costs were incurred once construction was complete and the bridge opened for traffic.


The County recognizes the financial difficulties faced by the City in its continued maintenance and operation of the Independence Bridge on an ever-tightening budget. However, this responsibility was voluntarily undertaken by the City in exchange for a sizable, multi-million dollar bond subsidized by Bay County residents.

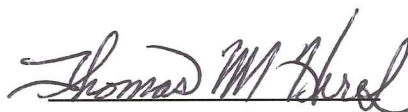
The County may issue bonds or levy taxes on County residents only when specifically authorized by law to do so. There are many different statutes that govern the type of taxes the County may levy, when it can borrow money, incur debt and issue bonds. This is a complex issue and the imposition of additional taxes on a County-wide basis will impact each and every Bay County taxpayer. It is not a request the County Board and Executive take lightly.

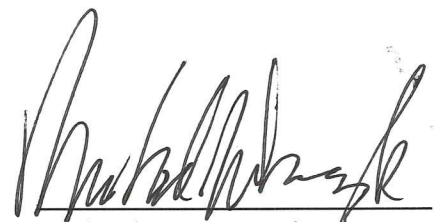
The Bay City Commission has a responsibility to conduct its own due diligence and present to the Bay County Board of Commissioners and the Bay County Road Commission a concise plan, proposal or request for financial assistance. It is not the Bay County Commission or Executive's responsibility to research this issue or create a plan for removal, repair or replacement of the Independence Street Bridge.

Bay County remains available to discuss this project with the City Commission members and other potential stakeholders in this project, including representatives of the Road Commission, state and federal government, and private entities that may also offer valuable input and offer options to resolve this very difficult matter. Absent such a dialogue, the County awaits a detailed proposal from the Bay City Commission identifying what statute it relies on to request that County tax dollars once again fund the Independence Bridge (or its replacement), as well as all of the details associated with the project.

Sincerely,


James A. Barcia
Bay County Executive


Thomas M. Herek
Bay County Commission,
Chair


Michael J. Duranczyk
Bay County Commission,
Vice Chair

Cc: Andrew Dodson