



April 10, 2015

Mr. Cory Cox
Legislative Director
Office of the Attorney General
323 Center Street, Suite 200
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Dear Mr. Cox:

We write to follow up on the recent request from Washington County Justice of the Peace Eva Madison asking the Attorney General's office to investigate the ongoing issues with the construction of our county bridges. We too are very concerned about these issues and hope the Attorney General's office will investigate. We are contacting you because we understand you are handling this issue for the Attorney General, and we wanted to provide additional information to assist you.

As you know, our County Judge, Marilyn Edwards, acknowledged last month that two of our bridges, the Harvey Dowell Bridge and the Stonewall Bridge, were constructed improperly. Quorum Court members have been trying to get information on these bridges and their improper construction since last November after George Braswell, the plaintiff in the whistleblower case, sent a letter to the members of the Court outlining his concerns about the two bridges. A copy of his letter is attached. At virtually every turn, no information has been provided. One member of the Court sent a letter in December asking for a report on the Judge's investigations into Mr. Braswell's allegations. Judge Edwards would not go into any detail, but assured us the bridges were safe. In January at our regular Quorum Court meeting, information was sought on the investigation into the safety of the bridges, but again we were denied information, but assured the bridges were safe. Even after Judge Edwards' acknowledgement that the bridges were constructed improperly – to the point engineers recommended the demolition of large existing center supports on the Stonewall Bridge and lowering of the weight limit on the Harvey Dowell Bridge to three tons – her office still refuses to provide any information. At our Public Works Committee meeting held on March 30, the bridge matter was on the agenda. Judge Edwards came to the meeting and read a prepared statement, but refused to answer any questions. At our Finance and Budget Committee meeting held on April 7, the Chairman asked Shawn Shrum, the Assistant Road Superintendent, to appear before the Committee and answer questions about the costs to taxpayers resulting from the bridge issues. Mr. Shrum declined to attend, choosing to attend his son's baseball game instead, and the Judge's office declined to send anyone from the

Mr. Cory Cox
April 10, 2015
Page 2

Road Department in his place. While all members of the Court do not agree on the specifics of how this matter should be handled going forward, the Court certainly desires more information than what little has been given to us so far.

We are concerned that if the Attorney General's office does not investigate, we will never know, and therefore the public will never know, how this situation with our bridges got so out of hand and how far ranging the problem is. Although Judge Edwards had originally asked our Prosecuting Attorney, Matt Durrett, to investigate the matter, she suspended that request pending resolution of the request of the Attorney General's office. Furthermore, Mr. Durrett had not decided that it would be appropriate for his office to investigate, so he may ultimately decline. For one, the County funds a large portion of his office expenses, raising concerns of a conflict of interest. For two, he would likely need to rely on law enforcement to investigate, and our Sheriff's office would also face a conflict of interest. For three, we believe a broader investigation, not just whether a crime was committed, is imperative here.

We are hearing from our citizens in the County that they want a fair and impartial investigation to be conducted as soon as possible. Without the assistance of your office, we are concerned that will never happen. We need the assistance of an outside agency, like your office, because the County cannot investigate itself.

We therefore join Justice of the Peace Eva Madison in her request and hope you will give the request due consideration.

Sincerely,

Justice of the Peace, District ____

11-22-2014

Honorable Marilyn Edwards, Washington County Judge Quorum Court Members and the Elect:

For those that do not know me, I am a County Employee with the Road Department.

The bridge under construction, on County Road 64, is not being built per plans.

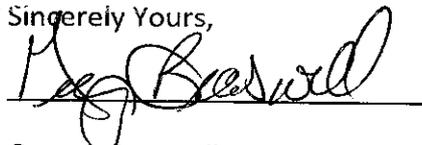
1. Bent rebar dowels in the footings were replaced with straight dowels.
2. Bent rebar in footings were replaced with straight bars.
3. Rebar mats have not been installed per plans.
4. Concrete footings have not been poured on a flat stable base.
5. Rebar lap is not being met.
6. Dowel bars are being installed in drilled 6 to 12 inch holes.
7. Rebar is being cut, heated and bent with a torch.
8. 130 yards of concrete was poured in a footing, that by plans, should have taken 60 yards.
9. Osha safety standards are not being met.

The bridge on County Rd. 195 was built in a similar way.

Questions that come to mind:

1. Has the life span of the bridges been shortened?
2. What is the true weight load the bridges are good for?
3. What will be the future cost for repair and maintenance?
4. Why not build bridges per plans?

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Braswell", written over a horizontal line.

George Braswell

Elkins, Arkansas

479-301-9465