

CITY OF BORDENTOWN

RESOLUTION 2023-111

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION'S RESTORATION OF THE
HISTORIC FARNSWORTH AVENUE BRIDGE**

WHEREAS, since 1831, the Farnsworth Avenue Stone Arch Bridge (“Farnsworth Avenue Bridge” or the “Bridge”) has been a significant and prominent feature in the historic City of Bordentown (the “City”); and

WHEREAS, recognized as one of the oldest masonry arch bridges which span an iron railway in the United States, the Farnsworth Avenue Bridge also had the first steam-powered locomotive to traverse that railway, the John Bull, travel under its arch; and

WHEREAS, located in the center of the City’s Historic District, the Farnsworth Avenue Bridge has always been an integral part of the City, and region’s history and economy; and

WHEREAS, over the past few years, the future of the Farnsworth Avenue Bridge has been a topic of discussion and concern, as the New Jersey Department of Transportation (“NJDOT”) weighs its options on whether the Bridge should be rehabilitated to save and revitalize the historic structure, or whether it should be demolished and reconstructed; and

WHEREAS, based on a Report issued in 2019, the NJDOT and its professional consultants have noted the Bridge is “structurally deficient,” but with no imminent or short-term risk to health, safety, and welfare to the City community; and

WHEREAS, in response to that 2019 Report, local professionals wrote to the NJDOT in early 2020, seeking clarification, with no response; and

WHEREAS, one of those individuals, a professional engineer, noted that the American Society of Civil Engineers (“ASCE”) has identified over 6,000 bridges throughout the United States as “structurally deficient,” which remain in productive use; and

WHEREAS, the 2019 Report also erroneously concluded that replacement of the Farnsworth Avenue Bridge would have “minimal socioeconomic impact[.]” on the Historic District of the City; and

WHEREAS, this conclusion could not be further from the truth, as demolition of the historic Farnsworth Avenue Bridge would impact the City’s thriving Downtown area by severing Farnsworth Avenue, one of the few primary arteries into the business district; and

WHEREAS, any such demolition would negate the Bordentown Historical Society's continued efforts to have the Bridge placed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, and the already-existing Veterans' Memorial, located atop of the Bridge, recently constructed through the tireless efforts of the Bordentown Veterans Memorial Committee, would also be inextricably damaged; and

WHEREAS, it is the Commissioners' view that the Bridge should not be replaced, but rather rehabilitated with every effort made to leave minimal impact on the City in general and the Historic Business District in particular; and

WHEREAS, in any case, it is clear that, at the very least, caution and further due diligence and investigation should precede any action regarding the Bridge.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED this 14th day of August 2023 by the Board of Commissioners, that for all the foregoing reasons, the Board of Commissioners hereby wholeheartedly support the preservation of the Farnsworth Avenue Bridge, and the protection of the City, and its Historic District and its businesses, and urge that the NJDOT investigate the Bridge, and the impact on the City, with caution, good faith, and due diligence, with the goal of preserving the Bridge.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by the Board of Commissioners of the City of Bordentown at a regular meeting conducted on the 14th day of August 2023.

Jennifer M. Smith
Acting City Clerk