



MINUTES OF JOINT-COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES AND COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

JUNE 3, 2026

Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources:

Chairperson: Hon. Glennon I. Pegollo
Member: Hon. Darlaine Mae A. Benesen

Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure

Chairperson: Hon. Bonifacio M. Atienza Jr

GUEST: Ms. Kejellen H. Evangelista
OIC-MENRO

Mr. Joseph Romoel B. Lofamia
Project Manager / Engineer (DSWD)

Ms. Jea Marie Diato
Atty III - (DSWD)

Ms. Heidee Becerral
Admin Officer V - (DSWD)

Ms. Maria Eugenia Karisma M. Carde
Engineer II - (DSWD)

Mr. Peter John D. Cobangbang
PDO II - (DSWD)

SUBMITTED BY: Irene A. Arviola

SUBJECT: ENDORSEMENT LETTER FROM MR. BENJAMIN A. BAUTISTA, PROJECT DIRECTOR, UPMO-ROADS MANAGEMENT CLUSTER II (MULTILATERAL), REQUESTING THE ISSUANCE/ENDORSEMENT OF A CERTIFICATE OF NO OBJECTION (CONO) FOR THE AFFECTED TREES WITHIN THE PROJECT ALIGNMENT IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF NAIC, CAVITE, IN CONNECTION WITH THE BATAAN-CAVITE INTERLINK BRIDGE (BCIB) PROJECT

The meeting was called to order at 11:04 AM by the Committee Chairperson Glennon I. Pegollo, with the presence of Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure Chairperson Hon. Bonifacio M. Atienza Jr., SB Member Cesar Ryan Nazareno, SK Federation Pres. Darlaine Mae A. Benesen, Ms. Kjellen H. Evangelista (OIC-MENRO) representative from MENRO, Mr. Joseph Romoel B. Lofamia (Project Manager), Ms. Jea Marie Diato (Atty III), Ms. Heidee Becerral (Admin Officer V), Ms. Maria Eugenia Karisma M. Carde (Engineer II) and Mr. Peter John D. Cobangbang (PDO II) as representative from DPWH.

At the outset of the discussion, the Committee noted that prior meetings had already been conducted between the DPWH, the Municipal Government of Naic, and the Sangguniang Bayan regarding the request for the issuance of a Certificate of No Objection (CONO) for trees affected by the alignment of the Bataan-Cavite Interlink Bridge (BCIB) Project within the Municipality of Naic, Cavite.

The Committee was informed that the Municipality has an existing regulatory framework governing the cutting of trees under Ordinance No. 10, Series of 2018, otherwise known as the Environmental Code of



the Municipality of Naic. Particular reference was made to Section 33(c), which requires the securing of a Certificate of No Objection from the concerned Sangguniang Barangay and an endorsement from the Office of the Mayor through the MENRO prior to the issuance of a permit by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The ordinance likewise imposes an environmental fee of Five Hundred Pesos (₱500.00) for every tree cut.

The representatives of the DPWH informed the Committee that under the previous administration, a Certificate of No Objection and exemption from the payment of the environmental fee had already been granted for the project. However, the certification covered only a portion of the affected trees and did not include the entire number subsequently identified within the project area. Consequently, DPWH requested the issuance of another Certificate of No Objection to cover the remaining affected trees.

The DPWH further stated that discussions with the current administration resulted in an agreement in principle to facilitate the issuance of the required CONO and to consider exemption from the environmental fee, taking into account that the BCIB Project is funded by the National Government and is intended for public use and benefit.

During the deliberations, DPWH explained that the agency consistently complies with all DENR requirements, including the payment of applicable fees and the implementation of tree replacement and environmental mitigation programs. However, they noted that this was the first instance in which a local government unit required the payment of an environmental fee per tree for a national infrastructure project. They further emphasized that the ordinance specifically pertains to trees cut for “firewood and charcoal making and other purposes for sale.” Since the affected trees would neither be sold nor utilized for commercial gain, DPWH maintained that the project should not fall within the scope of the cited provision.

The Committee was likewise informed that the project commenced on March 15, 2026 and that DPWH is currently undertaking right-of-way acquisition activities involving affected lands, structures, crops, and trees. Initially, four hundred thirteen (413) trees were identified for cutting. However, following validation and re-evaluation conducted by the DENR, the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), and the Department of Agriculture (DA), the number increased to approximately eight hundred seventeen (817) trees. As a result, DPWH was advised to secure a new Certificate of No Objection reflecting the updated number of affected trees.

DPWH further informed the Committee that it had formally requested exemption from the payment of the environmental fee. However, it was advised that the matter should be referred to the Sangguniang Bayan for appropriate legislative action. The agency expressed concern regarding the substantial financial implications of paying the environmental fee for all affected trees, noting that its allocated budget only covers fees prescribed by the DENR and does not include local environmental charges of this nature.

The Committee and DPWH likewise discussed the interpretation of the phrase “other purposes” under the ordinance. DPWH clarified that while the cutting of trees is being undertaken for a purpose other than those expressly mentioned, it is not intended for sale or profit. The affected trees will either be turned over to the DENR or donated to schools and barangays for public use, including the construction of tables, chairs, and other community facilities. DPWH emphasized that it derives no income from the cutting of the trees and that such activity is solely incidental to the implementation of a government infrastructure project.

The Committee also inquired about the agency’s tree replacement program. DPWH explained that replacement requirements are determined by the DENR and vary depending on the classification of the trees. For coconut trees, replacement seedlings are provided through the PCA, while forest trees such as mahogany are covered under DENR-supervised replacement programs. The actual tree-planting activities are likewise monitored and implemented under DENR supervision.

As part of its recommendations, the Committee suggested that replacement tree-planting activities be conducted within Barangay Timalan Balsahan, considering that the area would be significantly affected by the removal of trees. DPWH expressed its willingness to coordinate with the DENR regarding the Committee’s recommendation.



The Committee likewise raised the possibility of transferring some of the affected trees instead of cutting them. In response, DPWH explained that the affected trees are already mature and that assessments conducted by the DENR, PENRO, CENRO, and MENRO in February 2026 recommended cutting rather than transplantation, citing the very low survival rate of mature trees when transferred.

When asked about the schedule of implementation, DPWH stated that tree-cutting activities may commence immediately upon the issuance of the Certificate of No Objection and the corresponding permit from the DENR. The agency further noted that any delay in securing the necessary approvals may adversely affect the project timetable, particularly with the onset of the rainy season.

During the meeting, DPWH also presented an overview of the Bataan-Cavite Interlink Bridge Project. It was reported that the project has an estimated completion period of approximately seven (7) years. Adjustments to the original timetable were attributed to delays in procurement, bidding, and qualification processes. The project consists of seven (7) contract packages covering the Bataan and Cavite land approaches, marine viaducts, channel bridges, and ancillary facilities.

DPWH further explained that the project involves the construction of a four-lane cable-stayed bridge with an approximate length of 32.15 kilometers connecting Bataan and Naic, Cavite. A tree-charting map was likewise presented, indicating the locations of the affected trees. It was reported that approximately twenty-five percent (25%) of the identified 817 trees are situated within the highway alignment and must be cleared prior to the commencement of civil works.

The Committee also expressed concern regarding the possibility of flooding in Barangays Timalan Balsahan and Timalan Concepcion following the removal of trees. In response, DPWH assured the Committee that the project design had been prepared by consultants with expertise in large-scale bridge infrastructure projects. The design process took into consideration topography, drainage patterns, flood risks, fault lines, environmental impacts, and social considerations. DPWH further explained that adequate drainage facilities have been incorporated into the project design to ensure the proper management and discharge of surface runoff.

Notwithstanding these assurances, the Committee requested DPWH to consider the implementation of drainage improvement projects in the affected barangays as an additional flood mitigation measure. DPWH responded that the Local Government Unit may coordinate with the nearest District Engineering Office regarding such concerns and expressed its willingness to coordinate with the appropriate offices in support for the Committee's recommendation.

In closing, the Committee expressed its support for the Bataan-Cavite Interlink Bridge Project, recognizing its potential to generate significant economic benefits for the Municipality of Naic and neighboring municipalities and provinces. At the same time, the Committee underscored the importance of safeguarding the welfare of affected communities and addressing environmental concerns associated with the implementation of the project.

Finally, the representatives of DPWH inquired as to when the Certificate of No Objection could be issued. In response, the Committee suggested that DPWH submit a Letter of Urgency to facilitate the immediate consideration of a resolution endorsing the issuance of the Certificate of No Objection for the trees affected by the Bataan-Cavite Interlink Bridge (BCIB) Project.

There being no other matters discussed, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 AM.