




City and Borough of Sitka


PUBLIC WORKS

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MEMO

To: Mayor McAdams and Assembly Members
Jim Dinley, Administrator

Through: Michael Harmon, Public Works Director 

From: Scott Brylinsky, Public Works Operations Manager 

Date: April 20, 2010

Subject: Crescent Harbor upland improvements

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Background

In October 2009 the city awarded a contract to MRV Architects to undertake a master planning effort to guide projects undertaken with the Marine Passenger Fee Fund (Commercial Passenger Excise Tax). A component of that planning effort was to identify those projects which could be readily implemented with minimal lead time, with the intent of commencing construction in summer 2010.

Using earlier planning documents as a starting point, the consultants recommended construction of a seawalk from O'Connell Bridge to the Sitka National Historic Park as a valuable addition to Sitka's community and tourism infrastructure. Feedback on this concept was favorable in meetings with groups and commissions in January and at a public meeting in March.

Concept drawings for the seawalk in general, and the Crescent Harbor section in particular, were reviewed and approved in March by the Steering Committee, the Parks and Recreation Committee, and the Tree and Landscape Committee. The concept drawings were presented again at a March 10 public meeting. Feedback from the 35 attendees at that meeting was favorable, with few negative reactions. Based on the foregoing, the consultants were directed to proceed with design documents for the Crescent Harbor portion. The Crescent Harbor section was selected as the first leg for construction because the design and property ownership issues for the other sections would require substantial time to work through.

The concept was also presented at a Chamber of Commerce lunch on March 24. Subsequent to the Chamber presentation and stories in the Sentinel, public interest heightened and it was decided that additional public meetings should be held. On April 8 & 9 public meetings were held where the overall master plan and the Crescent Seawalk plan were presented and discussed.

Some additional background on the Crescent Harbor park project area:

- The proposed modifications to Crescent Harbor Park are consistent with LWCF restrictions on the property to be dedicated to recreational use, as determined by DNR in written communication.
- No changes to the number of parking spaces or available parking area are proposed.

- Under the proposed design the green space would be reduced by approximately 16% within the project limits. (This info is in answer to a question asked at the public meeting.) Currently, 80% of the project area is green space.

Analysis

Feedback at the April meetings was broad and variable. The written comments are attached. The Administration draws two conclusions from the meetings.

1. The westernmost portion of the project, that area contiguous to the Crescent Harbor main parking lot, was non-controversial. (See attached drawing for boundaries of this portion, now referred to as Phase I.)
2. The proposed modifications to the Crescent Park green strip were controversial with strong emotions, particularly around the variables of a) winding vs. straight b) width c) extent of landscaping beds and d) extend of hardscaping. A few suggested no changes.

Impact to the Community

To state the obvious, Sitka citizens view most any change to public space as having a large impact. Personal values and aesthetics, rather than objective analysis or factual considerations, appear to underlie differing views and opinions of proposed changes.

Fiscal Note

The total project cost to construct Phase I, or that portion of the project contiguous with the Crescent Harbor Parking lot is estimated at \$ 175,360. Funds available in the existing project account are \$136,140; an additional appropriation of \$39,220 is needed to the fund the project. The Marine Passenger Fee fund has sufficient funds to allocate to this project.

Recommendations

1. Approve going out to bid for Phase I of the Crescent Harbor Seawalk project (as shown in the attached drawings); and allocate an additional \$39,220 to project account 80224-2010.
2. Schedule an Assembly work session for June 22nd to address the most central design elements of the project. Design elements requiring discussion are:
 - a. do nothing option
 - b. sidewalk width options
 - c. sidewalk alignment options (straight/windy options)
 - d. extent of landscaping
 - e. extent of hardscaping/bench areas

Upon Assembly approval of the foregoing design elements Public Works will incorporate this information into a final design. That design will be brought back to the Assembly for final budget and design approval prior to bidding.

Attachments:

Design drawings, incl drawings over aerial photo
Public comments to date