Minutes  
Waterfront Development Committee  
Monday, May 2, 2005 – Noon  
Assembly Chambers

Waterfront Development Committee Members Present: Chair: Stan Ridgeway, Jeff Bush, Marc Wheeler, Johan Dybdahl, Dan Bruce, Don Etheridge, Jeff Wilson  
Other Assembly Members Present: Merrill Sanford  
Staff Present: Donna Pierce, Dale Pernula, Rorie Watt, Greg Chaney, Skye Stekoll, Frances Vlahos-Rohm

I. Call to Order  
Meeting called to order at 12:00pm

II. Approval of Minutes  
No objection to approval of minutes from 4/18/05.

III. Public Comment (not to exceed 10 minutes total)  

Dixie Hood - 9350 View Drive. Ms. Hood expressed her concerns about destroying the Merchants Wharf building. She felt that it should be maintained as an historic landmark and as a viable business area, and urged the city to look into restoration if feasible, or to recreate a similar structure.

Ann Fuller - 7943 N. Douglas. Ms. Fuller addressed seawalk issues and suggested a vibrant, visible logo to represent the current walkway and help build excitement in the project. She also stressed the importance of having it connected completely, through the Taku Smokeries area to ensure success of the project.

Kirby Day -1302 Tarn Ct. Mr. Day also addressed seawalk issues, and recommended that the city not lose focus on the Fisherman’s Memorial to Merchant’s Wharf area. There is a lot of congestion in that area and work should continue to mitigate the pedestrian traffic and congestion. He thought there were several inexpensive things that could be done with that area to make the area more attractive. He also expressed a reminder about the need for the dock extension/expansion project. (He cited the 06 schedule, which will have a large ship at anchor every other Monday, and an empty city dock.) He asked that this issue be kept on the city’s radar.

Marc Wheeler asked for suggestions on making the existing area more attractive. Suggestions by Mr. Day included temporary awnings, flowers, and benches as relatively inexpensive fixes.

IV. Discussion Items

A. Report on Cruise Industry meeting:  
Donna Pierce summarized the meeting. It was an informal conversation on the previously covered 06 CIP recommendations. The projects from the Manager’s recommendation list covered were:

1. Implementation of the Wayfinding Project – This project was well supported, with lots of stakeholder and public involvement. The signs will be in place by next summer and should help direct and keep people moving efficiently through the pinch points at the lightering dock into the Marine Park area.

2. Open Space/Land Acquisition – The Manager will present information to the committee later in the meeting.

3. Shore Power – The project has been in place for several years and is obviously supported by the industry.

4. Cruise Ship Operations Study – The funding for this comes from the Waterfront CIP. The industry reiterated they do not want a dock outside downtown core. The study would result in an adopted plan and make it easier to evaluate any future proposals for cruise docks outside of the downtown harbor.
Port Development Fund Projects:
1. Seawalk Planning/Design Project
2. South Franklin widening project
   - Cultural gateway is a left over piece from the Plaza project. Funding should come from the original Port Development fee revenue.
   - Marine Park Lightering float - not reorienting, but fixing and maintaining what is there, Donna Pierce recommended that ships at anchor liter to Marine Park when no ship is at the Steamship Wharf.
   - Wharf decking project

There was more discussion at the meeting about making a decision on the dock extension. The industry is very concerned about dock capacity and wants to continue to pursue further discussion on the issue.

B. South Franklin Widening project:
Rorie Watt presented information on the project in the concept as a way to mitigate the congestion on South Franklin. The concerns include safety issues, vehicle delays, loading zones and crosswalks, and ongoing construction in the area. Throughout the area sidewalk width should accommodate utilities, street furniture, in addition to pedestrian traffic. The presentation dealt with necessary sidewalk width to accommodate specific needs to specific areas. He addressed the construction projects at Timberwolf and the Belgian properties slated to start in September. Setback and FEMA issues further complicate the project in this area.

There are questions about the timeline for these projects. Some road realignment and changing some crosswalk locations could add additional sidewalk width. The cost estimate for the entire project is 4 million dollars. The recommendation is to piecemeal the project into smaller pieces for funding. There is good support for the proposal to proceed in phases, get the property setback in the Timberwolf and Belgian property sites. $250,000 is set aside for right of way acquisition and project planning in FY06.

Mr. Wheeler asked about a path behind the buildings, and the possibility of leaving room to move the buildings back at future date. City-owned tidelands behind buildings in the area would be part of the decision on setback. Piling options are probably less expensive than right of way. There is potential to purchase back some of the privately owned tidelands. Main areas of congestion depend on the docking schedule. It is a more aggressive schedule for this summer. Mr. Dybdahl asked how dock extension issues affect the seawalk plans. Parking issues were discussed. Mr. Etheridge said that dock extension is an important issue and should proceed sooner rather than later. Mr. Bush addressed industry emphasis on making the People’s Wharf - North area more inviting. Visitors will walk where the shops are. Security concerns in that area were addressed, and staff was asked to provide complete information about security requirements.

C. Seawalk Cost Estimate:
Rorie Watt recapped the seawalk information. A completed seawalk will extend from the bridge to the Rock Dump. Staff recommendation is that the first phases should be new walks before repair and improvement of existing seawalk. The initial phase should be connecting Fisherman’s Memorial to the new Miner’s Cove building. He presented two alternative alignments of the seawalk. Alternative #2 is similar to Alternative #1 with more easements. The harbor board suggested a viewing platform near the float. Issues around a viewing platform all need more discussion and development. He gave an estimate of $1.7 – $1.9 million for the structural costs for a pile-supported seawalk. The ability to flex the costs depends on finishing-amenities. The recommendation is to take this information to the PRAC and Harbor Board, with more research on construction costs. The project could overlap two construction seasons.

D. Open Space Acquisition:
Mr. Swope briefly spoke about the monies left over from Marine Passenger fees, which the Assembly directed to be used for the purchase of land. There is currently $1.4 million in that fund. The owners
approached the city and expressed interest in selling the property to the city. There have been a couple of informal meetings with the owners. It seems logical to purchase it and develop consistent with waterfront plan. The major interest is in the property and not the building looking to expansion of the park area. The property appraisal is underway. The Manager recommends having funding available if the opportunity comes up. He asked for recommendations from the committee and or questions for the owners. The owners have begun to get a demolition cost estimate. They are appealing the assessment of the building. The property value includes tearing down building during the window when tenant lease options are open. Termination date for building may be 2008. Things could happen quickly if there is a negotiated agreement with city. There are also timing issues with State DOT project improvements from Main to Whittier. The timeframe could be critical. The seawalk property issues related to the Wharf area could be negotiated including a subdivision of the property. Mr. Glidmann, the property owner, felt a negotiated contract in place would be key to making it all happen within a specified timeframe. After hearing from the owners, Mr. Wheeler made a motion that the Waterfront Committee recommend that the Assembly authorize the Manager to proceed with negotiations for the purchase of the property. There were no objections.

V. Information Items

Marine Passenger Fee Status report
Ms. Pierce explained the need for a detailed status report to be presented at future meetings. This is to address the concerns about unexpended balances, address auditor and industry questions. She also gave a “heads up” on a proposal coming before the Finance Committee from JCVB for $11,000 to participate in the Alaska Traveler’s Survey. There is money available for this planning activity in the Waterfront Plan funding if the Assembly chooses to support this request.

For next meetings:
1) Marine Passenger Fees Status, security questions, 2) CDD report on the Subport plan, 3) Seawalk ordinance (if ready), and 4) direction on the dock capacity study.

Mr. Dybdahl asked for clarification on who makes recommendation about closeout projects from the Marine Passenger fee list. There was a discussion about the committee recommendations and recommendations from the Manager’s office, and action by the Assembly. Mr. Wheeler suggested that there would be recommendations forthcoming from the committee at its next meeting.

VI. Next Meeting
Monday, May 16, Noon, Chambers

VII. Adjournment
The meeting was adjourned at 1:12pm.