

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 14, 2015
To: Damariscotta Board of Selectmen
From: Damariscotta Waterfront Committee
Subject: Waterfront Committee Recommendations

The Damariscotta Waterfront Committee has now completed the work requested by the Board of Selectmen when the Board created the Committee in February, 2014.

Activities

The Committee's activities for the past year and a half have included the following:

- Regular meetings to review previous planning efforts including the 2010 Shore and Harbor Study and to develop ideas for reconstruction of and enhancements to the publically-owned parking lot and waterfront. The meetings were open to the public and the Committee heard a variety of perspectives on the topic. In addition to the cross section of citizens and businesses represented on the Committee, individuals representing the Great Salt Bay Sanitary District, Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission, the Damariscotta River Association and volunteers who maintain Riverfront Park regularly participated in these discussions. Committee members were David Belknap, Dick McLean, Barnaby Porter, Haas Tobey, Shari Sage, George Parker, Ronn Orenstein, George Dolengowski, and Doug Morton. LeeAnna Libby, Walt Johansson and Bob Faunce were regular participants in the meetings, while Tony Dater and Matt Lutkus provided staff support.
- Close involvement with the grant-funded flood resiliency planning efforts for downtown. This \$25,000 project, funded in part by the Maine Coastal Program and NOAA, consisted of an assessment of the impact of flooding on the downtown area and the identification of measures that can be taken to minimize property damage from flood events. Representatives of the Maine Geological Survey and the Municipal Planning Assistance Program attended committee meetings and provided technical support to the committee and the project consultant, Milone and MacBroom.
- Work with landscape architect Mitchell Rasor who prepared renderings of the alternative design concepts that the Committee identified.
- Meetings with key Federal and State agencies involved in coastal development. These agencies included the Army Corps of Engineers, the State Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Marine Resources and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.
- Two "open house" meetings for citizens and businesses cosponsored by the Town, the Twin Villages Alliance, the Town of Newcastle and the Chamber of Commerce. Approximately 100 people attended these two meetings.
- A citizen and business survey that resulted in completed questionnaires from 281 respondents. The survey provided individuals who are interested in the future of the waterfront area with an opportunity to express their views on the various components being considered by the Committee. The survey results were taken into account when the Committee decided on its final recommendations.

- Display tables at the last two annual meetings of the Damariscotta Region Chamber of Commerce where we provided the preliminary design drawings for waterfront improvements.

Recommendations

Listed below are the Committee's recommendations for project components, estimates of costs and possible revenue sources. The list reflects the general priority after reviewing and assessing the survey results. It is important to note that implementation of the project will require an overlap of the various project components. For example, it would be necessary to identify additional public parking spaces prior to any reconstruction of the parking lot and subsurface infrastructure in order to minimize the disruption to area businesses.

The timing of the reconstruction of the parking lot, sanitary sewer, and the drainage system and other project components is dependent on the Town's and the Sanitary District's ability to garner Federal and State funding. The timing of the construction of additional public amenities, including a larger park or construction of a boardwalk, will be dependent on the ability of individuals and organizations to raise private donations.

The Committee believes that the improvements to the waterfront should, wherever possible, incorporate as an underlying theme, the waterfront's rich shipbuilding history.

A summary of the recommended project components is as follows:

Component 1. Parking Lot Reconstruction with Flood Resiliency Measures

Description:

- First in order of operations would be the correction of deficiencies and the rebuilding of the sanitary sewer and storm drain systems while simultaneously stabilizing and re-grading the subterranean fill under the parking lot.
- Reconstruction would also include construction of a mostly below-ground seawall identified in the Coastal Communities study completed by Milone and MacBroom. The latter would provide significant protection for downtown buildings and may remove the downtown from the FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) 100-year flood zone. If the flood zone amendment were to be approved by FEMA, it would likely result in considerable insurance premium cost savings for those businesses and property owners that must obtain flood insurance.
- Reconstruction of the parking lot and construction of the seawall would include an expanded area for Riverside Park allowing for a major enhancement and could accommodate the future construction of a boardwalk.
- Rough estimate of cost: \$2.8 million.
- Possible funding sources: Army Corps of Engineers, FEMA Pre-hazard Mitigation, NOAA/Coastal Communities, Clean Water State Revolving Fund, Small Harbor Improvement Program (SHIP)

Component 2. Acquisition of approximately 24 or more parking spaces

Description:

- The addition of another 24 +/- spaces could be achieved either through purchase or lease from nearby landowners or through parking lot expansion. One option favored by the Committee was the construction of a two level parking structure that would extend from Water Street. A pile supported structure over Misery Gulch (Component 6) could also serve as an expanded parking area for vehicles with boat trailers.
- Estimated cost: Cost dependent on negotiations with property owners.
- Possible funding source: Community Development Block Grant downtown revitalization funds

Component 3. Construction of public restrooms

Description:

- The restrooms would be constructed in a location that is convenient for visitors to downtown businesses and the boating community.
- Estimated cost: \$150,000 plus cost of land.
- Possible funding source: Community Development Block Grant downtown revitalization funds
Small Harbor Improvement Program (SHIP)

Component 4. Improved Pedestrian Access

Description:

- To better connect Main Street to the waterfront park, construct improved pedestrian access between Main Street and the parking lot through Taco Alley and from Water Street to the parking lot by way of a sidewalk along the driveway to Water Street.
- Estimated cost: Taco Alley \$43,000; parking lot to Water Street walkway \$8,000
- Possible funding sources: Recreation Trails Program, Community Development Block Grant downtown revitalization funds

In addition to the recommended components listed above, the Committee identified two project components that could be funded largely through private donations if grant funding were not available:

Component 5. Construction of Waterfront Boardwalk

Description:

- Construction of a boardwalk along the riverfront for more seating for waterfront park visitors, for a viewing platform for waterfront events spectators (such as for Pumpkin fest and fireworks display) and as a location for visiting music and other artistic productions.

- Two boardwalk lengths of 256' and '170 were included in the survey and if a decision is made to build this type of structure, other boardwalk lengths should be evaluated.
- Estimated construction cost: \$907,000 for a 24' X 256' boardwalk either in the shape of a clipper ship or rectangular extending out over the riprap and transitioning into the park green space on either side.
- Possible funding sources: Small Harbor Improvement Program; Community Development Block Grant Downtown Revitalization; private donations. Cost for maintenance and upkeep would also be raised as part of the fundraising effort.

Component 6. Pile-supported structure over Misery Gulch

Description:

- This wharf over Misery Gulch would provide a pedestrian walkway between the parking lot and Schooner's Landing parking area. Construction of a larger structure could also be part of a parking solution if it could provide parking for the boat launch and other marine-related uses.
- Estimated cost: \$143,000 for a 10' x 100' pedestrian walkway
- \$1 million for a pedestrian and parking structure that would cover approximately one half of the area of the gulch.
- Possible funding sources: Small Harbor Improvement Program; Community Development Block Grant Downtown Revitalization; private donations.

Vision

The above recommendations focus on infrastructure upgrades and provide needed facility improvements. In addition to the above recommendations the committee felt it important to keep an open vision on what is strategically best for the waterfront's long term purpose and use. For example town leadership should uphold a planning and development objective to make the waterfront a special place that is better than the status quo; something unique that sets Damariscotta apart; and defines the town as a coastal center. Said in another way, project improvements should not only provide function but also be visually smart and attractive. For instance, upgrades and improvements to Riverside Park should consider expanded seating areas, new hardscape, enhanced landscaping, and the use of a boardwalk and/or decking. Other ideas for improvements to the waterfront area include new information kiosk-type panels to illustrate Damariscotta history, aquaculture, and environmental protection of the river.

Continuing Progress

Although the Committee has completed the charge given to it by the Board of Selectmen, it is important to note that the project continues to move forward on several fronts. Progress made to date includes the following:

- In February, the Town was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Orton Family Foundation that will allow the Town to expand community outreach efforts for the waterfront project and help a subsequently created committee initiate a marketing campaign.

- Town staff have already begun to seek out grant opportunities and have received favorable feedback from a number of potential funding sources.
- Several of us who have been involved in the waterfront/downtown flood protection participated in a panel discussion on the project at the Maine Beaches Conference last month and will make a similar presentation in October at the Maine Municipal Association Conference.
- As opportunities present themselves on an ongoing basis, we continue to meet with business leaders and citizens to describe the project components that are being recommended and ask for their feedback.

While all aspects of this project will never have 100 percent support, it is apparent from the survey and the general public response that the Committee is on the right track in terms of developing a plan that will help maintain our historic village area by continuing to invest in public infrastructure. In order to move forward on this project, the Committee recommends that we begin the next phase with the creation of a plan implementation oversight committee comprised of members of the greater Damariscotta community including citizens, and business leaders. Such a committee would coordinate and oversee:

1. The Town's efforts to further define the project components and seek out public funding opportunities.
2. Establishment of a marketing program to engage public support and encourage private fundraising.
3. Selection and hiring of a full time project manager to see this project to completion.

As a final note, on behalf of the Waterfront Committee, we would like to thank all of those who participated in the many discussions on this topic during the past 18 months. The insights and creativity of everyone involved have contributed greatly to our ability to develop what we believe to be significant and attainable enhancements to our historic village.