

**CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
July 27, 2020 - 5:30 p.m.**

**City Council Chambers, City Hall, 3rd Floor
1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island, IL**

7/27/2020 - Minutes

SCHWIEBERT DOCK UPDATE

Public Works Director Mike Bartels discussed the updates and recent events at Schwiebert Dock. He said the first event on December 31, 2019 was the gangway drop down, and Public Works followed up, showing a failed shorehinge. He said on January 3, 2020, the shorehinge was removed and placed on the Schwiebert landing next to the band shelter. He said they removed all fire suppression and electrical lines, and the abutment was damaged as well. He discussed the second incident on January 13, 2020 in which a section of the dock was floating downstream.

Alderman Hurt said it was strange that so much damage was done from a piece of ice. Mr. Bartels agreed, but said after looking they were unable to find any additional culprit. He added that there could be other reasons, and didn't feel that ice could have caused that much damage. Alderman Hurt asked who put the spuds in originally. Mr. Bartels said Valley Construction. Alderman Hurt asked what kind of experience Valley Construction had with dock work, and asked if there was any guarantee on the work done to the dock. Mr. Bartels said without looking, he assumed Valley hired a professional subcontractor to do the work. He said on these projects there is a one year maintenance bond. Mayor Thoms recalled that defective bolts were also replaced at one point, and Mr. Bartels concurred.

Alderman Spurgetis asked when the 20-year project timespan began and would be ending. Mr. Bartels said it started in 2014 and will end in 2034. Alderman Hurt asked if repairs are made, would it need to go back to the original specifications per the agreement. Mr. Bartels said the original agreement was to maintain the structure but it can be modified. Alderwoman Swanson said that since the cause is unknown, would that preclude the City from going back to the original design since it failed. Mr. Bartels said it is not specified as long as approval is given for the damage through IDNR for a modification.

Mr. Bartels provided a timeline of events surrounding the project and the damage. He said a conference call meeting took place with IDNR, Fish and Wildlife, and the Parks and Recreation Department on March 7th regarding the dock, funding, and potential repairs. He said they have requested not to replace the outer dock with the anticipated and unknown cost associated. He said the outer dock experiences major wave action while standing on it due to the distance from the land and fast river current. He said the IDNR would allow the City to apply for grant funding for any of the repairs using the 2021 application process with a 25% fund match for the City. He said the request was submitted on July 8th regarding modifications and repairs along with a request for forgiveness of 18.7% of the pro-rated grant obligation due to the damage and economic circumstances. He said there is over \$200,000 in repairs for the dock. He discussed the type of repairs that would occur under their proposal to IDNR, which was recommended by a manufacturer. He said the repair proposal would take the number of slips from 23 down to 16.

Mr. Bartels discussed the estimated cost of repairs. He said without knowing exactly what will be required, but the estimate for gangway repairs would be approximately \$65,000. He said several of the outer dock estimates are unknown due to not knowing what would be required for

engineering, permitting, and the scope of work. He said the biggest unknown is associated with the support spud removal, replacement, and engineering costs. He said the estimated cost for the outer dock replacement is \$175,000. He said if the consideration would be made to remove the dock, there would be 14 years remaining and a 70 percent refund on the grant at slightly over one million dollars. Alderman Hurt asked if there was a time frame specified with the grant regarding repair modifications. Mr. Bartels said the City was not given a timeline, but the funds based on an award would not be given until April. Alderman Hurt clarified that he wanted to know if a repair timeline was part of the original agreement. Mr. Bartels said he wasn't aware, but would find out.

Mayor Thoms said people may not realize what they have in the dock until it is gone. He said the gangway needs replaced, but asked why the spuds wouldn't be pulled out so that something is at least usable. Mr. Bartels said he agreed, but it was a matter of funding. He said there is no money currently budgeted for the type of repair, and he had discussed TIF funds with City Manager Randy Tweet. Mr. Tweet said the City may be reimbursed, but the money would need to be spent upfront for repairs. Mr. Bartels said there are two points to the discussion, what can be done, and what could be done with funding. He said he hopes to know by September if they are able to repair the outer dock or make the proposed modification. Mayor Thoms suggested holding on repairing the outer dock and offered an alternate plan to make the dock usable. He suggested doing the work now if the City could be reimbursed, and offered additional perspectives on how to make the dock work. Mr. Bartels said he understood those ideas. Mr. Tweet said the cost can be figured and brought back to Council for approval with appropriate information.

Alderman Spurgetis said gathering the information is good, but he was concerned that the City did not know the cause of the incident. He said he was concerned that it might happen again the next winter. He asked if the City used TIF funds to make the repairs, would the money need to be replaced by the City back into the TIF. Mr. Tweet said no, it would be used for this purpose instead of funding something else within the TIF.

DOWNTOWN DISTRICT PRIVATIZATION DISCUSSION

Mayor Thoms called Beth Payne from the Development Association of Rock Island (DARI) to the front. She introduced herself and said she wished to have an open discussion about the potential of a short or long term lease involving the privatization of the Great River Plaza. She said the last six months of partnership with the City has been a tremendous asset to the community. She introduced Program Manager Stacey McIntosh, and said there are new possibilities and opportunities to explore given the pandemic.

Ms. Payne said privatizing the plaza is not a new idea, as it predates her 10-year employment with DARI. She said her group has collaborated with stakeholders, local business owners, and City staff and traveled to various areas throughout the country to get ideas and bring them back to the City and downtown district. She said staff from other cities were brought in to the City to see the downtown and offer guidance and suggestions. She said the visitors presented some possibilities.

Ms. Payne said they have developed a pilot program that incorporated input from City staff and the Police Chief in their plans. She showed a map of the proposal of the pilot program. She said they were looking to make an investment in the plaza area with additional cafe lighting and the overall lighting situation. She said DARI was looking at a 90 day period to see how privatization could impact the City. She said every building owner would enter into a sublease agreement with DARI, and they would communicate with the owners as to how it could benefit them. She said this effects not just the nighttime economy in the District, but also the entire economy in the downtown.

Ms. Payne showed a map of the proposed solution to the plaza area. She said their first priority is public health, as it is difficult to control mass amounts of people coming in. She said privatization may provide some control as to the amounts of people coming in quickly, as well as provide authority to enforce social distancing mandates. She said it would help with groups lingering that do not need to be and not contributing to the economy in the area. She said the proposal does not include fencing, but large signage. She said major events would supersede the DARI agreement if they are to occur. She asked Council if there were any questions.

Alderman Hurt asked how this proposal was received by the business owners thus far. Ms. Payne said the meetings were not well attended, but she did not feel it was ill-received. She said if this would continue outside of the COVID area, DARI is hoping to program the space to be more of a central hub for entertainment. She said it is a good opportunity for residential areas to experience additional activity in the downtown. Alderman Hurt asked how they plan to enforce with larger groups. She said she has had conversations with Chief VenHuizen and business owners trying to find a solution. She said with privatization, they would have the authority to move crowds along, instead of now when they have no authority. Alderman Hurt asked if the plan was to have business owners contact the Police Department if issues occurred. Ms. Payne said yes, and that owners would have the authority to take care of their own space, and the proposal would empower them to do so. Chief VenHuizen said the Police Department would not be withdrawing support in the District, and would still be available. He said the goal is to reduce the burden placed upon the department. Alderman Hurt asked Chief VenHuizen what his recommendation would be regarding training sessions for bouncers and greeters. Chief VenHuizen said there is nothing planned for that at this time, and they provide generalized guidelines due to liability. He said it is more dependent upon business owners to train employees, but they could provide guidance on what to do in certain situations.

Alderwoman Swanson said she was in favor of the proposal, as empowering business owners might be a way to help curtail some problems. Alderman Spurgetis said it sounds like a positive plan. Alderman Poulos said he is excited and knows the Chief will keep an eye on the fluid situation. Alderman Parker said the general idea is good, especially given the recent circumstances, but asked if the same could be accomplished with alternative means. He said the potential for problems from privatizing this public space could be problematic. He asked how people would be able to appeal a trespass violation. Mayor Thoms said although the discussion focused on night programming, this proposal would benefit the daytime activities in the plaza as well. He said there are groups that may need to be moved along during the day also, and this proposal would be able to control trespassing and panhandling. He said there is a substantial amount of money that is private dollars being invested into DARI, and if nothing is done the City may not have access to those funds. He said the 90 day trial may not be successful, but many cities have found it to be so.

Alderman Geenen asked if the groups from other cities had addressed any of the issues that Alderman Parker spoke of. Ms. Payne said they addressed those issues as part of a larger event, but not all components of their advice were relevant. She said the conversation needs to continue, and said Ms. McIntosh would be more actively involved with the businesses. Alderman Parker said he read the West Palm Beach report, and was concerned about chronic nuisances in the downtown. He said he was interested in what the report said about mapping out the types of individuals that cause the nuisances. He said this option was far better than a carte blanche privatization because the nuisances are because of the behavior. Alderman Poulos said he would like to give privatization a shot before saying it is not doable. Alderwoman Swanson echoed Alderman Poulos' comments, and that there is not much to lose with a 90 day trial.

Mr. Tweet said the intent is to move people along because of behavior and keep from having to call police with a low priority issue. He said the trespassing part is equal to mapping out per the plan stated. He said it empowers the business owners to control the kind of behavior as opposed to waiting for officers. He said the City would try to make any situation work, but the

intent is to control behavior but not target individuals. He said the City and DARI would work together to ensure that targeting individuals would not happen.

Alderman Hurt asked how long the trespass notice would be in effect. Chief VenHuizen said the concept is that the notice would not expire. He said he would look into graduated steps to release any ban. Alderman Hurt said he would like to know what the review process would be. Mayor Thoms said this should come back to Council again, perhaps many times. Alderman Parker said every hour that is spent talking is an hour not getting things done with the issue. He said items have already been outlined at previous goal setting meetings. He said he would like to see more staff time dedicated to this issue, which has already been prioritized. Mr. Tweet said staff is working on the budget for this through the partnership with DARI, and much of the work would be done by DARI as a result of the partnership. He said there needs to be a discussion on a food truck policy, as trucks would compete with the existing brick and mortar businesses. Alderman Spurgetis said he supported the plan for a trial period. Mayor Thoms thanked everyone for their time.

Josh Adams, Deputy Clerk