

**CITY OF ALBANY  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA  
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: 11/6/2007

Reviewed by: *BP*

SUBJECT: Acceptance of Neuwirth & Associates Waterfront Planning Report, Referral of the Initial Steps of Implementation to the Waterfront Committee, and Dissolution of Waterfront Planning Consultant Selection Group

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**WATERFRONT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

Attached (Attachment 1) is an October 15, 2007 memorandum from the Chair of the Waterfront Committee detailing the Waterfront Committee's recommendation. In summary, the Committee recommends that the Council should proceed with Scenario #3 "A Grounded Visioning Program for the Waterfront." The Waterfront Committee met on September 6, 2007, September 18, 2007, and October 4, 2007, and will meet on November 1, 2007, to discuss the consultant's preliminary report and final report.

**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION DISCUSSION**

At its September 25, 2007 and October 23, 2007 meeting, the Planning and Zoning Commission discussed the final report (Attachment 2 and Attachment 3). To summarize the two discussions, the Commission commended the consultant for the concise and understandable analysis. Although the Commission did not formally vote on endorsing any particular alternative, there was a consensus of support for the consultant's final recommendation.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Council proceed pursuant to the Waterfront Committee recommendation and the discussions at the Planning and Zoning Commission as follows:

1. The Council accept the Neuwirth & Associates Preliminary and Final Report;
2. The Council refer initial steps of Scenario #3 to the Waterfront Committee for implementation including consultant solicitation and making a recommendation to the City Council on the selection of a consultant, detailed scope of work, budget, etc.; and
3. Dissolve the Waterfront Planning Consultant Selection Group.

## **BACKGROUND**

Following discussion at the Waterfront Planning Consultant Selection Group meeting, as well as at Waterfront Committee and the Planning and Zoning Commission, the City Council at its March 19, 2007 meeting authorized the City Administrator to select a project manager to prepare a draft planning work program for the waterfront planning process.

The specific action of the City Council included:

1. Authorize the City Administrator to hire a project manager to work with staff, the Waterfront Committee, and the Planning and Zoning Commission to prepare a recommended work program to conduct a waterfront planning process.
2. Include a community participation component and the involvement of City commissions and committees in the work program.
3. Return to City Council with the project manager's recommended work program.

The preliminary report (Attachment #4) was completed in September. Mr. Neuwirth attended the Waterfront Committee meeting on September 6, 2007 and September 18, 2007 to present the Preliminary Report. Mr. Neuwirth also attended the September 25, 2007 Planning and Zoning Commission. Following these presentations, the Final Report (Attachment #5) was prepared. The Final Report has been provided to the Waterfront Committee and the Planning and Zoning Commission, but Mr. Neuwirth made no formal presentations.

## **DISCUSSION**

Attached is Mr. Neuwirth's preliminary and final report. The Preliminary Report describes the context for his recommendation, summarizes the various meetings and community outreach efforts associated with his analysis, and provides four alternative scenarios for the next steps in the planning process. The Final Report incorporates a final recommendation, reflecting feedback received on his Preliminary Report, including comments received from the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Waterfront Committee.

One of the key elements of the Neuwirth analysis is the preparation of four options to approaching waterfront planning. The range of options is summarized as follows:

Alternative	Cost	Time	Measure C Vote Required	Property Owner Involvement Required
1. Do Nothing	\$0	n/a	No	No
2. General Plan - Embed waterfront planning into the forthcoming General Plan update	\$800,000	3 years	Yes	No
3. Grounded Visioning Program				
Phase One - Civic engagement, education, and identification of values and principles	\$100,000	6 months	No	No
Phase Two - Design competition	\$200,000	12 months	No	No
4. Specific Plan – Community generated plan that leads to development agreement	\$1,500,000	3 years	Yes	Yes

***Additional Considerations Regarding Implementation of Scenario 3***

The Final Report concludes with the recommendation that Scenario #3, if implemented in phases, is the best way to proceed. The expected outcome would be a community vision for the waterfront that is based on community values and principles, supported with technical information on opportunities and constraints.

The Consultant’s analysis concludes that Phase One of Scenario #3 will require approximately six months. It should be noted that this is an aggressive schedule, and in particular, does not incorporate the time required upfront to hire consultants. The process of selecting and contracting with a consultant depends on the selection method selected, but a open competitive process would be expected to take four to six months, depending on the degree on community involvement at this stage. It also does not incorporate broad dissemination of the report to various Commissions at the conclusion of Phase One.

Secondly, there is a wide range of technical review and discussions incorporated in the Phase One work. To make sure that budget is expended on highest priority elements of the work, careful consideration will need to be given to setting priorities for the particular technical tasks to be undertaken. In addition, given that much of the work will be done simultaneously, consideration should be given to managing the work so that the analysis is presented in a clear and internally consistent manner with opportunities for community review.

As an optional second phase, the report recommends that the vision could be further illustrated by sponsoring a design competition. A design competition is a process where the City as the sponsor, would solicit a broad range of professionals to submit conceptual

plans for the waterfront, based on the vision developed in Phase One, and given the constraints and opportunities documented in Phase One. Design competitions tend to be high profile, and a design competition has the advantage of creating publicity for the waterfront and for placing an emphasis on design. Recent high profile projects that have involved design competitions include the Trans Bay Terminal project in San Francisco and the World Trade Center project in New York City. One of the most successful competitions was the Washington DC Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which was designed by a college student.

In a design competition, a selection committee would be formed, and at least five entities would be invited to prepare designs. A modest honorarium would be provided as an incentive for entities to put significant effort into the competition. The selection of a winner would not represent City approval of a particular project. It would however, give the community a way to see how its vision, given the constraints and opportunities documented in Phase One, could be implemented. The Neuwirth Report concludes by suggesting that if at the end of the competition, there is widespread consensus supporting a particular plan, further refinement of the winning design could be pursued.

### *Next Steps*

Given the scope of Scenario #3, the Waterfront Committee appears to be best suited to provide regular policy guidance. With the Council's authorization, the Committee could take initial steps of implementing Scenario #3, including consultant solicitation and making a recommendation to the City Council on the selection of a consultant, detailed scope of work, budget, etc. In the event scenario #2 or scenario #4 is pursued, the Planning and Zoning Commission would have a more significant role due to statutory requirements.

Furthermore, given the evolution of the planning process, the Waterfront Planning Consultant Selection Group, which included representatives of the Waterfront Committee, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Parks and Recreation Commission, and which was established for selecting a consultant envisioned under Resolution #06-50, appears not to be required at this time. Staff would suggest that at key milestones, presentations and discussions should be scheduled with the full Planning and Zoning Commission and the Parks and Recreation Commission.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The Neuwirth Report estimates the total cost of Scenario 3 to be \$300,000, including:

- Phase One: \$100,000
- Phase Two: \$85,000
- Contingency: \$15,000
- Optional Refinement of Winning Design: \$100,000

There is \$333,000 remaining in the \$350,000 the City Council earmarked last year for potential waterfront planning, following payment of the \$17,000 allocated for the Neuwirth report.

Attachments:

1. Recommendation from the Waterfront Committee
2. Minutes from Planning and Zoning Commission of September 25, 2007
3. Excerpt from Draft Minutes of Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting of October 23, 2007
4. Preliminary Report prepared by Neuwirth & Associates
5. Final Report prepared by Neuwirth & Associates