

Marina project moving ahead

BY KRISTINA HUGHES NEWS-REVIEW STAFF WRITER

CHARLEVOIX -The Charlevoix City Council and Downtown Development Authority have decided to sail forward with the marina and East Park project despite hurdles by the state.

City officials said the steps could save taxpayers money.

The city and state are partners in a \$11 million marina and East Park project. The Michigan Waterways Commission will finance \$6.2 million, with the DDA bonding for up to \$5.5 million.

“There are a lot of concerns no matter when we start the project,” Charlevoix mayor Norm Carlson said. “My feeling is the community waited long enough and we should push forward.”

“I’d rather get the damn thing done,” Carlson said.

The city made the decision despite city manager Mike Wiesner's recommendation to move back the project start date to August of 2007, to finalize plans, avoid disruptions in the park in the summer and provide time for state reviews.

But city officials said by waiting the project's cost may increase because of increased construction costs and bonding charges.

“I have no problem with the start date. We're looking to minimize the disruptions and apparently starting the project is more important to the community,” Wiesner said. “But it's a gamble.”

The state must complete a thorough review of the project before the city has the green light to proceed with construction.

Paul Petersen, the harbor program manager with the Department of Natural Resources in Lansing said the department received the plans for the land side of the project Friday. Petersen said the state review process may take a few months. But the process could be longer if plans undergo revisions. The plan must fit standards for the compensation board, waterways commission and the Department of Natural Resources.

During a joint meeting Monday, the DDA and council set a preliminary construction schedule, pending state review.

The city may proceed with the first phase of the project, bulkhead improvements and dock construction, in November 2006.

The plan for the land side is to proceed with the design and construction of the harbor master building that may be usable by June 2007. But if the review takes more time, the schedule will change.

The plans for the harbor master building include a park area that is scheduled to be finished by the fall of 2007.

The central area of the park will be available for use for the summer of 2007. The old performance pavilion and restrooms would be available for temporary use, but the use of the park may be limited during the peak summer months.

Charlevoix Chamber of Commerce president Jacqueline Merta said the chamber will hold events like the

Taste of Charlevoix and Summer Solstice Art Fair in a visible place.

“We will have to put our thinking caps on,” Merta said. “But we will make it happen.”

The consultants may push for the pavilion and Mason Street storm sewer project to begin sooner since the project does not fall under waterways funding.

The recent movement is part of a long line of delays. The project was stalled by a lengthy review by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the Army Corps of Engineers and the state's decision to include the prevailing wage in the bid package.

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