

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON RIVERFRONT ACTIVITIES

April 10, 2001

5:15 PM

Chairman O'Neil called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen O'Neil, Levasseur, Sysyn, Pinard, Thibault

Messrs: F. Thomas, T. Sommers, R. Johnson

Chairman O'Neil addressed Item 3 of the agenda:

Riverwalk Status Report.

Mr. Thomas stated I asked Tom Sommers from CLD to come here and give us a quick update on the status of the Riverwalk. In your agenda there is a written summary and a map that is folded up. We ask that you take a look at the map as Tom goes through the status report.

Mr. Sommers stated following through the status report, Phase 1A is complete. Today would be a beautiful day if you ever wanted to go down and see what the Riverwalk looks like and what the views are and what you are getting. Phase 1B is under construction. We should have our crews back out there from Shumway within a week or two. I said that last week so I am sure it is within a week now. That is the section from Phase 1A on the north end going underneath the railroad bridge down to Jac Pac. We have met with Jac Pac. We have our final alignment set with them. It is all going well and they are being very cooperative. It is looking good. The next part of that is the NYCOA piece. The NYCOA piece is a piece that was put in in order to make sure that we got a public connection down at Hesser College and if you follow your map that NYCOA piece is the green piece at the south end. Every one of these is labeled and if anybody isn't clear on what they are looking at please let me know. If you hold the map up like this, the top is north, and the bottom is south. I am going from north to south now. We are in final design on the NYCOA piece. We are working with the facilities manager there. We have gotten very positive responses from them. They are, with very minor exceptions, ready to have us put this in. We are anticipating having this section of the Riverwalk in construction this summer and done this fall. It is not an extensive, complicated section and this is the part where we are asking to preserve \$400,000 for in order that we can finish it. This will give us a public

connection to the south. It will connect us to the Hesser College building. It connects us to other lands in the south owned by the City and some of the conservation land down behind the cemetery heading down along the river. That will complete a project at that point, which has a northerly public entrance at Singer Park and a southerly public entrance on Sundial Avenue.

Chairman O'Neil asked what is the distance north and south.

Mr. Sommers answered the distance is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, but if you take the loop that we have put in on Phase 1A, the total Riverwalk will be about a mile long in terms of total walkable, bikeable area.

Alderman Thibault asked does that include the mill section that we had a problem with on Granite Street.

Mr. Sommers answered no. That is in Phase III and I will discuss that in a few minutes.

Alderman Levasseur asked what is the price for that one-mile so far.

Mr. Sommers answered the price so far is approximately \$1.5 million.

Alderman Levasseur asked does that include the \$400,000 you are asking for.

Mr. Sommers answered yes. We are asking to preserve that \$400,000. It is already in...this is not new money. The other part that I would like you to note is the part in red. That is the West Side rail trail. That is now, I believe, ready to go to bid or will be ready to go to bid shortly. That is being done by Parks & Recreation.

Chairman O'Neil stated before you move on, I know that Ron Johnson had written the Board back in November about this section and somehow it never got on an agenda so before we move on from the West Side why don't you finish your part of the West Side trail and then we will let Ron give his presentation on it.

Mr. Sommers replied the point I am trying to make is if you look at the section in blue, that is the Hands Across the Merrimack section and that is the section that we are working with a group here in the City on, which is chaired by Helen Claussen to raise private funds for. We are also looking with Bill Jabjiniak at another \$600,000 in federal funds, which has been brought to our attention which look like they have a very good chance of being procured.

Chairman O'Neil asked this is over and above the T-21.

Mr. Sommers answered correct. This would basically be equal to the T-21. I am afraid to say the word match because it is not a match to that. They are separate funds. We also have private monies that are coming forward for that project. I am not going to say the exact amounts at this point because I don't think it would be fair to the people who we are still in negotiations with but they are reasonably substantial and we expect this part to move forward. This is the signature piece. If you look at all of the parts, including the part that Ron has done, you have at the end of this one cohesive project and I guess that is the point I am trying to make, which gives the City a very visible, usable recreational and I think economic development area that is important to the City. That is the status report with respect to that area. Phase III, which is on the second page...

Chairman O'Neil interjected before we move on to Phase III, why don't we have Ron Johnson come up now and talk about the status of the West Side trail portion.

Mr. Johnson stated as I think many of you know we applied for a separate grant to do the Piscataquog Trailway. We came to the Committee I think last year... Kimball Chase put together the Master Plan and the trailway... actually this is the Merrimack River here and it goes all the way out to the Goffstown town line. We received funding to do the Master Plan and then also to do the engineering. The second grant has allowed us to do construction of Phase I, which is only going to be about ¼ mile but we see this as being the most expensive part of the trail. Just to orient you, this is the Merrimack River. This is the FE Everett Turnpike and this is the bridge that would link over to the Riverwalk that the separate funding through the transportation enhancement funds have been applied for through the Planning Department. We are going to be going right from the end of Turner Street to South Main Street. Part of that project also involves putting a new pedestrian bridge over Second Street. That is why the cost of this project is quite a bit more. That bridge, itself, is estimated at about \$120,000 there. The old bridge was taken down as part of the original grant. It was deemed to be a hazard by the Highway Department. It was too low. This one will be 12' wide and it will be raised up. As I mentioned, the new pathway would be 10' wide paved. We are also trying to take off of some of the improvements that were done over on the Riverwalk incorporating the Amoskeag Historic Light throughout the trail, new benches, landscaping and we will be putting in some irrigation. The project is currently being designed by VHP. The plans were sent up to the NH DOT yesterday for final review. We would like to go out to bid in about a month and bid opening would be at the end of May. Construction would be June through November. The estimated cost on the project... we have about \$300,000 for the construction. We put in a request to the NH DOT to see if they have a little bit more funding. The engineers have come up with an estimate of \$340,000. In the bid package, we are identifying a couple alternates with one being the bridge. We

could put that in at a later date or maybe some of the lighting could be done at a later date. This grant is an 80%/20% match grant. The federal government through NH DOT awards 80% to the City and we have used a cash match for the other 20%. Again, it is only going to be ¼ mile but it brings us up to South Main Street. At that point we have a land issue as we go across South Main Street. A few years ago a piece of that property was sold and we would have to get an easement to go through that property and to continue on out to the Goffstown line.

Alderman Levasseur asked is this bridge a different bridge than the one called Hands Across the Merrimack.

Mr. Johnson answered right. This one just spans Second Street.

Alderman Levasseur asked so you are talking about a path, after we get past Jac Pac and we go past the Queen City Bridge.

Mr. Johnson answered this is on the West Side. This is the Merrimack River, the FE Everett Turnpike and this is Second Street.

Alderman Levasseur asked before Queen City Bridge.

Mr. Johnson answered this is located between the Queen City and Granite Street Bridge.

Alderman Levasseur asked it is not the one that is already there, that trestle. We are not talking about that trestle right.

Mr. Johnson stated that trestle is right here coming across the highway and it dead-ends and then the old rail corridor begins here and at Second Street the bridge was taken out a few years ago.

Alderman Levasseur asked so people are going to be walking up...they obviously are not going to put traffic lights across the highway so how are they going to get from this bridge. Are they going to walk from underneath like Second Street down another path and then across the bridge?

Mr. Johnson answered for the time being the City has applied for another grant and that is the Hands Across the Merrimack project and then at that point when that is in place everyone would be able to continue right over and link into the Riverwalk. We are ending our project...we have to stay back about 100' from the abutment at Turner Street and we met with CLD and Tom to discuss that so when the new grant comes through they would have access to work and then do the bridge across the Merrimack. At this point we are just going from Second Street

to Turner Street. There is a railroad siding that grades down to Turner Street and folks would be able to walk and get down here and they would have to use Granite Street until the new bridge is constructed.

Alderman Thibault asked has anything been done to take care of the Tires, Inc. right-of-way off of Main Street as you are heading west. I know that that was sold at one point to these people and I know in talking to Jack and some of the other people out there that it would have a major impact and I am wondering how we are going to resolve that. Do you have anything on that?

Mr. Johnson answered we have had a couple of community meetings and we have actually met with some of the abutters one on one. We met with Mr. Larabee who has a property on the other side. That was also sold but the City did reserve an easement so we did have an easement. This one went ahead prior to the City being able to do that. The Thompson family has attended the community meetings and I have met with them a couple of times and we are trying to work out different options. One is to go around the property. The consultants and everyone were saying that it is best to keep a straight path and not to divert off. At this point, we have presented it to them. I think we would have to get into a little bit more detailed design on how it would impact the property.

Alderman Thibault stated in looking at that, I think there is room to do that. Of course, he would like to keep as much land as he can, but I believe there is room to do that.

Mr. Johnson stated they also purchased other properties on Main Street so they own all of the property on that side of the street.

Alderman Levasseur asked, Mr. Chairman, the money that Ron is asking for...

Chairman O'Neil interjected he is not asking for any money.

Alderman Levasseur asked that is a continuation of the \$1.4 million.

Chairman O'Neil answered no. This is separate. This is money that Parks & Recreation has applied for and been awarded.

Mr. Johnson stated it is totally separate. We are just here to update because it ties into the Riverwalk so this funding was approved...we actually had two grants. The first purchased the property and allowed us to do a Master Plan and the second grant is allowing us to do the construction.

Alderman Levasseur asked what is that bridge right there.

Mr. Johnson answered that is the bridge over Second Street.

Alderman Levasseur asked so that is the one that is right by the laundromat.

Mr. Johnson answered right. It is only 50' across. We are just spanning the existing granite abutments.

Alderman Levasseur asked so you are just raising it up a little bit.

Mr. Johnson answered right.

Alderman Levasseur asked how do we get over the river.

Chairman O'Neil answered we have already received 1/3 of the funding for the Hands Across the Merrimack project and they are applying for another federal grant to pick up another 1/3 of it.

Mr. Sommers stated if you refer to the map, there is a section in blue. That is the Hands Across the Merrimack section that utilizes the existing trestle that is already there and we are building on top of that. That is the Hands Across the Merrimack section. That is a \$2.2 million section. It is the entrance to downtown Manchester. That is the money...we right now have been allocated \$600,000 through the same source that Ron received money from. Two different projects, but the same source which is the NH DOT. We are looking for another \$600,000 in federal grants that we have been told are available through DRED. We then are going to go after private funding to match that or local funding. It would be nice if there were some City funding, but most of it will probably be private money. That will be the connection between the Riverwalk that we are doing on the East Side, which has public connections to the south at Hesser College and Sundial Avenue and to the north at Singer Park and the part that Ron is talking about which would then, and it won't be until the year 2003 or 2004 that we are talking about when that happens but we will have a full connection all the way through here. I think and I know a lot of other people agree with me in the City that this will be a very, very nice piece for the City and will promote people coming into the City, which is economic development.

Alderman Levasseur stated I don't have a problem with all of this stuff because you guys have obviously been working on this a lot longer than I have been an Alderman but I was just down at the Riverwalk, your section of the Riverwalk, 40 minutes ago and I don't see how that bridge, the trestle that you are talking about, leads to downtown and when you look across the river you see the highway. You are asking people to walk all the way across and then across that bridge and that

leads you right into...it is actually below Singer field. It is nowhere near downtown. I guess you want to call downtown Singer Park but I call downtown right here in front of City Hall. I don't have a problem with doing that Tom. I just want to know what kind of development you are going to be putting around that little entrance to the bridge because I don't have a problem with the bridge. It brings us to a tar path and it doesn't bring us to any kind of event up there except for the Singer Park stuff where we are going to have some concerts you said. If that is your plan, that is fine.

Mr. Sommers replied this is the start of a plan.

Alderman Levasseur asked what is the big plan.

Mr. Sommers answered the big plan is to bring this whole Riverwalk up along the buildings, on the river side of them, along what I call where the Langers underneath Granite Street up to Phase III, which we have done preliminary design on and are in the permitting of right now. In fact, we are under contract to do that. That is the part in front of Jillians and Gateway.

Alderman Levasseur stated I don't have a problem with any of that stuff. That is fine with me. What I have a question about is the land itself, which is after Singer Park. What is going on in there? Is there any other development that is going to be going in there? Is there a plan somewhere for more development to go in there?

Mr. Sommers asked for more development beyond the Riverwalk.

Alderman Levasseur answered where Singer Park is. Is all of that land between Singer Park and Jac Pac...there is that big huge piece of land that is sitting there...

Chairman O'Neil interjected I believe that in the Master Plan there were two parcels that were identified for possible development.

Mr. Sommers stated right and those parcels still sit there and are open for that. If you put the Riverwalk in there, the idea is that you can then develop the right kind of development in there that gives you the best use of those parcels. Some of that land probably will be and ought to be maintained as open space.

Mr. Thomas stated keep in mind that we still have a Phase II CSO requirement with the EPA. Originally, the cemetery brook CSO facility was going to be under Singer field. That moved south to potentially where the senior center was going to be. Now it is quite frankly on the south side of the trestle so that area may be needed by the City to build what we call swill separators once the study has been

completed and once we determine whether we need that or not. To jump ahead with developing some of that land at least south of where the trestle crosses there, I would urge caution on because if we have to put in some type of CSO facility in that area with development on it, it is going to make it very difficult and it might mean that we would have to move back into the Singer field area and take that down and build a facility. There is vacant land, open land there and at least to the south I would recommend that we go with caution as far as developing that.

Alderman Levasseur stated I just walked the Riverwalk, the section that goes up to Jac Pac. You already have knocked down the trees and created the path. Now that was done prior to the winter, is that correct? So all you need now is the tar and the lights. Do you have the money for that? Is that included in the \$1.4 million?

Mr. Thomas answered that project has already been approved. We have a signed contract with Shumway Construction and that project will be completed this year. The project that we are urging that move forward with is what we call the NYCOA section, the section from Queen City Bridge down to Sundial Avenue that shows on this plan at the very bottom in green. The reason why I say it is important that we go ahead with that phase of the project is that it suddenly ends and it ends right now or will end once the Shumway project is completed at the Queen City Bridge does not have any public access to it. The rail crossing there is private. We have no possibility of making it a public rail crossing and the streets in that area like Biron Street as it gets into that back area by Jac Pac is all private.

Alderman Levasseur asked where is the path going to go on Sundial Avenue. Is it going to go in front of the Sundial Avenue building where Foster Grant is? Is that the continuation?

Mr. Thomas answered it will be right on the bank of the river. The top of the bank of the river is old Foster Grant, which is now NYCOA.

Alderman Levasseur asked what is the money going to be after this...we keep talking about the \$1.4 million and I am going to vote yes that we keep going to Jac Pac. Now has that been put in your budget? I didn't think it was included in this budget past Jac Pac.

Mr. Thomas answered it is part of Phase IB. It has not been approved yet because what we did is we stopped Phase IB at Queen City Avenue until we negotiated with NYCOA. Now it is not part of the \$1.4 million.

Chairman O'Neil noted we are actually into Item 4 now.

Revised Project Fund Allocation submitted by the Public Works Director

seeking approval of his recommendations to reallocate and commit other funds up to the total bond appropriation of \$4,000,000 as outlined herein.

Mr. Sommers stated be careful of the \$1.4 million because I just did that in my head.

Mr. Thomas stated if you are looking at what I am recommending, which is the second agenda item, the three page document from myself to this Committee and the CIP Committee, it has a lot of various recommendations and number two is the NYCOA piece at \$400,000. When all is said and done, if you go to the last page, which summarizes the commitment and recommendations you can see the bottom line is that there is \$1.4 million and I guess that is the number that you are referring to that does not include that \$400,000 for NYCOA. That is a balance that is left after all of the other commitments and reallocations plus the funding of NYCOA at \$400,000 and leaving a contingency of \$55,000. That gives you a balance of \$1.4 million that we were going to recommend to propose in a reserve for the time being until a determination is made where we should spend it on parking. Seeing that we are into that area, I wanted to give the Committee a little summary of what happened with the approval to do the Seal Tanning Parking deck, which was approved by both this Committee and the CIP Committee. As we got into the letting of that contract, and through the fact that we had the Rubenstein parking lot under construction and the potential ability to use South Commercial street parking for some of the demands in the Gateway area there it was determined that we didn't need to spend the money to build that parking garage at that time. So what we did was we said okay we are going to not award the project and take a look at where else in the Millyard does it make sense to provide some parking. Based on the preliminary design report that was done by Desmond Associates, that was the previous parking consultant we had, we started looking at the Jefferson Mill lot at the northerly end of Commercial Street. Based on information we had, we went in and did a preliminary design and one of the things that increase the cost on the Seal Tanning lot was that fact that we didn't have borings and we didn't know what the foundation material was going to be and we determined once we were into the design that we were going to need pilings. We did not want to get surprised on the Jefferson Mill site so what we did was we had a very preliminary design done of Jefferson Mill with borings so that we could determine for ourselves what we would be acquiring for additional parking, how much it was going to cost so that we could come in and make a presentation to this Committee and the CIP Committee and recommend that we don't go with Seal Tanning but go with Jefferson Mill. Once we got involved with looking at the Jefferson Mill site knowing that we had air rights, we found out that some of the assumptions that were made by the previous consultant, Desmond Associates, was incorrect. They were assuming they could build a deck right up to the face of all the buildings in that area and it would have provided a lot more

parking and the cost per space would have been somewhat reasonable. Once we found out that there were some errors made, the City staff and the Riverfront Development Committee got together and said okay we have to stop a minute and back up and take a better look at exactly what we can build down there and what are the true costs to go ahead and do some of this construction. In addition, we wanted to develop a policy. Alderman Gatsas at one time stated that we should have a policy instead of just throwing money at various projects in the Millyard area. What we did was we commissioned that a more detailed preliminary study of all parking options in the Millyard would move ahead and that report will be done within a couple of weeks. I have all kinds of various cards here that we can review or I can talk to you after this meeting because I know we are running out of time, but some of the new things that have come up is there is a potential for building a parking facility on Public Service. We would have to get their authorization. There is a potential of developing quite a bit of parking there depending on how high you go. There is a potential and we have known it right along, that Bedford Street could accommodate a lot of cars and what we have done is we have included the Bedford Street right-of-way and we put together another preliminary design and we have also taken another look at Granite Street, that parking lot, but we ruled that out because the right-of-way of the Granite Street widening really encroaches into that parking area and quite frankly doesn't make is cost effective to build a parking facility. One of the surprises that we just learned from doing this study is down on the Langer site. The Langer site would be just south of the last building on South Commercial Street. We have a potential of going four to five stories high with a parking facility there, which is not going to block anybody's view and will tie in very nicely with the height of the abutting building. That has a potential of quite a few spaces. Just as a follow-up and this is preliminary, I have a hand out for you. Basically this is a preliminary summary of some of the findings that this report has revealed. You can see some of the cost per spaces at some of these locations are very desirable. Again, depending on how high you go at Public Service you could potentially obtain 519 spaces. Jumping over to the Langer site again if you go five levels or four stories you could have a potential of 875 spaces. This report coupled with the reserve that we are recommending this \$1.4 million will allow us I think to make proper decisions where we should be spending parking money in the Millyard. In addition to this study, the same consultant has also been commissioned to do a study of the downtown area. With the civic center coming and there is a need to take a look at parking downtown, part of the study is to again do some preliminary estimates to provide parking for the federal lot on Pine Street and the Pearl Street lot. Most of these studies are going to be combined together with a needs assessment so that again I think we will be able to talk intelligently about what we have for spaces. Part of the study is also looking at utilization of the existing spaces and parking facilities to find out at different times of the day how many people are in them. On that note, I will be glad to try to answer any of your questions.

Alderman Levasseur stated I just want to know once we get past Jac Pac for the Riverwalk that we are building...I just want to make sure because I don't want to approve something tonight just based on a recommendation. I need to know what the price is going to be to go past Jac Pac because I think you said the \$1.4 million gets us up to Jac Pac. So this is another \$1.4 million?

Chairman O'Neil replied all of the money is there. It is just a reallocation. It is money that has been budgeted.

Alderman Levasseur asked so you are taking that \$1.4 million that we saved on the Seal Tanning Lot and putting it in with this group.

Alderman Gatsas stated it is \$400,000.

Chairman O'Neil stated it is \$400,000 plus the \$1.4 million is already there.

Alderman Levasseur stated well I just want to make sure because there are going to be a lot of questions asked once we get past Jac Pac and I want to make sure before I go voting on something I want to know how far...are you going to stop somewhere or are we going to go all the way down Brown Avenue.

Mr. Thomas replied the Master Plan shows the southerly terminus of the Riverwalk at Sundial Avenue.

Alderman Levasseur asked so that is the end of that portion.

Mr. Thomas answered that is the southerly end, that is correct. As Tom mentioned, another reason why the funding of that particular section is important, again, is to tie it to South Manchester. Now we have pretty much a stand-alone project. You have the Riverwalk tying to Sundial Avenue, which is also the Heritage Trail and tying to Commercial Street to the north and eventually to the West Side.

Alderman Thibault stated on that land that you just talked about that we are holding because we don't know if the federal government is going to obligate you to do certain things on that land, when...do you have a time limit on when this may happen.

Mr. Thomas replied we are in the process of entering into a study of what we call the cemetery brook basin. That is going to be handled through sewer user fees as part of the entire CSO study and consent order. In the consent order we agreed to

do certain construction and we also agreed to study this issue on the East Side. Hopefully within a couple of years we will have an indication as to what the extent of the work will be on the East Side of the city in relation to the cemetery brook and some of these other CSO's.

Alderman Thibault asked you don't have any cost estimate do you.

Mr. Thomas answered the second phase of the CSO program could be as high as another \$50 million, however, we are hoping that is not the case. One of the reasons why we broke it into two phases was so that we wouldn't jump into something without knowing everything. In addition, there is a study of the whole Merrimack watershed that is being partially funded through appropriations from Senator Smith that may benefit us if it determines that the river isn't as bad as everybody thinks and the work that is going on will benefit us.

Alderman Thibault asked are you fairly comfortable with this, Frank.

Mr. Thomas answered yes. I strongly recommend that we fund or authorize the funding of the NYCOA piece.

Alderman Gatsas asked the design on the Seal Tanning parking facility, did we use all \$77,000 of it.

Mr. Thomas answered that is correct.

Alderman Gatsas stated I noticed and maybe Frank you didn't do this and maybe Mr. Jabjiniak or somebody can answer this question but on the Hands Across the Merrimack project two additional grants are being applied for. Is that your baby or somebody else's because there is also a grant being looked at from LCHIP. Does anybody know about the grant that we are looking at from LCHIP?

Mr. Sommers replied there are two grants. I think one is land and water conservation and the other one is another federal program called UPAR.

Alderman Gatsas responded well LCHIP is a state one.

Mr. Sommers replied this isn't LCHIP.

Alderman Gatsas stated well someone has made application to LCHIP. I saw it today.

Mr. Sommers replied that is not included in these. That was a separate application that was made above and beyond these. I believe that it is not moving forward. I think it has to be in a historic district and the bridge is not in a historic district.

Alderman Gatsas asked so that is being removed. Has somebody withdrawn that application?

Mr. Jabjiniak answered the application was not accepted at the state.

Mr. Sommers stated what we are doing now, we have met with Bill because these other two need to come to the City, is we were approached by the person from the state who is with the Land & Water Conservation and we were told about those two federal grants and we are working with Bill to go after them.

Alderman Gatsas asked Phase IB is how long.

Mr. Sommers answered about 2,500 or 2,600 feet long and that doesn't include NYCOA. If you add NYCOA, 3,600 feet.

Alderman Gatsas asked how long is NYCOA.

Mr. Sommers answered 1,000 feet.

Alderman Gatsas asked so NYCOA is \$40/foot or \$400. What is the number? That is \$400/foot.

Mr. Sommers answered that is an estimate. We have not gone to bid on it yet so that is not a final number.

Alderman Gatsas stated so we paid \$687,000 for how many feet. Did you say 2,600?

Mr. Sommers replied I believe that is correct.

Alderman Gatsas asked so we are at \$260 a foot or \$264 a square foot. I am looking at this project and I am saying it is nice to say it will go by Jac Pac but you have to go across the railroad tracks and you have to go a long way to get to it. I am looking to see who is going to, who is that servicing?

Mr. Sommers answered it is part of a program that will service more people than you can imagine. It is downtown. It is very visible. You will see this whole piece across the river from 293. People are already using it.

Mr. Thomas stated let me follow-up on that. I think it is going to be servicing people in the Hesser College area, people in South Manchester on Riverdale or whatever that street is down there and right now that rail crossing as I mentioned earlier that is not a public crossing down there. That is all private. The Heritage Trail actually does run from the southerly terminus of this NYCOA piece all the way down to South Manchester.

Alderman Gatsas replied but we continue spending money on a project that at some point leads to nowhere. Right now if we stop at Phase IB we are nowhere and you just spent \$687,000. Why aren't we going in the direction where there are more people and more businesses to utilize this? Is it easier to go this way and if we get stopped the other way we have spent \$1.5 million with no conclusion to the project?

Mr. Thomas responded I disagree that there isn't any conclusion. I think that with the construction of NYCOA we now have a piece that is open to Sundial Avenue and all of the streets south of that point. To the north you are tied into Commercial Street and all other streets north of that. In addition, you are going to be tied to the West Side. I agree with you that in my opinion the more advantageous piece to construct is up along the buildings. Phase III has been under design. They have taken to the design to a point where they have their permitting in and now we are waiting to hear responses on the permitting. We are not going to have the go ahead, I don't believe, within the next year or year and a half. We are building the easiest sections first.

Alderman Gatsas replied why do we want to spend \$1 million on two sections just because they are easier to do if we don't get permits to do the most important section. Does that make sense? This is the easy part to do, Frank. We can get this concluded at any time.

Mr. Thomas responded even if we can't move forward with any other phases up along the buildings because of a change in philosophy by the Board to not fund the project, we still have a stand alone project down by Singer field between Sundial Avenue and Commercial Street tied to the West Side. Why build the bike trail on the West Side? It is not by any buildings.

Alderman Gatsas stated I don't think this Board was ever led to believe that the part of the project going north from Granite Street would not be concluded because if that were the case because of permitting purposes I don't think the other portions of the Riverwalk would have been done.

Chairman O'Neil replied I don't believe that is what he is saying. Phase III northerly from Granite Street is the toughest and most expensive portion of the

project to design, to get permitted and to build. That is underway now. I didn't take what Frank said to mean that it would never get built. We believe, the City believes, that it will get permitting but there are a number of agencies, both federal and state, that are involved and it is going to take time to get those permits. We skipped Phase II because one of the buildings, to the best of my knowledge, is still in bankruptcy. That would have been the natural next move but why commit money when one of the buildings you aren't going to be able to resolve until it comes out of bankruptcy. I believe this thing is moving forward as quick as it can based on the time. I think the original plan when it was presented by CLD and LDR was seven years maybe.

Mr. Sommers stated it was a five to ten year but we were hoping six or seven years.

Chairman O'Neil stated it could take 12 or 15 years to complete this thing, but at least we are keeping it moving. I think to see almost a mile of it just on the East Side of the river complete is a step in the right direction. Hopefully it opens up the door to completing the bridge across. We know Parks & Recreation is proceeding westerly from the Everett Turnpike with the bike and walking path eventually out as far as the West Side Arena. I think this is a good plan and I think it continues to move the project forward.

Alderman Gatsas stated I certainly heard exactly what you heard, Alderman, but the only problem I am having is that if the other phases are not approved why are we going to spend another \$400,000 if it is two years away before approval. I don't understand why we continue spending money not knowing if the next phase is ever going to happen. My belief is that the Riverwalk was put in place because of the northbound traffic from Granite Street up. Now if that is not correct than somebody needs to explain to me something different.

Mr. Sommers replied that is partly correct. The Riverwalk was put in place as a multi-function...something that displays the downtown and Singer Park is considered to be in my mind anyway adjacent to downtown Manchester...to help fix up and make into a recreational area an area that I would call pretty blighted over the years and pretty much a mess.

Alderman Gatsas asked if we could not get the approvals to do the other phases, would you have recommended that we spend \$1.5 million on this phase.

Mr. Sommers answered yes I would.

Mr. Thomas stated the Master Plan that was prepared and approved by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen does show Phase IA and IB being the first phases

recommended. Those were the first phases funded. I would like Tom to respond to where we stand with the permitting. He didn't have a chance to get into the status report, but as far as I know all of the permitting is on track. It just takes a long time. We don't see any obstacles.

Mr. Sommers stated we have met with all of the permitting agencies. They are working with us jointly. In fact they have given us a person at the state...

Chairman O'Neil interjected could you outline who they are please.

Mr. Sommers stated the Corp of Engineers, EPA, Fish & Wildlife, FEMA because we have flood issues on the Merrimack River, Shoreline Protection, Erosion Control and Wetlands. We have met with them all together. They are working with us. They have said the project is doable. We obviously have a set of criteria that we have to follow.

Chairman O'Neil asked so there are seven different permits required.

Mr. Sommers answered no. Seven different agencies and what they are doing is coordinating all of this. There are probably about four permits required but these people all have a say in them. We are on track in that process. They are favorable to the project. They think it is good to accentuate and have the Riverwalk along the Merrimack River here because they think it will allow people that connection and that is what they are in favor of. They feel that it is an environmentally safe project if done right, and the part we are talking about is Phase III now, and they are just making sure we are doing the right thing. We also have a canal there, which is an old remnant canal that has historical value and that weighs in too. We are dealing with that now and on track. It takes time.

Alderman Thibault stated other than the bankruptcy phase of the Woman's Gym building, have you had any other problems with getting permits to do the Riverwalk in that section.

Mr. Sommers asked do you mean easements.

Alderman Thibault answered yes.

Mr. Sommers replied no. We are working with the Langers and we are working with the owners of the middle building. There is no indication of problems. In fact, I have letters from them saying that once we have final design or once they know exactly what it is they are ready to go forward.

Alderman Thibault asked so you are saying that you have no major problems with the people who own these buildings.

Mr. Sommers answered no. They are all working with us.

Alderman Levasseur stated, Tom, I know that you guys come before the Board and it can get a little rough sometimes but you are dealing with some very frustrated people, very frustrated Aldermen. We just spent \$6 million on Livingston Park and you can't use the pool up there. We have tennis courts that don't look good. We have a Riverwalk that you say if you go down there you can see how wonderful it is but I went down there when the trees were in full bloom and you can't see the river. That is the frustration of all of this. We were sold on an idea that this was going to run along the river and that people were going to be able to fish off of this. The pictures that we have seen in the books...oh look how pretty it is and it has a community center down there but we tried to put a community center in there and we can't get it in. It looks like a tar pathway and it is covered by trees and I talked to you about this before, Frank, and you said you would take some of the trees out so you could have a better view of the river but you can't see the river. You are talking about allocating money to go forward and keep going down this Riverwalk and there are other needs in the City. I know that you sit there and go ah, but there are a lot of questions that have to be answered because some of these guys are new and I will be honest with you, Tom, it would have been smarter for us to go forward with the hard part first because it would have sold better, it would have looked better and people would have been a little more excited about it. I am with you on it. I am not really 100% thrilled with the path and the fact that you can't see the river and I thought it was going to be really something special and you walk along it and there is nobody down there and it really doesn't feel safe. I just walked down there and I saw two people walking along the thing. Hopefully this Master Plan is going to come together and you are going to build this and it is going to go all the way forward, but you have to understand that there is frustration on this Board.

Alderman Pinard moved to approve the recommendations by the Public Works Director. Alderman Sysyn duly seconded the motion. There being none opposed, the motion carried.

There being no further business, on motion of Alderman Thibault, duly seconded by Alderman Levasseur, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee