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# Saratoga Springs City Council hoping grants will help complete waterfront park on Saratoga Lake

Published: Tuesday, August 02, 2011

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SARATOGA SPRINGS — The City Council authorized a plan Tuesday to put in for grants to support efforts to develop the Waterfront Park planned for Crescent Road on Saratoga Lake.

The city purchased the land where The Waterfront restaurant was located as part of open space bond money 2006.

Since then, not much has happened on the beach-side of the project, in part because of the economy and in part because a \$200,000 state grant only recently came through in April for the city.

“Things have been kind of at a standstill,” Public Works Commissioner Anthony “Skip” Scirocco said. His crews will do some of the work down on the site, which includes the demolition of the former restaurant.

The grant requires a match from the city, but the \$200,000 can come out of city man-hours, engineering work and other “in-kind” contributions.

“It will take care of a significant portion,” said Mayor Scott Johnson, who added that because of other money already in place for the project, “The taxpayers will not see any difference in taxes at all,” from phase one of the project.

The first phase will provide paving and other infrastructure for the area, as well as the money for the building’s demolition.

The total cost of the three phases will be around \$1.6 million, but Johnson said the idea is to get half of that through state grants. “Right now we are paying 50 cents on the dollar,” he said, because the grants make up half of the project’s cost thus far.

Johnson said the decision to go to grants came after the dip in the economy over the past few years, but said doing nothing with the property was “unacceptable.”

“We used \$2 million from the \$5 million we had in our open space bond act (on the property)

and then we turned around and padlocked it,” he said. “You don’t spend city resources and taxpayer money and then don’t make it available for public use.”

At this point, there is a grassy area near the road with picnic tables and benches for the public, maintained by the Department of Public Works, but Johnson hopes to have the beach accessible to tourists by next summer.

The grant the city is preparing to apply for would provide \$400,000 for phase two of the project, which would add more park amenities.

“I hope they develop it,” said Jack Tevlin, who lives up the road from the land on Garside Lane. “It would be nice to have a public place to go on the lake.”

Tevlin bought his house in 2003, when The Waterfront was still operating.

“It was just a nice place,” he said, pointing out the gazebo down near the beach that used to be a part of the restaurant.

The beach also has bathrooms already, holdovers from The Waterfront. “Brown’s Beach (on the Southeast side of Saratoga Lake) is a great place to go,” he said, hoping aloud that the city’s site could become a comparable place. “It’s a beautiful spot.”

Further down his road in a house less than 50 feet from the closed restaurant is the man who sold it to the city, Jon Diesem.

“I think it should be opened,” he said. His property is down near the beach and he still has a driveway connecting it to his former restaurant. He said the increased traffic and public would not bother him.

“Not at all,” he said. “That’s what they bought it for.”