

# New Capitola pier offer; council seems interested

The Capitola Wharf is again being offered to the city of Capitola and several city council members think the city should accept it.

The proposal will be on next Thursday's agenda with a recommendation from City Manager Steve Burrell that a public hearing be scheduled on the proposal for the Oct. 25 meeting.

The offer, said Burrell, is being made by wharf owner Rick Karleen who will dedicate the wharf lease to the city in exchange for a 17-year operating agreement allowing him to continue to operate the wharf's snack shop, bait and tackle and boat rental concessions.

Burrell said Karleen would pay the city a percentage of his gross sales with a minimum as rent on the wharf.

In return, the city would have to restore the century-old structure to a sound condition, probably using a 75 percent matching fund grant from the state Wildlife Conservation Board.

The agreement, said Burrell, is conceptual now with the amount of the rent still to be worked out. However, the agreement does not include any expansion of the existing commercial operations on the wharf, although the locations of the buildings might be shifted towards the center of the wharf, allowing fishing around the entire perimeter.

This is at least the third time Capitola has been offered the wharf in the last decade, and the second time since a 1978 storm caused major damage to the wharf's pilings, planking and the buildings at the end of the structure that started life a hundred years ago as a shipping terminus for the village of Soquel.

Based on estimates given the city council a year ago, it could cost \$400,000 or more to

restore the wharf, with the city paying \$100,000 under the 75-25 percent matching fund grants offered by the state Wildlife Conservation Board.

Burrell has been quietly negotiating with Karleen for several weeks about the wharf transfer.

"They would dedicate the wharf in exchange for operating those concessions for the 17 years remaining on the lease," Burrell said, describing the proposed agreement with Karleen.

"We would allow them to operate the existing concessions and they would pay us rent based on the gross receipts with a minimum — to be worked later."

Burrell added: "To renovate the wharf, we would apply to the Wildlife Conservation Board for grant. The city would renovate the basic pier with the concession operator rebuilding the buildings and the city putting

in public restroom facilities.

Burrell doesn't know how much money it would take to renovate the wharf in its present condition, but when he worked for the city of San Clemente in Southern California, the city wharf was rebuilt for \$550,000, and it was 400 feet longer than Capitola's.

"What we would do if a decision is made to renovate is to get engineers to do a study and give us an estimate of what needed to be done and how much.

"But it's not in that bad shape," Burrell said. "And the rent they pay could recover the city's expenditures over a period of years.

Reaction to the conceptual proposal by city council members was generally favorable.

"My reaction," said Mayor Michael Routh, "is extremely favorable, since I played a part in the negotiations.

"Right after Bob Berry turned down the city's offer of (\$114,000), Rick (Karleen) came to me and started hashing it out.

"If we accept the proposal," Routh added, "we've got ourselves a pier and in the long run, a profit. Everything seems to be falling into place."

"Councilman Bob Garcia also liked the proposal. "I think that is sort of what we've been hoping for — it's a much better offer than before. It gives us control, a low intensity use and the cost is minimal.

"The wharf has proven it is in better shape than a lot of people thought it was," Garcia added, referring to its survival of the latest ocean storm to hit the Monterey Bay coastline last Tuesday morning.

"I'm absolutely for it," said Councilman Jerry Clarke.

after hearing an outline of the present proposal. "We've got to get off the stick and get it now.

"This is the most reasonable proposal I've heard, and if it doesn't go now, it never will.

"I think the community will get behind it," Clarke added, referring to earlier opposition to the city's acquisition of the wharf, mainly from a handful of Depot Hill residents. It is just about our last chance to get it."

Councilwoman Carin Mudgett said she supported the basic idea. "I think I'm inclined to support that, but without knowing the specifics, I can't say for sure.

"I think it makes sense for the city to have control over the wharf's maintenance and basically, I'm for it without hearing the complete details," she added.

Councilman Ron Graves was unavailable for comment Thursday afternoon.



**Storm-battered wharf still stands after 100 years.**