



Capitola wharf has been a landmark and a favored fishing spot for several decades.

City seeking ways to save old, storm-battered pier

By BOB SMITH

For sale: One wharf, heavily damaged but with a lot of memories and high hopes for the future. Price: \$150,000 plus.

There's no "for sale" sign hanging on the Capitola Wharf this morning but the Capitola city council will make a decision within the next two weeks on whether or not to acquire full control of storm-damaged and closed-to-the-public wharf for \$150,000.

But the joker in the deal is that no one knows how much more money the city will have to spend in the future, first, to keep the wharf from disappearing below the waves in the next major Pacific storm; second, repair it to the point that it could again be used for fishing and other low key public uses; and finally, rebuild it sufficiently to allow construction of a restaurant or other high intensity tourist oriented business on it.

The estimates discussed Monday night by Capitola city council members and Robert Mason, one of two men who now hold an option to acquire the lease on the wharf, indicated that the repair and renovation costs could range from a low of \$300,000-\$500,000 to \$1 million and more.

If the city bought the lease, it wouldn't be acquiring the title to the land the wharf stands upon. But if the county goes through with a deal to transfer the tidelands title to Capitola, purchase of the lease would give the city full control — and responsibility — for the wharf.

City Manager Max Kludt was directed by the council to find out, if possible, and how much it might cost to repair the wharf, what financing sources might be opened from the state and federal governments. The issue will be discussed again at the Oct. 23 council meeting.

Capitola Mayor Michael Routh has met with Mason and his partner, Vincent E. Brown, several times over the last two months about the wharf's future.

The partners have an agreement with Robert Berry to acquire the assets of Capitola Wharf, Inc. for a total payment of \$150,000, with an initial payment of \$36,000 due Oct. 31, plus the assumption of a promissory note with a principal balance of \$114,000, and 10 percent yearly interest, and payable in installments of \$1,110 a month, with the balance to be paid in five years.

"They are willing to sell the lease to the city for that amount," Routh told the other council members. This would give the city sole ownership.

"They are willing to go 50 percent, up to \$10,000 on a feasibility study.

"And they are willing to lease back the wharf (after it

has been repaired)."

Routh thinks the city has the money to buy the wharf, if it diverts \$100,000 it has set aside for open space purchase to the wharf acquisition, and also commits approximately \$65,000, in 1973 and 1976 state park bond money for the purchase.

"The pier has such a total visual and aesthetic impact on the city," added Routh, "that it would be like cutting off your right arm to lose it."

Routh got quick concurrence from a majority of the council.

"Although Escalona Gulch is a very important area," said councilman Jerry Clarke,

talking about the present target area for the park bond funds, "the wharf serves all parts of the community and its loss could be far worse than the loss of all the trees in the city."

"Its history," added Councilman Bob Garcia, "is longer than the city of Capitola's and I would hate to see anything happen to it."

But the question still remained: can the city afford to repair and maintain the wharf once it has purchased the lease? The answer, according to the council and Kludt, is "no", unless the city

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On the inside



Storm-battered pier

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can get state and federal grants.

Councilman Ron Graves asked for more information on the repair costs.

Graves told the council that he had, last weekend, inspected the wharf from underneath. "The building at the end is supported by only two heavy pilings. And between the bait shack and the gate, almost every header is missing or damaged.

"Just to put the wharf back into some kind of walk-on condition, it would need maybe \$250,000 in repairs.

"I think we should find out what the repairs would cost," Graves added.

"But I am concerned that if nothing gets done, it won't be there soon. If some repairs aren't made, there won't be a wharf to sell."

Mason added to Graves' gloomy assessment. Sixty percent of the storm damage is under the water, away from surface-only visual inspection, he said.

Marine inspection and engineering work would cost \$1,200 an hour, Mason said, although Kludt said he believed he could get the wharf inspected for much less money.

"The major damage is underwater," Mason said. "The structure under water is 60 percent damaged,"

"It would take \$150,000 to get it back to the way it was before the storm," Mason said.

"But it needs major reconstruction," Mason added. "We are talking about complete reconstruction."

Mason's assessment was underscored by city Building Inspector Bill Clarke. Clarke told the council that to use the wharf for anything except fishing, it must be raised at least five feet higher.

"If you are going to put a building on it, you are going to have to raise the deck five feet — completely rebuild it.

"The only thing that deck is good for now," he added, "is a platform for a fixed pile driver."

Routh agreed, and added that damage may be beyond the resources of private enterprise to repair.

"The damage to the pier has probably gone beyond the scope of anything except a government agency to repair.

We are the only ones who can get the grant. We are the only ones who can afford to save the wharf."

Garcia, a coastal commission member, was critical of Mason for not going ahead with emergency repairs this summer. Mason and his attorney, Edward Newman, were questioned sharply as to why they had not gotten emergency permits from the Coastal Commission for the work.

Newman said the owners wanted to determine the use for the wharf before filing a Coastal Commission permit application.

Outside the meeting, Newman told reporters his group could not get an emergency repair permit, saying that the commission staff had insisted on a full permit application be filed.

Mrs. Carin Mudgett was cautious about committing the city to reconstruction of the wharf without some outside help.

"What if it means complete rebuilding of the wharf — \$500,000 or more — and there is no possibility of a grant or a restaurant," she asked.

Mason wouldn't commit his group to opening a restaurant on the wharf if the city restored it. And a draft agreement presented to the council by Newman calls for Mason and Brown to have the right to lease, or a first right of refusal for a monthly rent of two percent of all revenues received on the wharf.

But Mason added: "We need a lot of help here, and if free enterprise can't do the job, you have to. The wharf is at a point now where it will either exist or it won't exist. The city will have to decide if it will make a substantial investment in the wharf — \$300,000-\$500,000.

"Ruth and Going (a San Jose engineering firm retained by Mason) feel it needs substantial work or it won't be there this winter."

"It was offered to us at \$115,000," Graves said, referring to an offer by Tom Shanahan, the former operator who sold the lease to Berry. "We didn't like it then. Now, it is offered at \$150,000 and we may still not like it.

Survival talk for jobless

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