

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)

Urban Waterfront Action Group (UWAG) Meeting
Tuesday, May 13, 2014

1. Pier 34 residential development: Presented by Marathon Engineers, Inc.

2. Spring Garden Street and Festival Piers reconstruction: Presented by Anchor Consultants, LLC. and Delaware River Waterfront Corporation (DRWC)

Participants:

Louis A. Cicalese, Pier 34 Owner

Ahmad Nadeem, Anchor Consultants

Peter Ludas, Anchor Consultants

Peter Grinnell, Anchor Consultants

Randy Brown, PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

John Hohenstein, PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Domenic Rocco, PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

David Kovach, Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC)

Samuel Manka, US Coast Guard

Thomas Simkins, US Coast Guard

Pat Patterson, PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Ed Bonner, US Army Corps of Engineers

Mike Mansolino, US Environmental Protection Agency

Lisa Magee, Philadelphia Regional Port Authority (PRPA)

Andy Quinn, Urban Engineers

Angelo Waters, Urban Engineers

Joe Forkin, Delaware River Waterfront Corporation (DRWC)

Meeting Summary:

1. Pier 34 residential development: Presented by Marathon Engineers, Inc.

This development involves both Pier 34 and the smaller Pier 35. Pier 34 is a finger pier that was last used as a nightclub and parking lot. In recent years, a number of different developments have been proposed for the site. In 2000, a development of 20-30 stories was proposed. Subsequently, a Marriott hotel was proposed but also did not move forward. As part of these prior proposals, a dredging permit had previously been issued.

The current proposal is for a low-rise development of 47 residential units. Cope Linder is the architect. The development is in compliance with zoning regulations and the Central Delaware Master Plan. It will be a private gated community.

There were previous studies conducted by Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), which are adequate for the current proposal. This development will have no impact on the sturgeon population. It was questioned whether the Gloucester office of the NMFS may want additional studies on the sturgeon population.

The reconstruction of the pier will involve a high deck structure and threading 300 new piers into the old piers. There will be a curtain wall around the existing pier structure. Construction activities will be conducted from the existing pier. The pier once had a railroad on it, so it has the capacity to hold cranes and other equipment.

This site is part of the Penn's Landing area, which allows residential uses, even though it is in the floodplain and over navigable waters.

Mr. Bonner questioned if navigational servitude extends to Pier 35, and if there was a sunset date on the navigational servitude permit. If the permit is expired, Congressional approval would be needed. However, the pier head line defines the limit of the federal navigational channel, and the project does not encroach beyond that line.

Mr. Bonner questioned the current strength of the pier due to the partial collapse of part of the pier when it was a nightclub. Mr. Cicalese responded that the entire structure has been evaluated for safety.

The current structure is part fill, not a low deck. The economics of removal of the fill has been evaluated, but would be too much of a challenge financially. In general, a low deck structure is less preferred than a high deck structure and any new structures should ideally be a high deck, and removing the deck while leaving the piles in place should be considered.

There was a question about whether the previous permit involved a mitigation site by the Pennypack. They are looking to do off-site mitigation on a regional scale.

There will be a small marina area on the north side of the pier for use by the residents of the development. The dredging for this has already been done by the Moshulu. There will be a public fishing area on the south side of the development which will be open to the general public.

The recommendation was made to indicate the details regarding sheet pile and depth on the plans.

Bore samples have shown that the fill material is a combination of rubble, stone, and sand. There is no evidence of fly ash in the fill.

The high deck will be located above the floodplain. The 300-400 piles that will be driven will have a direct impact. There will be an additional one acre of shading created by the development. Shading blocks photosynthesis, although there will be less of an impact here since it is over deep and not shallow water.

As far as the timeline, Mr. Cicalese hopes to have the permits finalized and start construction before the end of the summer. There will be a timing restriction to protect the sturgeon population.

As far as mitigation, the back bay, shallow edge/fringe area could be considered for on-site mitigation. At Pier 28, there is a constructed small inter-tidal wetland, which is an alternative to a sheer drop-off. A similar type of on-site mitigation may be possible here.

2. Spring Garden Street and Festival Piers reconstruction: Presented by Anchor Consultants, LLC. and Delaware River Waterfront Corporation (DRWC)

This proposal is for Piers 27-35 (not including Pier 35 1/2), currently known as the Festival Pier. The north side of the site was once a trash incinerator and the south side was once a vehicle impoundment site. DRWC acquired the site in the 1990s and did environmental remediation. The site is proposed to be a low-rise mixed use development with a maximum of 400 residential units. There will also be public access on the site, including a 50' multi-use path.

Currently, the site has a mix of different pier structures. The current proposal is to reduce the size of the site from 13 to 8-9 acres. The pier will be reduced by 115', which will be returned to open water. They will encapsulate the remainder of the sheet pile bulk head. They will need to fill in some areas, which will be done with a high deck structure instead of fill.

A seasonal restriction to protect the sturgeon will be in place.

The recommendation was made to more clearly identify on the layout map what is old fill and low deck and what is the proposed new high deck area.

For the encroachment, DRWC will need to justify why this is necessary in terms of viability and practicability.

It was questioned whether the old piles should remain, as they provide structure and habitat for some fish species.

DRWC was questioned about the potential for archeological resources to be uncovered at the site, as was the case at the Sugarhouse Casino. DRWC responded that it was doubtful based on historic uses of the site.