Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)

Urban Waterfront Action Group (UWAG) Meeting

Tuesday, January 19, 2016

Participants:

Laura Ahramjian, KSK; Jim Boyer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Randy Brown, Matt Waldron, PA DEP; Tamra Dann, Dennis Stefanski, SEPTA: Rick Howley, Lindsay Reul, Philadelphia Water Department; Mike Mansolino, US EPA; Joseph Musil, John Federico, Mike Wagner, Urban Engineers; Daniel Ryan, PFBC; Mike Scott, WSP/PB; Sean Greene, Mike Boyer, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Meeting Summary:

Meeting materials and project summaries were sent to the attendees before the meeting.

1. SEPTA Track bed Resiliency Project (Miquon Station to Norristown along Schuylkill River)

Joe Musil introduced the SEPTA resiliency project concept, noting that the project is being funded by FTA and FTA will serve as the lead federal agency. Joe indicated that the project's purpose is to secure the Norristown Regional Rail line and secure the track bed against future damage from Schuylkill River Flooding. The project is in early planning phases and SEPTA and Urban Engineers are trying to get an idea of what permitting may be required for a number of mitigation activities.

Mr. Musil reviewed the existing conditions, which included existing cribbing and retaining walls constructed when the rails were laid down in the late 19th century. Most of the presumed stabilization work would be outside of the normal high water mark and not the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers but may be within the floodway and require PA DEP permitting. Mr. Musil stressed that there is no intention at this time to extend the stabilization work into the river.

Dan Stefanski, SEPTA, reported that the funds are recovery monies from Superstorm Sandy and the goal is to harden the Right-of –Way not to stop flooding of the Norristown line.

Randy Brown, PA DEP stated that more work needs to be done before he can definitively comment on the required permits but at this point it looks like a General Permit may be required. There was some conversation about whether the mitigation efforts constituted a number of small projects with individual utility of should be taken as one big project as this may influence the type and level of required permits from the state and US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE).

Jim Boyer, ACOE) noted that this project may qualify for a state joint programmatic permit and that the state could handle this issue in house as long as the regulated work remained under 250 feet of impacts. Jim also reported that the project would require an individual permit if disturbance impacted more than 1 acre below the high water mark or wetlands. Mr. Boyer also noted that historic resources would be impacted and cultural resource staff would be involved. Jim noted that once the NEPA process is started FTA should invite the USACOE to participate as a cooperating agency.

Dan Ryan (PFBC), asked that Red Belly turtle habitat be noted.

Randy Brown reported that a pre-application meeting should be organized once the planning for the project is further along to determine independent utility of projects and to clarify what permits may be necessary.

Mr. Musil read an email from the Delaware River basin Commission stating that the project was subject to DRBC floodplain regulations but as the proposed project includes only maintenance streambank stabilization, reconstruction or replacement of drainage cross pipes and outfall structures, and structural improvements to the rail beds to protect them from flooding it does not require DRBC review and approval provided that the facilities are not expanded in the floodway and that any structural improvements to the rail beds do not raise the level of the 100 year flood.

2. Schuylkill River Trail Extension (56th Street to Passyunk Avenue)

John Federico, Urban Engineers, reviewed the scope for the Schuylkill River Trail extension project from 56th Street to the Passyunk Avenue Bridge. Mr. Federico noted that the project was likely to be implemented in two phases with the first phase extending the SRT to 61st Street. Phase I is completely landside of the normal high water mark and outside of the floodway. Mr. Federico also noted that the intent during design will be to have no net fill in areas that are located within the 100-year floodplain. The project is being sponsored and implemented by the Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC), while the trail will be owned by the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation. SRDC would like to initiate design of the project in 2016.

Mr. Brown indicated that Phase I of the project is fairly straightforward and may require Chapter 106 permits. Mr. Boyer noted that this phase of the project is outside of the ACOE jurisdiction.

Mr. Federico described Phase II of the trail extension and noted that implementation plans are a number of years off. After discussion about potential planning and permitting possibilities, it was decided that it would be more fruitful to discuss this phase of the project when the plans for this section of trail are more developed.

The DRBC floodplain regulations do not apply in the tidal Delaware River or tidal portions of tributaries thereto. No DRBC review or approval is required. Mr. Howley said that he can investigate the three sewer pipes within the study area to see if PWD has any capital plans to repair or replace these pipes.

3. Moran Tug (Pier 1 Re-development Plan)

Mike Wagner, Urban Engineers, presented the plans to re-develop pier 1-A at the Philadelphia Navy Yard for use by Moran Philadelphia, a Division of Moran Towing Corporation. The project will be funded with private funds. The plans include:

- removing existing battered fender piles around the perimeter of the pier,
- minimizing demolition and disposal costs by encapsulating and stabilizing the existing structure inside a new steel sheet pile bulkhead (approximately 985 linear feet). The perimeter of the pier will be constructed as an anchored steel sheet pile with a concrete cap. The upriver and downriver sides of the pier will be tied to each other using anchor rods. The outshore end will be anchored to an internal sheet pile wall constructed inshore and parallel to the outshore wall,
- excavation of existing fill material and removal of the timber decking. Trench or/core through existing seawall for anchor rod placement,
- installation of structural piles and concrete grade beams / mat-foundation to create an independent foundation for the building at the outshore end of the pier,
- installing 15 bollards on independent pile-supported concrete foundations around the perimeter of the pier for the mooring of the tugs,
- placing backfill, and fill between the existing timber sheeting and the proposed steel bulkhead to engage the bulkhead,
- placing anchor rods, utilities, and pavement subbase and pavement,

- placing timber pile fender system and timber chocks at berth locations, and
- Applying coatings and other treatments to protect the new steel structural elements from corrosion and to enhance the pier's appearance.

The plans include building a garage for tug maintenance on the rehabilitated structure, along with employee parking, and public open space.

Mr. Ryan asked if other plans were considered to minimize the footprint of the pier. Mr. Brown also inquired about alternative plans.

Mr. Wagner noted that any rehabilitation would require access to the pier structure to meet inspection requirements.

Mr. Boyer asked what the water dependency was for the garage on the proposed pier. Isn't there a presumed upland alternative for this facility? Mr. Wagner responded that the garage on the water facilitated repairs on the tug fleet.

Mr. Boyer noted that since the Navy Yard is a National Historic District and that there is a Memorandum of Agreement between the Navy and occupants regarding the maintenance of structures in the historic district that the cultural resource management will be complicated.

Mr. Brown noted that this is a new proposed use and not maintenance and that an individual permit will be required.

Mr. Ryan expressed a concern about season construction restrictions due to striped bass and sturgeon spawning habitat disturbances.

Mr. Boyer stated that the use of a spudded barge as a structure may be regulated by the Corps.

The DRBC floodplain regulations do not apply in the tidal Delaware River or tidal portions of tributaries thereto. No DRBC review or approval is required.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday March 15, 2016