

PLANS ADVANCE FOR DOCKS IN GATEWAY HARBOR CANAL

Published n December 6, 2006

Author: Laura E. Winchester

© The Buffalo News Inc.

NORTH TONAWANDA - New docks with electricity and water hookups are promised for Gateway Harbor by the start of next year's boating season.

City Engineer Dale Marshall says he plans to advertise for bids on the long-awaited and redesigned project - estimated at \$600,000 - this winter, with work starting as soon as weather allows. The plan calls for installing about 600 feet of permanent docks along the wall of the Erie Canal from the railroad bridge at the foot of Oliver Street to just beyond the Dockside restaurant.

Marshall said that in 2002, the city augmented a \$137,500 state grant with \$120,000 for floating docks in Gateway Harbor.

"But I got cold feet because of concerns about the operation and maintenance required and decided we'd do better to have permanent docks," Marshall said.

Because permanent docks are more expensive, the city increased its share to about \$220,000 and asked the state to double its grant, but it refused, Marshall said.

So with about \$360,000 on hand early last year, the city "bid out a dock system that included electric and water, but the bids that we got on average were \$660,000," Marshall said.

He said he "took a hard look at the project" and realized that he could eliminate about 200 feet of dock because the canal wall varies in height.

Marshall said the canal wall near the Dockside is high enough that the decks of bigger boats are nearly at ground level, negating the need for docks.

Community Development Director James Sullivan recently announced that \$100,000 from a state Small Cities grant could be used for the docks.

The State Canal Corp., meanwhile, agreed to provide \$72,000 for electricity and water service, already available on the City of Tonawanda side of the harbor. Another \$50,000 was obtained for the dock project through State Sen. George Maziarz, R-Newfane.

Sullivan told a recent meeting of the Waterfront Commission that the dock project is "crucial" to the planned \$15 million redevelopment of the former Remington Rand Building on Sweeney Street, adjacent to the canal.

Anthony Kissling of Buffalo and Manhattan has proposed converting the building into live/work lofts with an antique and classical boat museum, plus a restaurant, on the ground floor.

Marshall, who now has nearly \$600,000 on hand, says he believes that, with some redesign, the project can draw bids of that amount from marine contractors.

"This project will attract more people to our city and our docks. And with the fees charged, it's a project that can pay for itself over time," Marshall said