

Lower OKs \$3.8M. more for Roseann Ave. work

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council approved bonding an additional \$3.9 million for the Roseann Avenue drainage and storm water management project.

In October 2015, council approved \$4.2 million to be bonded.

Engineer Mark Sray, of Mott MacDonald, said modifications to the plans

and specifications were completed and the project was advertised for bids March 21. He said bids were expected to be received April 25, with an award of a contract during council's first meeting in May.

Councilman Frank Sippel asked the results of the latest groundwater sample from the project area. Sray said a sample was taken two weeks ago and the raw

sample results indicated the same type of metal concentrations found in the first test well.

"Nothing new, basically just more consistent with what we already found," he said. "We have a pretty good idea now of what the contractor will encounter throughout the length of the project."

When working on obtaining a master general permit from the state De-

partment of Environmental Protection for the dewatering process, heavy metals found in groundwater.

Councilman David Perry said the ordinance provides funding for the project. He said he hoped a contract would be awarded with a notice to proceed for the successful bidder on May 21.

"We're not going to kick the can down the road anymore, this project is going

to go forward and hopefully people back there will get some relief sometime in the not too distant future," he said.

Council rejected all bids Feb. 5. The lowest bidder substantially exceeded available funds. Mathis Construction submitted a base bid of \$7.5 million. Perna Finnigan Inc. submitted a base bid of \$8.8 million.

The project consists of

1,750 linear feet of roadway reconstruction with installation of curb, gutter, sidewalk and storm sewers. In addition, 1,770 linear feet of 66-inch by 51-inch steel arch pipe would be installed with an under-drain system.

A storm water pump station would include a standby generator. The project must be completed within 360 days, according to the request for proposals.

Keep Promenade buildings, subcommittee says

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\$140,000 in annual revenue for the city.

"Our goal is can we make the other side as equal to that when it comes to the revenue," he said.

The building at 708-710 Beach Ave. is comprised of the former Oasis restaurant, now used as a ticket annex for Convention Hall, and the former Ricker's store, now used as the beach tag office.

"When you're looking at those buildings, you have to ask the question, 'Why do they look that?'" Reed said. "Why are they in that condition?"

He said 708-710 Beach Ave. is actually one building that was subdivided, a total of 2,400 square feet. The building produces revenue of \$45,000 per year because the beach tag office pays some fees for use of the property, Reed said.

Reed said 708 Beach Ave. is used as an auxiliary box office during large events, as well as storage for Convention Hall. He said Convention Hall has inadequate storage space. The beach tag office is in better shape due to remodeling, according to Reed.

The city-owned restaurant space on the Promenade, 702 Beach Ave., is leased to Angelo's. He said in the past, the restaurant had an open-air porch as well as the current rear deck. Reed said the building is believed to date to the late 1800s to early 1900s.

"It's not attractive, it's underutilized, but it's a million-dollar-plus property and (we're) not getting anything out of it," he said.

The restaurant space measures 3,400 square feet and could be subdivided, Reed said. Last year, the city received only \$38,000 in rental payments from the property. Expenditures for a new floor in the kitchen brought the revenue down to about \$27,000, according to Reed.

He said next season's lease for a full season should bring \$56,000 in revenue to the city. Reed described the condition of the building's interior as "terrible" and "poorly maintained."

"Nothing has been kept up on these buildings for years," he said.

Reed noted the city has just passed a bond ordinance to begin work on a public safety building. He suggested a bond ordinance would be needed to rehabilitate the Promenade buildings.

Ceilings have cracks and sections of flooring are coming up in the restaurant space, Reed said.

A grant is available to improve the exterior of 708-710 and the restaurant, he said. Longtime residents and visitors remember Ricker's and the Oasis,



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The building at 708-710 Beach Ave. is used for storage and as an auxiliary box office for Convention Hall during larger events.

so no one is suggesting a "cookie cutter" look for the Promenade buildings, he said. If the properties were sold, the city would not be able to control the look and use, Reed said.

"Yes, you could turn it around and try to sell it and put it on the tax rolls, but right now in the condition they are in, you're not going to get anything for those buildings," he said.

Reed said if the city is going to spend money on the buildings, it may as well keep them.

The city's engineer, Tom Thornton, inspected the buildings and made an initial conclusion that 708-710 Beach Ave. was pretty sound. Thornton was able to crawl under the restaurant at 702 Beach Ave. and discovered problems with piling, according to Reed.

"That building, once we get that final report, is going to be a big deal," he said.

Reed suggested an architectural review of the buildings to determine best use. He said there was no "Band-Aid" approach to fixing the Promenade buildings.

He said the creation of a Promenade improvement district could open the door to further grants and tax incentives.

"Could a Promenade improvement district also include the theater across the street?" he asked.

Reed suggested a Convention Hall annex for the former Oasis property including a covered portico for inclement weather. The building could also house, fully maintained, year-round restrooms and seasonal changing rooms for beachgoers, he said. Ad-

ditional retail space would also be included.

"Retail drives an area, retail brings revenue, retail brings visitors," Reed said. "We still feel an improved and viable restaurant is a great way to go."

Mayor Chuck Lear asked if there was discussion of selling the restaurant and keeping 708-710 Beach Avenue. Reed said.

Committee member Gregg Giancola, a real estate broker, said the restaurant space in its current condition, would net little for the city.

"Right now, I don't think you're going to get the big dollar you should get for a beachfront structure," he said.

Reed said the 702 Beach Ave. did not have to remain a restaurant. He said the front part of the space could be recreated as retail with a snack bar on the beach side of the building.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The building at 702 Beach Ave. is leased to a restaurant known as Angelo's and may date to the late 1800s or early 1900s.

ditional retail space would also be included.

"Retail drives an area, retail brings revenue, retail

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