

Capitola Planning Commission

Agenda Report



Meeting: March 27, 2024

From: Community Development Department

Address: 1400 Wharf Road – Capitola Wharf

Project Description: Amendment to permit #20-0141, a Design Permit and Conditional Use Permit for the rehabilitation, repair, and expansion of the historic Capitola Wharf. The Capitola Wharf is located at 1400 Wharf Road within the PF (Public Facilities) zoning district, at APN: 034-072-01, -02. This project received a Coastal Development Permit issued by the California Coastal Commission.

Recommended Action: Approve the amendments for permit #20-0141 and provide direction to proceed with option 2 for the layout and location of the donor panels.

Property Owner: City of Capitola

Representative: Jessica Kahn, City of Capitola

Background: The Capitola Wharf was constructed in 1857 and has been modified, repaired, and rebuilt multiple times. The most recent structural changes were in 1981 when significant portions of the wharf were replaced, and during the 2019-2020 storm season when the wharf required emergency repairs due to wave damage.

On January 5, 2023, the wharf sustained substantial storm wave damage, which destroyed an approximately 43 linear-foot section of the structure, severing access from the shore. Due to unsafe conditions caused by the storm damage, the wharf has been closed to the public since the beginning of January 2023.

On December 28, 2023, storm waves caused further damage to the wharf and the two commercial buildings serving the Wharf House Restaurant and Capitola Boat and Bait. Their foundations were severely damaged and the structural integrity of the two buildings was compromised. On February 27, 2024, the City Council approved the removal of the commercial structures at the end of the wharf.

The Planning Commission reviewed the design permit and conditional use permit for the current wharf project at multiple public hearings. The original project was approved on June 4, 2020, with conditions that specific design elements return to the Commission for final review. The Planning Commission reviewed amendments to the application on May 4, 2023, and March 7, 2024.

On March 7, 2024, the Planning Commission approved 10 overhead lights, four viewing stations, four telescopes, 40 benches, four tables, and 10 trash receptacles. The Planning Commission continued the discussion on the remaining items to a special meeting with the request to modify the following items:

1. Bathroom: Install vertical wood clad on the bathrooms.
2. Entry Archway: Mosaic tile should extend to the cap (remove the dragon), dragon could be implemented into the archway or elsewhere, decrease fluted stone to four-inch width, and remove illumination on pillars.
3. Gate: Remove the city logo.
4. Site plan: Create a full site plan of the wharf. Identify the location of the water fill station, foot wash, bronze fish scavenger hunt, and viewing stations on site plan.
5. Signs: Remove the Capitola Wharf monument sign and the Wharf to Wharf monument from the project
6. Donor panels: Provide additional information.

Discussion: During the special meeting on March 27, 2024, the Planning Commission will review the updated plans including a new site plan, an updated entry archway design, an updated gate, and the layout and location of the donor wall.

Site plan: One feature of the wharf project is a scavenger hunt pathway of 40 bronze fish created by local artist Sean Monohan. The bronze fish will create a meandering pathway down the wharf to the four viewing stations with telescopes. The updated site plan of the wharf identifies all the wharf enhancements including the bronze fish pathway, the four viewing stations, the new entry archway, benches, trash cans, overhead lights, security fence, bathroom, and combined water fill/foot wash station. The drive aisle for the Wharf is located on the east side of the wharf, closest to the village. The majority of the fish will be located on west side due to the overbuilt decking within the drive aisle.

Entry Archway: The new design of the entry archway for the Capitola Wharf was well received at the previous Planning Commission meeting. The Commission requested minor modifications to the pillars to enlarge the area for local artist Kathleen Crocetti's mosaic tile kelp forest by removing the metal dragons that were previously located above the mosaic area and decreasing the fluted stone width from 6 inches to 4 inches. Within the updated design, the lighting on the pillars has been removed and the material for the archway has been modified to painted stainless steel to assist in cost savings and maintenance. The updated design incorporates small dragons and a fireball within the filigree metal located in the center bottom of the archway. The dragons and fireball are said to symbolize community, prosperity, and peace.

Rolling Gate: A simple eight-foot-tall vertical gate is proposed to close off the wharf during times of emergency. The metal gate will slide to the side and typically be located between the new restrooms and the guard rail. The city logo has been removed from the gate in the updated design.

Donor Panels: Artist Kathleen Crocetti is in the process of creating a donor wall recognizing the members of the Capitola community who helped fund the Capitola Wharf Enhancement Project. Within a series of three public engagement events and a survey, Ms. Crocetti worked with interested participants to come up with the idea of a kelp forest reflective of the wharf's maritime setting to be placed on the two gate pillars. The donor panels will have an underwater scene with donor names on individual fish.

Staff is seeking Planning Commission guidance on the donor wall layout and location. The options are as follows:

1. Install 7 panels to 20-foot-long railing before the entry archway on the right.
Panel dimensions: 2 feet wide by 3 feet tall.
2. Install 7 panels on the wharf railing after the bathroom on the right overlooking Hoopers Beach.
Panel dimensions: 2 feet wide by 3 feet tall.
3. Install 1 large freestanding panel bolted to the deck on the south side of the bathroom.
Panel dimensions: 7 feet wide by 7 feet tall.

Staff recommends Option 2 with the donor wall located on the railing after the bathroom overlooking Hoopers Beach. By separating the donor wall from the entryway, the iconic entry archway and the donor wall will create two public art experiences for visitors while on the wharf. Staff has concerns with overcrowding in the first option due to the railing length in front of the entry archway being limited to 20 feet. Seven panels, each measuring two feet wide by three feet tall, will fill the 20-foot entry railing in front of the entry archway. This layout runs the possibility of the entrance looking overcrowded when historically the main focal point at the beginning of the wharf has been the iconic Capitola Wharf entry archway.

Bathroom: At the previous meeting, the Planning Commission was asked to provide direction on the finish for the three-stall Exeloo restroom with the options of pressed bamboo or paint options. The Planning Commission preferred the pressed bamboo. Following the meeting, staff got a bid on pressed bamboo

and the cost is significant. Staff is requesting the Planning Commission choose a backup paint color in the event the bamboo will not be within the budget. Options for paint colors are included in the plan set.

Coastal Permit

The California Coastal Commission (CCC) is responsible for authorizing the Coastal Development Permit (CDP) for the entirety of the proposed project because the entire wharf is located within the Commission's retained coastal permitting jurisdiction. A CDP was approved by the Coastal Commission on July 8, 2021, and issued to the City on July 19, 2021. Additions to the original scope of work due to storm damage were authorized under the 2021 approval as a minor modification. The City received a Coastal Development Permit for the demolition of the commercial structures.

CEQA: As part of the existing approval, the City adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) was also adopted prepared pursuant to Section 21081.6. The MMRP has been incorporated into the existing conditions of approval by reference to ensure that impacts are reduced to a less than significant level. Additionally, the project has been reviewed and found to be consistent with Section 15300.2(f) for modifications to historical resources.

Conditions of Approval:

1. The project affirms the original approval of a Design Permit, Conditional Use Permit, and Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the rehabilitation and repair of the historic Capitola Wharf. The project is conditioned under the existing Conditions of Approval for permit #20-0141 by the Planning Commission on June 4, 2020, except as modified through conditions imposed by the Planning Commission on May 4, 2023; March 7, 2024; and March 27, 2024.

Attachments:

1. 1400 Wharf Road – Plans and Renderings for Amenities

Report Prepared By: Katie Herlihy, Community Development Director

Reviewed By: Austin Westly, Deputy City Clerk

Approved By: Katie Herlihy, Community Development Director