

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report

Meeting: June 22, 2023

From: City Manager Department

Subject: Memorials Installed on Capitola Wharf



Recommended Action: Determine the plan for memorial plaques currently installed on Capitola Wharf.

Background: Administrative Policy I-7 outlines a uniform procedure for the public to purchase memorial items to be placed within the City of Capitola. That Policy designates locations for such memorials and allows memorials on the Wharf railings or on Wharf benches. The Wharf location has, however, been 'full' with no room for additional plaques or benches for several years.

Administrative Policy I-7 states that "the City will maintain plaques for the life of the plaque. The City will determine when the plaque is no longer reasonable to maintain and needs to either be replaced or removed". Because the plaques are made of bronze and therefore have a lifespan likely measured in centuries, staff has interpreted this to mean the City will maintain plaques in their current location for the life of the object on which it was installed (for example, as long as the bench or railing remains undamaged).

Prior to the January 2023 storms, 145 plaques were located on the wooden railing of the Capitola Wharf, along both sides and the head of the wharf. 39 plaques were located on various Wharf benches. In anticipation of the Capitola Wharf Resiliency and Public Access Project, staff photo-documented and indexed all plaques on the Wharf, so a complete record of what existed before the storm is available for reference. Approximately 20 wharf railing plaques were lost in the storm, and it is possible that upon further inspection and the removal of the current railing, staff will discover more damaged plaques. The Wharf remains inaccessible, and staff can only estimate the status of Wharf plaques and benches.

Staff has accurate contact information for roughly ten percent of all Capitola Wharf plaque owners/purchasers.

At the April 27 City Council meeting, staff presented options for the Capitola Wharf plaques in anticipation of the Wharf Project; 1) Move all memorial plaques to a new location on the Wharf, 2) Remove all plaques and return them to owners, and 3) Re-install all memorial plaques along the new Wharf railing. Staff highlighted the complications involved with reinstalling all plaques along the Wharf and on benches as they would have been before the January storm. Rather than choose one of the three options, Council asked that staff return after surveying members of the public, primarily those who had purchased and owned Wharf plaques, on what their desired outcome was.

Discussion: Staff designed and launched an online survey on May 5 to gather information and assess public opinion on the Wharf plaques. Those surveyed were asked to provide current contact information and the name on their Wharf plaque (if they own one) to help staff update the plaque database.

Staff promoted the survey in three issues of the Capitola Wave e-newsletter, highlighted the survey on the City website, emailed all members of the public who reached out regarding Wharf plaques with a direct link to the survey, and posted about the survey on the City's Facebook and Instagram accounts.

At the date of this agenda printing, the survey has received 68 responses, 64.71% of which indicate the responder owned one or more Wharf plaques. Staff will close the survey on June 21, and will present any significant responses during the presentation on June 22.

The table below shows survey responses to the question of how satisfied or dissatisfied would you be with the following three options for Wharf plaques:

<i>Place/Incorporate all memorial plaques on an artistic & contemplative memorial structure located on the Wharf</i>		
	Plaque Owners	Non-Plaque Owners
Very or Slightly Dissatisfied	63.42%	47.82%
Very or Moderately Satisfied	29.27%	39.13%
<i>Re-install all memorial plaques along the Wharf railing and on benches as they were pre-storm</i>		
Very or Slightly Dissatisfied	0	8.7%
Very or Moderately Satisfied	87.5%	78.26%
<i>Remove all plaques and offer to return them to their owners/purchasers</i>		
Very or Slightly Dissatisfied	87.5%	75%
Very or Moderately Satisfied	7.5%	16.66%

46 people wrote responses to the last survey question; “is there anything else you want to share with City staff about the Wharf memorials”. Most responses highlighted the significance of the Wharf plaques, and the emotional attachment plaque owners have for each specific Wharf location. Several responses explained that individual plaques are more meaningful than a single memorial design feature with many names on one element. Responders explained that a single memorial element would feel less personal; if installed all together on one design element, plaque owners say they would be less likely to visit their plaque to privately remember their lost loved one. Two responders replied that the presence of memorials along the Wharf detracts from their overall experience and asked that the Wharf not be a memorial site.

Staff included re-installation of all plaques in Phase 2 of the Capitola Wharf Resiliency and Public Access Improvement Project request for proposals. The lowest bidder estimated a cost of \$18,000 to re-install all plaques along the Wharf railing. Staff estimates that at least 20 plaques were lost during the storm, and proposes they be replaced by the City at a total estimated cost of \$4,000. Significant staff time is required to ensure all plaques are re-installed in the same location as pre-storm. Other considerations for this option is the future time and cost of maintaining bronze plaques along the wooden Wharf railing.

If Council directs staff to move forward in re-installing all memorial plaques, staff proposes that bench plaques be placed on whichever type of bench either the Wharf Resiliency Project or the Capitola Wharf Enhancement Project determines as part of the project’s scope.

If directed to re-install, Staff also recommends a time limit be imposed on all plaques on the Wharf (railing and bench plaques) to set a clear expectation for how long the City guarantees to maintain the memorials. If Council does not set a clear time limit, re-installing plaques along the Wharf railing and on Wharf benches may set a precedent that the City will do so in the event of any damage to the wharf, at any point in the future.

Staff estimates it would cost \$30,000 to include a memorial design element that incorporates all the plaques on the Wharf as part of the Capitola Wharf Enhancement Project.

Fiscal Impact: Dependent on Council direction.

Report Prepared By: Chloé Woodmansee, Assistant to the City Manager

Reviewed By: Julia Moss, City Clerk

Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager