

## Wildwood may use tropical wood on Boardwalk

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**WILDWOOD** — The city may use tropical hardwood to complete a Boardwalk renovation between Oak and Schellenger avenues after a shipment of black locust failed to meet the project's needs.

Environmentalists had urged the city to use black locust rather than ipe, a tropical wood found in South American rainforests, and the city agreed early this year to use black locust harvested from New York. But when the first shipment arrived a few weeks ago, it was 90 percent defective, city Development Director Lou Ferrara said Monday.

Ferrara said the shipment included six pallets of wood priced at \$60,000, an amount paid by the contractor, Walters Marine Construction, of Ocean View. What portion will be used and its cost remain unclear.

Ferrara said the shipment, purchased from a Long Island supplier, contained wood that had knots, bark, cracks and splits.

"It's a disaster," Ferrara said, adding the city will use the small amount of quality black locust in the shipment.

Ferrara said the city is pursuing a supply of certified ipe, but if that cannot be purchased, it will use wood that is not certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Mayor Ernie Troiano Jr. said the quality of the black locust was not what the city was promised.

"It's such a bad quality, we just can't use it," he said. "It would be like ordering a Cadillac and getting a beat-up Pinto."

Ocean City residents Steven Fenichel and Georgina Shanley, who had actively lobbied for the black locust wood, said Monday they were disappointed that the city is considering using rainforest wood.

Shanley, co-founder of the local group Friends of the Rainforest, credited Troiano with attempting to do the right thing for the environment.

"I have to admire Wildwood for going so far with the black locust," she said, adding that she hopes the city will consider using a high-grade yellow pine or recycled plastic rather than ipe.

"We're still hoping it's not a done deal," she said.

Fenichel also urged the city to consider other options while searching for a better source of the black locust.

Troiano said that while he had hoped to avoid using tropical hardwoods, he could not delay the Boardwalk reconstruction to search for materials.

"I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place," Troiano said of the need to complete the work before the Boardwalk welcomes the 2009 tourist season.

The project is scheduled to be completed by Easter next year, which falls on April 12.

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