



Wildwood to use black locust on Boardwalk

By Trudi Guilfillian, Staff Writer, 609-463-6716 Published Tuesday, November 27, 2007

WILDWOOD — Black locust will replace worn and aging planks of southern yellow pine on the city's Boardwalk, Mayor Ernie Troiano Jr. said.

Tropical hardwoods were once in the running as the wood of choice for much-needed Boardwalk renovations, but Troiano said that after test results from the city's engineer, he opted to use the alternative wood.

"We are going to use the black locust," he said Monday.

Troiano said the wood was durable and comparable to tropical hardwoods, such as ipe, harvested in South America. Durability, Troiano said, is crucial in repairing what could be one of the state's busiest roadways — the island's popular Boardwalk.

"The amount of traffic we have up there — a lot of vehicle traffic and thousands of people. It does wear it out," Troiano said.

The black locust is also expected to be less expensive than ipe, although it is more expensive than the southern yellow pine it is replacing.

"We think it's a good thing. It's eco-friendly and a good thing for the city," Troiano said.

In 2006, the reconstruction of the city's Boardwalk was classified as a rainforest emergency by one environmental group because of fears the city would replace its aging boards with tropical hardwoods from Brazil's rainforest.

Public works employees will be using the black locust to complete repairs to sections of the Boardwalk starting around Montgomery Avenue north to Schellenger Avenue.

"We're going to do it ourselves," Troiano said of the work.

Troiano said he had hoped to have the repairs started last month, but now he was aiming for a start date as soon as possible. Troiano said the city is drawing up bid specifications for the repairs, which city development director Lou Ferrara said would cost \$150,000. The repair work involves replacing headers and stringers that support the Boardwalk and the wood decking in sections that cannot wait for a major renovation.

"We're immediately buying a supply of black locust to repair the Boardwalk this winter," Ferrara said.

Ferrara said the city was making a large commitment to using the black locust, and if the wood is supplied on time in the quantities and quality the city needs, then it would likely be used for the city's larger planned rebuilding of the Boardwalk.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture handbook, "Silvics of Forest Trees of the United States," black locust is used for a wide variety of products including "fence posts, mine timbers, poles, railroad ties, insulator pins, ship timber, tree nails for wooden ship construction, boxes, crates, pegs, stakes, and novelties."

The rebuilding, delayed by litigation involving the bidders on the project, could take place in fall 2008, is expected to cost \$3.4 million and will stretch across Oak, Cedar and Schellenger avenues.

Troiano added that the decision to avoid using tropical hardwoods is not the only environmentally focused plan in the works. He said he is also considering the installation of windmills at the Boardwalk street ends to supply energy to the Boardwalk. The windmills would be spiral-shaped rather than the more common fan blades.

"We're looking for options for the city. Anything to save money," Troiano said.