



Wildwood mayor: Choice of wood for Boardwalk not set in concrete

By TRUDI GILFILLIAN Staff Writer, (609) 463-6716

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WILDWOOD — Mayor Ernie Troiano Jr. on Wednesday restated his willingness to use something other than tropical hardwood to rebuild the city's Boardwalk if an alternative can be found that will meet both the city's structural needs and spending limits.

During the city's regular commission meeting, Ocean City resident Stephen Fenichel asked the mayor about the city's plans to use a tropical hardwood called ipe certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Designating the wood as certified means the council can track its origins and certify it has not been illegally harvested.

Fenichel, pointing to a January 2007 issue of National Geographic, told the commissioners that the logging of tropical hardwood's is destroying the rainforests and should not be supported by local governments.

As he has done before, Troiano told Fenichel the city is willing to consider using an alternative wood, black locust, if the wood meets the city's needs.

City Engineer Marc DeBlasio told Fenichel that “mechanically the wood meets the specifications,” meaning a Boardwalk made of black locust could be strong enough to support both the millions of visitors who come here and emergency equipment if needed.

The question is whether the city could readily access a large enough supply by the time the Boardwalk reconstruction is scheduled to begin in October and whether it could be found for the right price.

Phase one of the project, which stretches across Oak, Cedar and Schellenger avenues, is expected to cost \$3.4 million.

Urban Enterprise Zone director Lou Ferrara said the city has been willing to work with Fenichel and Rainforest Relief, but he suggested the push for black locust was “another stall tactic.”

“If you're serious about us getting black locust, get us a price,” Ferrara said.

Troiano echoed his comments.

“We will use it if the price is right,” Troiano said, explaining that the city's bid specifications allowed for the use of ipe and other materials of equal or better quality.

Fenichel said he would attempt to get the city a price with the help of Rainforest Relief.

Also during Wednesday's meeting, the commission introduced several bonding ordinances to support a range of capital improvements and equipment purchases.

They include \$5 million for water-main replacements and another \$658,000 for drainage upgrades in the back bay area, sewer repairs and equipment purchases. The city also expects to receive \$240,600 in grant money for the drainage projects.

The city also introduced an ordinance to spend \$42,000 for a revision of the master plan.

That revision was deemed necessary by the state Department of Environmental Protection if the city hopes to move forward with the construction of multiple high-rise hotels.

To e-mail Trudi Gilfillian at The Press: TGilfillian@pressofac.com