

Base area work could begin Wednesday in Steamboat

Promenade committee works to squeeze most out of \$4.5M budget

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Steamboat Springs — Construction on the pedestrian promenade at the base of Steamboat Ski Area could begin as soon as Wednesday after the committee advising the city on the project reached consensus this week on how to accomplish the most it can this summer within its \$4.5 million budget.

Members of the Steamboat Springs Urban Renewal Area Advisory Committee started from scratch this week and ordered a la carte from their construction menu.

“Before, we knew what the whole dinner cost, but we asked our consultants and staff to give us more detailed pricing, and now we’re absolutely going to meet \$4.5 million,” said David Baldinger Jr., co-chairman of the Urban Renewal Area Advisory Committee.

Tentatively, work that could happen this summer includes building the first segment of the snow-melted promenade, including pavers, from Torian Plum Plaza to the Sheraton Steamboat Resort property line, Baldinger said. The promenade would continue as a durable concrete path all the way to One Steamboat Place. The path would someday serve as the hard platform for a finished snow-melted promenade when there is sufficient funding to complete the project.

In addition, the first segment of Burgess Creek with a small waterfall and a pond would be built in the summer and fall. Rough grading for the balance of the new creek bed also would be completed, to minimize disruption of summer tourism when that portion of the work is someday completed, Baldinger added.

Representatives of the city and contractor Duckels Construction were present Thursday when URAAC refined the program of work.

“It was hard work,” Baldinger said about the number crunching that took place at the meeting. “You had to have everyone in the room to get it done. The group really came together. Getting the connectivity was the biggie. I’m really excited.”

Committee members took a micro look at budgets, right down to the type of grass seed being used to revegetate construction areas, Baldinger said. But big-ticket items, such as deferring a pair of \$25,000 bridges in favor of culverts until the permanent structures are really needed, helped them squeeze the most out of their \$4.5 million.

URAAC member Jon Wade said completion of the concrete path would allow for a hard-surface walking trail that completes the horseshoe at the base of the ski trails while building a foundation for the full length of snow-melted promenade to come at a future date.

“I think it was a very efficient solution,” Wade said. “The concrete-surfaced path will be durable, and it’s OK if you plow it and salt it. We’ve minimized what would have to be done” to complete the promenade.

The public improvements being undertaken by Steamboat Springs’ urban renewal effort are funded by tax incremental financing that is used to back bonded indebtedness. When the private sector builds improvements and new condo buildings within a boundary at the ski base, the resulting property tax revenues are set aside to fund the public projects. No one

close to the project can say for certain when there will be enough expansion in the tax base to support another bond issue.

The city's finance department and its banks have capped present funding for the two-year, \$9-million-plus promenade project at \$4.5 million.

If the City Council, acting in its capacity as the Steamboat Springs Redevelopment Authority on Tuesday night, agrees to the details of the latest bonding terms, work could start on the promenade as soon as Wednesday, Baldinger said.

"We're still within a comfort zone as far as getting the work done this summer," Baldinger said. "But we don't want to wait too many more weeks. We'll reassess this fall and see where we are with underwriting a new bond issue. We would need \$2.8 (million) to \$3 million more to complete everything including fire pits, two bridges over the creek and public art. But after this year, we'll have an excellent project in case we have to wait a year or a second year."

URAAC is scheduled to meet May 12, when firm pricing is known, to put the final touches on this summer's scope of work.