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The Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Information Report to Council

SUBJECT: Floating Docks/Small Watercraft Launch
DATE: 2024-06-18
REPORT #: OPS-24-030
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DEPARTMENT: Operations Services

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This report will address Council's direction from April 30, 2024, requesting further information on the motion for Floating Docks.

NEXT STEP / CONCLUSION

Staff have provided **Appendix I** as support for Council. This overview of the Dock Area labels all elements (docks, parking lot, park space) and is to provide clarity as to where the potential small watercraft launch would be located.

Town staff have received a preliminary cost estimate from a vendor that provides removable docks for small watercraft entry. **Appendix II** is a rendering of what the potential small watercraft launch could look like in Riverbeach Park. The estimate aligns with the budget value provided in the motion for \$80,000. The costs would include the purchase of a removable dock in addition to some site improvements to Riverbeach Park and the Riverbeach parking lot. The funding source of the motion will allow the remaining funding (if any) to be returned to the reserves.

Town staff has the required experience and knowledge to remove and store the small watercraft launches during seasonal changes. As the launch is close to the Riverbeach parking lot, a secured seasonal compound will be erected annually to store the assets over the winter months. Town staff anticipates installing the launch in early May and removing it in late October (pending weather conditions).

Town staff have reviewed Council’s Strategic Plan (2022- 2027) and have identified that this project is in alignment with the following pillar:

Pillar	Guiding Principles	Action Item	Action Item
Enrich Community Assets, Environment, & Infrastructure	Enrich and preserve community assets by maintaining and promoting a sustainable natural and building environment and investing in physical and green infrastructure	Environment – Sustainable Natural Environment	Commence research and community engagement for the Waterfront Plan

The Town’s active population is looking for safe and affordable access to the water. This floating dock will have a safe loading and unloading area for people with small watercraft (kayak, canoe, paddleboard). It will also have an accessible launch for participants with mobility challenges.

Town staff has reviewed the Town’s Official Plan – 6.32.7 - Special Policy Area A-8 (Dock Area) and there is a direct relationship with the proposed project and some of the guiding principles below:

	Subsection	Guiding Principles
1.0 Community Development Principles	1.2 Foster a vibrant public realm that, over time, includes increased public access to the water’s edge, improved connections within the Dock Area and to the Town, creates increased amenities for local and Town residents, maintains the historic scale of the area, provides passive park space and transition between public and private areas and tells visitors that they are somewhere special.	(c) Public lands on the water, including the Town Dock and adjacent park, are enjoyed as places open to the public for waterfront recreation.

2.0 General Policies		(g) The Town Dock and adjacent town-owned land shall remain predominantly publicly accessible and available for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.
4.0 Land Use and Site Development	4.4 Town Dock Area	(a) Main Uses: parks and open space, publicly accessible dock, a marine passenger service terminal (including facilities for a cross-river ferry), heritage and cultural uses, and recreational and commercial uses that complement with other policies of this Plan, are in keeping with the small scale of the Dock Area and that allow for permanent public access to Town-owned land, including the Town Dock.
5.0 Fostering a Vibrant Public Realm		(c) The Town Dock Area should be the focal point and opportunity for the public to engage the water's edge and enjoy recreational boating and waterfront transit in keeping with the small scale of the Dock Area.
		(i) The Shoreline Park should be maintained as a publicly accessible neighbourhood park for enjoying the shoreline and launching one-to-two-person paddle watercraft.

Town staff has also reviewed the Dock Area Master Plan (approved in 2015) and Ball's Beach was identified as the area for the kayak/paddleboard/canoe launch area. Due to erosion in Ball's Beach, the location adjacent to the Melville Street public dock is ideal for accessing and launching small watercraft. The proximity of the Riverbeach parking lot provides better access to the water. Staff have included **Appendix III** to demonstrate the distance from the launch points if participants unloaded from the Riverbeach parking lot.

The Parks and Recreation division discussed the Riverbeach parking lot with the Parking division. Staff are confident that a payment solution will be installed in the parking lot soon, pending Council approval of the motion. The parking lot will be kept with its existing material (gravel) and size. There will be approximately 34 parking spaces.

ATTACHMENTS

- **Appendix I** – Dock Area – Site Plan with Labels
- **Appendix II** – Rendering – Small Watercraft Launch
- **Appendix III** – Riverbeach & Ball's Beach Launch Site - Distances