

Marina Expansion, the real concerns

Thursday evening's "Neighborhood Workshop" at City Hall was standing room only. Audience participation kept Council in their seats for over four hours. Obviously, residents continue to have deeply felt concerns about the proposed expansion of the City Marina.

An article published the next morning suggests that opponents' comments focused on traffic, noise, and—lastly—the environment. This is a gross simplification of citizen concerns. More importantly, it ignores the issue that mobilized the community this spring—the Council's refusal to fully consider alternative plans, and a lack of transparency regarding the full extent of their intentions.

The fact that Council never communicated the criteria for their decision is a concern.

The fact that Council never asked for a cost/benefit analysis on ALL options presented to them in 2019 is a concern.

The fact that Council has barreled ahead with plans to maximize growth of the marina while continually reassuring residents that this is only a "concept" is a concern.

The fact that the full plan was not revealed to the public until the neighborhood workshop is a concern—especially since, when asked, Mayor Brackett told the crowd that Council was now free to vote to go ahead with the maximum expansion "tonight!"

Residents ask: Why were we misled? Why did the City not reveal the full extent of this plan until the day before Council was free to vote on it? Why didn't Council prioritize the liability posed by the unsafe docks—used every day by multiple people—over a boat barn occupied by a single employee at any one time?

The economy is only one of the challenges facing us. The erosion of public trust is another.

When this project was first proposed, residents agreed that there was a NEED for refurbishment of the Marina. This maximum expansion plan is a WANT. In times of financial uncertainty, NEEDS must come before WANTS.

It is a fact that there was never a full consideration of any but the "most aggressive" plan (as City Manager Monte

Falls termed it in an April 2021 letter). That plan, presented to Council in October 2019, included a 16,000 square foot dry storage building to hold 84 vessels, double the size of the current building. Residents spoke up, but were reassured, "This is only a concept."

But in July 2021, at a budget workshop during Covid, the City decided to expand even that "most aggressive" plan—to include a boat barn triple the size of the current building. Worse, the public (and apparently also the press) never knew that the goalposts had shifted. It wasn't until last Thursday's workshop that the City revealed the actual dimensions of that building—a 24,150 square foot shed designed to hold 160 vessels (the original plan, including visuals and dimensions for an 84-boat facility, remained the only plan to be found on the City website until May 4th).

There was never outreach to the community to alert them that plans had changed, nor an invitation for public comment. There was simply a decision made, during the doldrums of summer, in

a budget meeting that few residents would be expected to watch.

There are real concerns about the wisdom of building this size boat shed in this economy. Although the City has pointed to a "waitlist" for the current building, residents took a look at the book that holds requests for dry storage and did NOT find a large number of boats waiting. The requests on that list dated all the way back to October 2019, and of the 17 boats waiting for dry storage, only 5 were longer than 24 feet. Given this, and the fact that a call to dry storage facilities in both Sebastien and Fort Pierce showed that there is NO shortage of dry storage for 30' long boats with high tops at the current time, suggests that the City should pause.

What should Council do now?

We don't need an immense boat barn at all -- just update and refurbish what we have at this marina that has been neglected for years. Make the repair of the docks top priority. There is a real liability there.

Thank you for supporting our efforts to preserve our very special town!

Thank you Council Members for genuinely listening and hearing our concerns!

Council has much to consider before the vote (date TBD)

Council is still listening and needs to hear your input so please:

- Email council - send to tbursick@covb.org (sample emails can be found at vbpreservationalliance.org/sample-emails)
- Sign our on-line petition (even if you signed the paper version)
- Help fund our efforts - Donate on-line
- Attend next city council meetings and have your voice heard (5/17 & 6/7)
- Spread the word, Display a sign

Should a valuable taxpayer asset be demolished and turned into a parking lot???

Help us envision a new future for the Waddell Building...

A Marine Related Co-op? Research, Education, Recreation, Lagoon Restoration, Manatee Protection....????

WHAT AN IDEA FOR THE ESTUARY!!!

**Seagrass, Oysters, & Kayaks
VS More
Gasoline, Chemicals, & Propellers**

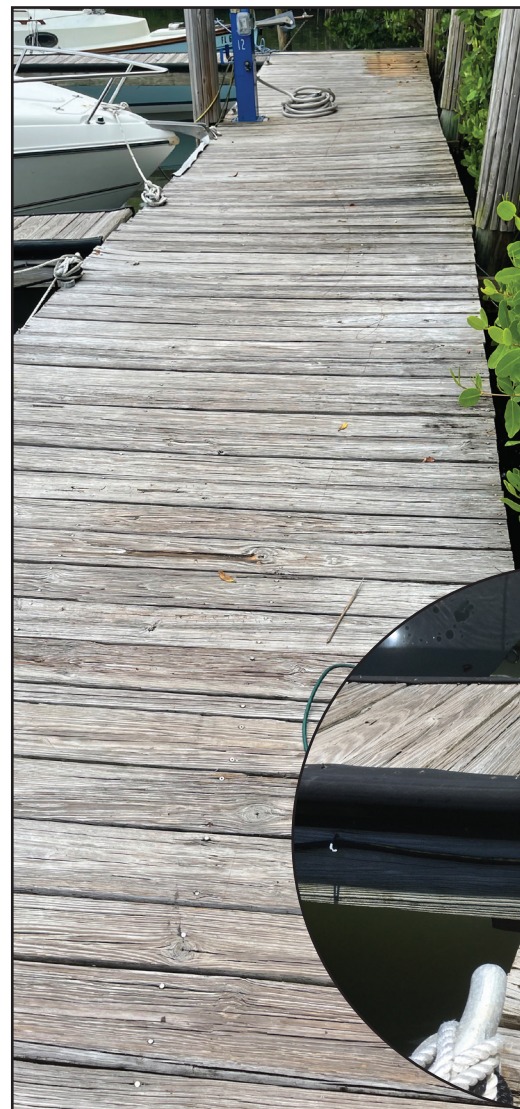


VERO BEACH
Preservation Alliance

Please send us your ideas - info@VBPreservationAlliance.org

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Business 101:



Before ever considering an expansion, a business must be well run and in ship-shape condition. And a market study is a necessity! When a business expands and doesn't do essential research, strategy, and planning, the financial drain can sink the whole enterprise.