

BSI Canal Committee

6/29/21

The most asked question, of me, is about Lock Widening.

From the questions and comments, I know most of you are unaware of the difficulties and processes involved with accomplishing anything associated with our canals. I myself, being around similar processes most of my working life, am still amazed at the amount of permitting require by such (what seems to me to be) a relatively small endeavor.

It is my understanding, (and I'm probably wrong, and I'm sure some more knowledgeable than myself will quickly point out, as with all things typical of this) --- going back to the original days of BSI canal construction, controversy has surrounded this Lock. The original developers of BSI did not acquire all permitting approvals prior to starting canal construction; and in a negotiated settlement, BSI developers agreed to add this Lock (with gates) in finally obtaining approval from the powers that be. For most, this was seen to be punitive in nature, since the Lock did not actually "lock" water (having a difference of water elevation on either side of the closed lock), because canal water flowed freely through Mayors Cut. An interesting fact, even today, there is such strong tidal flows through Mayors Cut that it continues to erode and widen-- and presently we are again forced to add additional pilings, preventing motorized traffic through the cut.

Some 20 years later, (and after what some have characterized as paying penance) BSI finally received approval to remove the gates.

In the last 5 years, the movement has gained force to widen the Lock from its current single boat width to a double boat width. The permitting process was started last year, and we are in the final stages (only several clarification questions remain to be answered) before receiving approval to proceed.

Assuming, permitting is behind us, the real work starts! Which of course begins with engineering. After that, there will be several review cycles, public comment, more reviews, final approvals, then on to bid development, actual bidding and finally contract letting. Then construction can be scheduled, and based on the recent PGI Buckley's Pass shortcut, we can expect 3-6 months of construction before having a wider lock. My best guess (and it is just that) is 2 to 3 years from now before project completion.

OK—brass tack time! The current budget for Lock widening is \$580,000.

Since there is no specific engineering documentation defining the details of widening, this is a "best guess estimate" by our canal maintenance organization, base on previous project costs and discussions with several potential contractors. We have a preliminary budget for expenditures of \$125,000 per year spread out over a 4 year period, starting in 2023. The remaining \$80,000 has already been spent, primarily with the permitting process.

Good News/Bad News/Good News—Assuming permitting is behind us, and realizing we weren't expecting to start engineering until 2023. Good News--the BSI Canal Committee approved and is recommending to the city, moving the project budget forward one year, to 2022. Bad News-- this is still an unfunded project, and in order to pull this job forward, we will be digging into our (very limited) reserves, which is the first of the \$125,000/ year expected expenditures. Eventually, this will need to be replaced/funded through annual assessment increases. Right now I can't tell you how much assessment we are talking, since final costs are not in, but we do have the option of spreading assessment out over a number of years, so I do not anticipate a significant increase in annual assessments—just something to

keep in mind down the road. Good News—having a wider lock, opens up BSI to larger boats, which my real estate friends claim will immediately increase property values by an estimated 10%.

All of this, goes without saying, that a wider Lock is a safer Lock.

So there you have it---

Rick Daugherty, Chairman, BSI Canal Committee