

Report submitted by the Barge Committee:

This committee grew out of a September 10, 2003 executive board meeting of the CIA where opposition to the city's selection of Land Associates #2 (LA#2) was expressed. The board passed a motion stating "The CIA Executive Board will solicit volunteers to form a committee to study alternatives to the proposed Land Associates #2 site and ways to eliminate the needs for barges on the island, with a time frame of 90 days maximum in which the committee makes a recommendation to the community." The committee was later granted an extension of 3 months. The committee work was done primarily by email, letter, teleconference, and a meeting with city officials. We took pictures of the ramps at other islands. We submitted over a dozen questions to city officials about the public ferry landing, its possible reconstruction or repair, and its expected lifetime. We consulted with state Marine Geologist and an official of the Maine Department of Marine Resources. By March 5, 2004, we had exchanged at least 151 emails. We reviewed the July 29, 2003 Sebago Technics report on the ten possible ramp sites, the Sebago Technics application for grant award to the Small Harbor Improvement Program (SHIP) from March of 2002, and the Sebago Technics plan for LA#2. The SHIP grant application shows the two options for a ramp on either side of the current public landing. A plan for the Howard property is not yet available. The committee in its first 90 days concluded that we could not eliminate the need for barges and there were only four feasible sites-Coyle's beach, LA#2, Howard's property, and the wharf. The committee no longer believes that Coyle's beach is feasible. Of the remaining sites, the committee has discussed a number of criteria at length. They are arranged below:

ISSUES THAT DON'T MATTER WHEN COMPARING THE 3 SITES

- 1) Neighbors' opposition. No neighbors will be happy with any site at first.
- 2) Security concerns. We have no evidence that a public landing ramp will make the island more susceptible to crime.

ISSUES THAT MAY MATTER WHEN COMPARING THE 3 SITES

- 1) Cost.** The committee is not certain of the role cost plays in the eventual outcome. Some members believe we should pick the best site without concern for cost while others believe that cost will have, for practical and political reasons, some impact on the selection. The committee would like to have more accurate construction cost estimates for the wharf and some idea of land acquisition costs at all three sites.
- 2) Zoning.** LA#2 and Howard's property are zoned residential. There is concern that placing the ramp at these sites constitutes spot zoning and would be illegal. We are unable to resolve this issue at this time.

3) ISSUES THAT MATTER WHEN COMPARING THE 3 SITES

- 1) The owner of the property at each site and the owner's likely acceptance of the site.

- 2) The physical impact of the site on the island.
- 3) The emotional impact of the site on the islanders.
- 4) Environmental impact
- 5) Problems that arise when the sites are being used.

Each issue is treated in greater detail below.

- ISSUE 1** Howard's property has been offered to the city. The wharf is owned by the city but the plan requires taking land from property owners on either side of the wharf. One of the property owners has contacted us to express his opposition to that action. LA#2 is owned by Land Associates and though the city believes the Land Associates are amenable to some agreement, the Associates have not voted to do so and some of them have threatened legal action to prevent the ramp.
- ISSUE 2** The plan for Howard's site is not available yet. However, the physical impact on the island is probably less here than at the other sites. There is no ledge to cut or long access road required. The wharf plan requires removing as much as 475 cubic yards of ledge, the volume equivalent of a typical Cliff Island house. If the ramp is on the north side of the wharf, ledge cutting will extend 45 feet north from the wharf. If the ramp is on the south side of the wharf, the cutting extends to within 8 feet of the porch of the sandwich shop. In either plan, paving extends about 30 feet from the wharf and the ramp entrance into the square. At LA#2, the ramp requires an 80 foot paved access apron to reach the current road. Should transportation or delivery systems in the future improve or the wharf be reconfigured, the ramp may become unnecessary and be removed or moved. That would make selecting the site with the least physical impact even more important.
- ISSUE 3** From the pictures of the ramps at other islands we learned that the ramp could be unobtrusive. On neighboring islands the ramps look like roads that run into the bay. One of the concerns expressed by the committee is that we not irreparably damage an asset that is distinct and important to the island collectively. While we can't predict how the islanders will react to each site, all residents are familiar with the wharf and square and substantial changes in that area will likely be resisted. While the CIA voted for the wharf site, as expressed in Ruth Mistark's letter included in the SHIP application, the committee believes that support for the ramp as shown in the SHIP report is less than stated. Several committee members who participated in the vote believed that the wharf would be expanded and the barges would land on the wharf. The islanders may have also misunderstood the actual plan. Any extensive change at any site may be opposed. While the emotional impact on islanders is an important aspect of the decision, the committee has no means to measure it at this time.
- ISSUE 4** After talking with a marine geologist, the committee learned that the issue of eelgrass that was raised in the July 2003 Sebago Technics report is not a significant

environmental concern. There does not appear to be any environmental concerns at the three sites. The LA#2 site has some nearby wetlands but to our knowledge, none is impacted by the ramp and access road.

ISSUE 5 The Howard property is the most protected site and offers the best chance of year-round use. The LA#2 site is subject to heavy seas and would not be accessible at some times of the year. It would require more frequent maintenance as a result of its exposure. Both are located in relatively light traffic areas, and the estimated 17 barge landings a year would likely be less intrusive at these sites. The wharf site presents a number of problems. The square is already a busy traffic area. A ramp on either side of the wharf would remove traditional parking spaces on that side. Loading and unloading barges while the Casco Bay Lines ferryboats are docking may be a safety concern.

While some members of the committee have expressed their choice of a site, the committee has not taken a vote or reached consensus. The committee has accumulated a great deal of essential information, has verified the need for barges, and has identified two alternatives to the LA#2 site. The remaining obstacles to consensus are the unresolved issues of cost and spot zoning. The city can provide the necessary information on both issues.

The committee urges the Cliff Island Association to:

- 1) share the facts we have developed with the full island community,
- 2) study carefully the site map for the Howard property now being prepared by the city; and
- 3) engage the island in a deliberate conversation that takes into account the facts and site plans.