

Future waterfront park sees movement

Contract for \$2 million will cover first phase of boating and upland park center

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Nearly four years in the making, a portion of the banks of the Hackensack River in Carlstadt will soon begin transforming into a waterfront park and boat launch.

Last week, the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) awarded a \$2.1 million contract for Phase 1 of the development on the River Barge Park and Boating Center.

The contract, awarded to Northeast Remsco Construction, Inc. of Farmingdale, will involve river dredging and construction of a 31-slip marina and rowing dock, sheet pile bulkhead, pre-cast boat ramp, kayak launch and creation of a low salt marsh wetland edge.

A total of eight bids for the project were received with Northeast Remsco posting the lowest while J. Fletcher Creamer submitted a \$2.3 million bid to lose out on the project. The highest bid came by way of Navka Construction in Newark, which submitted a bid package with a contract price of \$5.7 million.

The NJMC purchased the plot of land, which sits on Outwater Lane, from former owners Jay and Lenny LaVerghetta in November 2005 for \$3.1 million with funds contributed from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration. The LaVerghettas, father-son co-owners, ran the iconic Barge Club for 30 years at the site, a literal barge that was trans-

formed into a riverside restaurant/nightspot made most famous by its unique floating bar. By March 2007, the commission hired Global Construction Inc. to knock down the club while preserving its numerous 100-year-old Southern Longleaf yellow pine beams to reuse in the park as well as the iconic BARGE sign that has greeted residents to the location for years, but since, little movement on the park and boating center has occurred. The NJMC and Hackensack Riverkeeper have both used the site and current docks as a launching point for their eco-tours along the river.

According to Lilo Stainton, a spokesperson for the NJMC, now that all required Department of Environmental Protection permits have been issued, the first phase of the project will commence by November and pending the weather, be closed out by April. The second phase, the construction of the park itself, will be bid out and begin next year.

"Phase two will include the upland amenities, which include buildings, the parking lot and the park itself, which has been designed by our award-winning landscape architects and will involve native plantings," she said. "The buildings will include principles of sustainable design and construction and the park will provide walking trails, picnic areas and space for outdoor classrooms and other programs."

According to a permit application submitted to the U.S. Army Corps. of Engineers by the NJMC for the dredging activities, a per-



STAFF PHOTO/JAIMIE WINTERS

The River Barge Park and Boating Center on the Hackensack River in Carlstadt is one step closer to reality. The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission accepted a \$2.1 million bid for Phase I of the park last week, which will create a 31-slip marina and dredge a portion of the river. Seen above in 2007 during demolition, the park is replacing the iconic River Barge Café that stood there for 30 years.

mit the NJMC plans on soon securing, approximately 3,360 cubic yards of sediment from an approximately 34,000 square foot portion of the river will be dredged and carted out by truck to a landfill. The marina, which will have the capacity to dock boats up to 30 feet, may have a private component to it.

"It will be a public marina and could potentially involve some private slips as well," said Stainton. "Efforts will be made to reduce boaters' impact on the river's ecosystem."

Some residents can't wait for the opportunity to hit the Hackensack. Janice Suaze, an East Rutherford resident who regular-

ly rows in the Passaic River said the Hackensack, due to its tidal flow, is a more challenging row but more majestic due to the marshland. She goes to Laurel Hill Park in Secaucus anytime she wants to launch, but said a launch point on the western shores would be welcoming.

"I heard they were going to do something down there a long time ago, so it's nice to hear they're finally getting a move on," she said. "There's more boaters than most people think in this area, so the more spots to attract them, the better."

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