

# Council calls for caution on marina fix

**LONG BEACH:** An audit finds that debt plan may not be affordable.

By Paul Eakins  
Staff Writer

LONG BEACH — Boaters have waited for a decade for the Alamitos Bay Marina to be refurbished, but with new concerns about the project's financial viability coming to light, City Council members urged caution Tuesday.

An audit commissioned by City Auditor Laura Doud says that a plan to take on \$90 million in debt through loans and bonds for the marina rebuild project may not be affordable and could hit Long Beach's struggling general fund or tidelands fund. City management says that the project will be completed in phases only as money becomes available and that debt would be paid through slip fees and other marina revenue.

"In no circumstances would you envision the general fund or the tidelands being used," 7th District Councilman James Johnson asked at the council meeting at City Hall.

"That is correct," City Treasurer David Nakamoto said.

Fourth District Councilman Patrick O'Donnell also sought assurance.

"So if the project is too expensive, what you're saying is you would scale it back," O'Donnell asked.

Marine Bureau Manager Mark Sandoval replied: "It's been our plan all along."

However, the California Coastal Commission approved the entire project in January, granting a permit with a two-year window in which to complete the renovations. Doud's audit criticized the proposal for having only a single project design plan and noted that the city has already been accepting state loans when the next step isn't entirely clear.

City Manager Pat West has said the first phase of the project would be in Basin 4, rebuilding docks and deepening the basin next to the Long Beach Yacht club, though it isn't certain when that would start.

Despite the cautionary recommendations, there was a note of urgency Tuesday.

"We're about 10 years behind schedule, too," said Councilman Gary DeLong, whose 3rd District includes the marina. "We shouldn't build any more than we can afford, but we need to get moving on what we can afford."

Bud Lorbeer, who said he has a boat at the marina since it was built in the late 1950s, said he supports the city's plans and that the project will make the marina "enviable."

"This is a marina we need," Lorbeer said.

Not everyone supports the plan, though.

Mike Lesner, who said he has had a boat there for 25 years, told the council the project is too expensive and that he opposes some of the plans, such as replacing the wooden docks with concrete ones.

"We are the non-Marina del Rey," Lesner said. "We are not concrete, we are not glass, we are not all of those things that make a cold and unfeeling marina."

Boat owner Jon Nahhas said that the city can't depend on slip fees to cover the project's costs.

"This is a project that has gone out of control, and you need to find out how you're going to pay for it," Nahhas said. "If you try to put those costs off on the boaters, it's not going to happen."

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