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Flounder Bay Marina dredging set for this summer

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by Elaine Walker

The dredging of Flounder Bay Marina, a project many slip and dock owners have advocated for years, will take place this summer following Anacortes City Council's approval Monday of the \$1.9 million job awarded to Pacific Pile and Marine Construction Co.

"It's a pivotal, monumental occasion for us," said slip owner Don Everett, an active member of the dredging advisory committee. "What other superlative adjectives can I come up with?"

Pacific Pile is the contractor currently dredging in Fidalgo Bay at the Scott Paper Mill site, said Assistant City Engineer Eric Shjarback. The company's bid, the lowest of five received by the city, is substantially below the \$2.4 million engineering estimate for the project. The high bid was \$4.3 million, and the other three were all around \$2.2 million.

"Based on the contractor's work experience and reference check by our design and construction engineer Rob Webb from Dalton, Olmstead and Fuglevand it is recommended that this project be awarded to Pacific Pile and Marine Construction," city engineers wrote in a memo to the City Council.

Silt has accumulated in Flounder Bay to the point where navigation in and out of the marina is limited during low tides. Owners have wanted to dredge for years, but were unable to find a way to pay for the project.

"There's been no major dredging since construction in the 1970s," Shjarback said.

In 2007, a public/private partnership between the city and the slip owners was organized. Although the deed to the marina clearly states that the owners are responsible for maintaining its public waterways, the city provided technical support and a way to finance the work. Planning stages were funded through an area-specific storm water utility fee, meaning only those who own slips and docks contributed.

"We had a group of really intelligent, dedicated people," Everett said. "This was a well-coalesced group looking to get it accomplished."

The cost of dredging the public sections of waterway, about \$856,000, will be funded through the same storm water utility mechanism. Cost to each owner will be based on a sliding scale, worked out by the advisory committee, that takes into account slip lengths and how much public waterway must be accessed to get to the slip. The city will pay for the work and will be reimbursed over the course of five years.

The remainder of dredging to private keys of the marina will be paid for in advance by the 12 property owners impacted, Shjarback said. All opted to have the work done.

Everett said work should start about mid-July, and the project should be completed in September.

The council also approved a task order to hire engineering firm Dalton, Olmstead and Fuglevand to manage and oversee the dredging project for \$274,566. The firm has been design engineer of the project and is well-acquainted with its intricacies, Shjarback said.

The city will coordinate communications between slip owners and the contractor.

Shjarback said some of the construction companies who bid on the project said they would not have done so without the public/private partnership, because of the complexity of working with so many owners.

"Two contractors expressed what a great solution it was," Shjarback said.

"This is a big step forward. Nothing like this has been done before," Everett said.

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