



300 Southborough Drive, Suite 200, South Portland, ME 04106  
(207) 772-2515

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**Subject:** Bath Riverwalk Extension, Neighborhood Meeting Public Comments (held on 08/22/2024)

**Date:** October 2, 2024 (GP) November 19, 2024 (City Staff)

**Location:** Bath City Hall Auditorium

**Attendees:** Jenn Curtis, Misty Parker, Marc Meyers, Lee Leiner, Trey Warren, & Jared Winchenbach

**Compiled by:** Trey Warren & Jared Winchenbach

GP File No: 4278

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August 22, 2024 Public Meeting Questions and Comments with Post-Meeting Responses:

Question #1: Has the City or team completed a review regarding the usage of the existing Riverwalk that was completed as part of phase I? What were the results?

GP Response: Based on Gorrill Palmer's understanding of Phase I (we were not onboard during this process), the path was extended approximately 315 linear feet along the Kennebec River until it was dead ended in the Bathport property. It will be difficult to thoroughly review the effectiveness or use of the project since the path is a dead-ended effectively cutting off pedestrian circulation. It is worth noting that during the initial site visit to the area we did see pedestrians crossing the parking lot from Commercial Street down to the (dead-end path) then following it down to where it connects into the park. Based on these observations it is not unreasonable to assume that the trail would be relatively well used if it was more accessible. We will defer to the City of Bath for a more in-depth response.

City Response: The City has not conducted a formal economic impact assessment of the existing riverwalk, however, where there has been an increased number of events at Waterfront Park, and now Bridge Park, and observable high levels of use of the existing riverwalk, and where Riverwalk Phase 2 is included in the most recent comprehensive plan as a strategy, extending the riverwalk remains a priority for the City. The purpose of a comprehensive plan, is to solidify the goals of the City for a period of time and not to have to continually decide what to do to improve itself. The project being included in the comprehensive plan, adopted by the City in 2023, means the community has collectively agreed it is a worthwhile priority. The feasibility study currently underway will now allow the City to evaluate feasible route



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extending north, upriver, and provide direction for options to consider in moving this project toward development.

Question #2: Will there be a fence (vertical separation) between Front Street (or any adjacent roadways) and the path?

GP Response: No, for sections of the path that are adjacent to Front Street (and/or any other road), we do not recommend installing a fence or vertical separation between the road and the path. Vertical barriers such as a fence create a shy factor for both vehicles and pedestrians/bicyclists alike. This would in turn reduce the effective width of both the roadway and the proposed path. In addition, the fence would create issues for maintenance vehicles during winter months and would be subject to damage as snow is plowed off the road and into the fence.

City Response: A fence would not enhance the user experience for reasons described by GP above, and would add considerable initial expense and additional maintenance costs. The vision is for this trail to be inviting and feel like it's an extension of the parks and public spaces it connects, wherever possible.

Question #3: Front Street is already narrow, increasing the width of the sidewalk would further narrow the road, has this been reviewed/considered?

GP Response: The intent of the neighborhood meeting was to provide a chance for the neighbors to provide comments prior to concept plans being generated. Based on conversations during the meeting it was made apparent that the width of Front Street (as well as Bowery Street) is a concern to residents. We will keep this in mind moving forward, a few possible solutions to help remedy this issue include:

- Consider making Front Street a one-way (direction of one-way would need to be reviewed), which would reduce the required width of the roadway and provide room for potential improvements/snow storage.
- Consider ending the 10' wide path at a potential pocket park just north of the Bath Riverwalk apartments and focus on making upgrades to the existing pedestrian facilities along Front Street to connect the two ends of the project.

Question #4: Do we know who the people are being represented by the Strava data? Based on personal experience a lot of the walkers appear to be BIW workers and dog walkers.

GP Response: Strava data does not provide in depth knowledge of who is walking, only relative densities representing which routes are more heavily favored by pedestrians, bicyclists, etc.



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**City Response:** As this would be a riverwalk in a proudly inclusive and kind community, all community members and visitors would be welcomed to use the riverwalk. It is not meant to be exclusive. The use of the Strava data is to provide additional evidence of the existing use of this area by pedestrians and the expected use of improved pedestrian amenities.

**Question #5:** Why are we having this conversation (why is this project important to the City)?

**GP Response:** The goal of the project is to connect/extend the existing Riverwalk that is currently dead ended in front of the Bathport property. In addition, the project will look to enhance the pedestrian infrastructure along Front Street & Bowery Street, provide and enhance parks for people to enjoy the city, and connect the City's downtown with a walkable amenity at the north end boat launch. We will defer to the city for additional information regarding the projects purpose from a city perspective.

**City Response:** The City has considered extending the riverwalk for over a decade but has not made any advancement on the project since 2016. Providing access to the riverfront, connecting neighborhoods to downtown, and providing enhanced recreational opportunities for all residents and visitors are important goals of the City. This project helps facilitate the next step in determining what options may be available and how it might be approached in order to begin moving the project forward.

**Question #6:** Initial part of Riverwalk has been stopped by the Kennebec Tavern; how do you plan to proceed around Kennebec Tavern? With easements or litigation?

**GP Response:** The City's preference would be to work with the Kennebec Tavern owner to produce a quality project that would mutually benefit both the City of Bath as well as the business. We acknowledge their current stance on the project and will investigate potential solutions and/or project phasing options that could be implemented both short term and long term.

**City Response:** The City is in communication with the Kennebec Tavern owners, and appreciative of their willingness to engage and take part in this planning process. GP has accurately represented the City's preferred paths forward.



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Question #7: The easement in front of the apartments has not been designated yet by the developers and owners within the apartments are concerned about the path in front of apartments?

GP Response: The City of Bath is working with the developers regarding the easement along the Bath Riverwalk Property (apartments). The intent of the path is to be located as close to the river as possible (as far away from the apartments as possible) to ensure privacy. Considerations for additional privacy could include landscaping, plantings, and/or a fence at the back of sidewalk to keep pedestrians on the path and off the lawn area of the apartments. Sidewalks could be proposed from the apartment's internal pedestrian infrastructure to the "Riverwalk" path and gated access could be provided to the residents.

City Response: We appreciate the Riverwalk Condo residents taking part in this concept planning process, so that we can work towards a design that incorporates features that will make it more complimentary to their existing useable space.

Question #8: Has any consideration been given to using a ferry boat to bring people from one area of the river to the next?

GP Response: At this time (to the best of Gorrill Palmer's knowledge) there has not been any consideration given to the use of a ferry boat for this project.

Question #9: Is there any additional information that can be provided regarding phase I of the Riverwalk project?

GP Response: See our response to Question #1.

Question #10: The "proposed" riverwalk is not along the river, what is the point?

GP Response: The intent of the project is to extend the existing riverwalk path that currently dead ends in front of the Bathport property. The name of the project (the Riverwalk Extension) is slightly misleading due to the projects limited access to be adjacent to the river. Where feasible the project will attempt to align the path along the waterfront. Based on public feedback during the neighborhood meeting, a name change may be proposed to reduce confusion. Gorrill Palmer proposes "The Bath Riverwalk Extension and Neighborhood Connectivity Study".



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Question #11: What is the status of the 25-year-old park?

GP Response: We are unfamiliar with which park this question is referencing, we assume that it is the Linwood E. Temple Park. GP has no information regarding the “status” of the park and will defer to the city for a response.

City Response: The park is much-loved and used by many people consistently; not just by individuals and small groups of passive recreational users, but also for many community events and concerts. It is a gathering space and place of pride where everyone has the chance to enjoy the river in an attractively landscaped setting.

Question #12: What is the advantage or reasoning behind trying to utilize the existing sewer easement?

GP Response: The potential use of the existing sewer easement for the project was considered by the team as one of a few options. This would potentially allow the path to wind through the woods instead of remaining adjacent to Front Street (where road widths were a concern). There are a few steps that would need to be completed before the path could feasibly be proposed at this location including owner coordination among other things. As noted during the neighborhood meeting, the graphic was only meant to show potential high-level options that were being considered for conversational purposes.

City Response: GP covered this well, but it was the intention to consider all options that could have been less costly or prove less difficult to secure or build. Where this site has existing infrastructure easements and City infrastructure, it was worth bringing it into the conversation, if it made sense to build on.

Question #13: There is a large group of invasive Norway Maples that have grown up between Front Street and the River. Could these be removed as part of the project?

GP Response: It is unlikely that the footprint of this project would require the removal of the existing Norway Maples as requested. In addition, the maples are located on private property and not held within public lands. We will defer to the City of Bath regarding any plans to address this issue outside of the proposed project.

City Response: The City Forestry Committee and Department are currently working on a Norway Maple replacement plan and likely these trees will be replaced as part of that effort.



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Question #14: There are two bald eagles (with a nest) that live between 325 Front Street and 327 Front Street (see photo/new clipping in Appendix A). Will the project have any impacts on them?

GP Response: It is our understanding that the eagles reside on trees within private property on the back side of the house located at 327 Front Street. The intent of the project is to stay along the road for this section of the project. No impacts to the existing eagles nesting area are anticipated. It is worth noting that this project is still in its infancy (only conceptual plans) and does not have a schedule regarding potential design or construction. We believe that the projects name (Riverwalk Extension) may have confused some people regarding its intent and therefore the assumption was made that we would be closer to the eagles who are living along the river.

Question #15: The Kennebec River is home to the Atlantic Surgeon which are protected and endangered, how will this project mitigate any impacts to them and their breeding (see original letter/photo in Appendix B)?

GP Response: The project does not currently propose any in-water construction or infrastructure. The intent of the path would be to run along the river a few feet behind the top of the riverbank.

Question #16: Will the proposed walkway be four seasons (I.E. will it be plowed)?

GP Response: It is our understanding that the walkaway would be available year-round. However, we will defer to the city regarding potential winter maintenance.

City Response: Yes.

Question #17: How will you address the forested areas in terms of safety?

GP Response: Proper lighting would need to be discussed for the sections of path that are not adjacent to the roadway. During the design process (and based on initial public feedback) we will be reviewing these “off-road” sections that were originally under consideration. Additional information will be presented at a public meeting later this year.



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Question #18: What is the decision critical path for the project? How will we decide if it is worth doing or not?

GP Response: The project “kicked off” with the neighborhood meeting that was held on August 21, 2024. Gorrill Palmer will work with the city to develop concept plans taking into account the public comments we have received to date. Once concept plans have been generated, Gorrill Palmer will attend a second public meeting to walk through the proposed concept plans with the public. We will incorporate any additional comments received by the public and generate a draft and final report for the City of Bath. Where the project moves from there will be determined by the city. We would assume that the final decision would be made by the city council based on their review of the plans/report/and potential funding availability. We would encourage the city to provide any additional information that we may have omitted or overlooked.

City Response: The feasibility study will provide pathways for the city to consider as well as critical steps or information needed before moving forward. Recommendations will be made, based on the outcomes of the feasibility study, and the City Council will have the final vote on what if anything gets built.

Question #19: Will this be a voted-on ballot question?

GP Response: We will defer to the city for this response as we are unfamiliar with the City’s internal process.

City Response: Unless a bond referendum is proposed, this project will likely only require City Council approval.

Question #20: What are you hoping for at the end of the project, what is the final product?

GP Response: The final product will consist of a high-level concept plan with initial cost estimate and a final report summarizing the project’s findings. This report will include public comments and a summary of the public meetings for future reference.

Question #21: Have you spoken to any of the property owners before today (the neighborhood meeting)?



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**GP Response:** Prior to the neighborhood meeting, we had only met with one property owner (Kennebec Tavern) due to their involvement with Phase I of the project. The intent of the neighborhood meeting was to reach out and receive feedback to better understand the communities' thoughts towards the project. Based on the feedback that we received, additional meetings will need to be scheduled for any off-road segments that we would like to propose.

**City Response:** This meeting is intended to be a meeting with neighbors in the area of interest for possible riverwalk extension improvements and connections in the future, to share ideas and solicit feedback. Some additional outreach was done in the area of the existing planned riverwalk before this meeting. We appreciate everyone taking part and providing feedback at this time, to help us improve the study results.

**Question #22:** Has there been consideration to making Front Street a one-way?

**GP Response:** Yes, due to the existing width of Front Street (relatively narrow) we have had some initial discussions with the city regarding their appetite for potentially making it one-way. Additional discussions will need to be had regarding its connection to Bowery Street as there is a section of Bowery that is one-way just west of its intersection with Front Street. At this time everything is up for discussion.

**Question #23:** What do people do when they reach the end of the pathway? Will there be stores/bathrooms/parks?

**GP Response:** The project is considering making improvements to the North End Boat Launch to make it a viable destination for pedestrians with its scenic view of the river. There is also a proposed development at the former cannery site which may serve as a destination for the public.

**Question #24:** What will the impacts of front -end loaders and construction vehicles be on the area with the apartment buildings? How will the frontage be changed/affected moving forward?

**GP Response:** We are a long way out from construction currently. However, the intent would be that the contractor works with the city and the property owners to provide as minimal disturbance as possible. Any disturbed lawn areas or plantings that are disturbed by the contractor or their equipment would be repaired by the contractor. Things such as time restraints (can't start work in front of the apartments before 9:00am and/or cannot leave machinery in there lot overnight) could be added into





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the contract. The intent is to work with the property owners to find a resolution that works for everyone.

Question #25: Floods impact this area and recent resiliency meetings have discussed rebuilding the area, so why are we looking to build a path.

GP Response: We will defer to the City of Bath for a response to this question as we were not in attendance.

City Response: Riverwalk paths provide opportunities for residents to connect with the Kennebec River, provide recreational opportunities, and connect people from different areas of the city to the downtown. The Flood Vulnerability Analysis produced in 2023 will be consulted in producing the study and making recommendations. Knowing the flooding risks will allow us to build the walkway to withstand these projected weather events. Additionally, design may help reduce vulnerability of nearby upland property during storm surges and flooding when designed intentionally.

Question #26: Is flooding and sea level rise being considered as part of this project?

GP Response: Yes, we are aware of the previous work (reports) completed by the City of Bath and will make sure that this information is reviewed by the project team prior to developing the concept plans.

Question #27: Plowing concerns on Front Street since it is already so narrow, and narrowing of the road will create additional issues. Is the project considering plowing operations as part of its final product?

GP Response: We were made aware of the plowing concerns during the neighborhood meeting and will consider these issues as we progress the design. One previous comment which could help the snow maintenance along Front Street would be making it a one way and utilizing some of the extra width for snow storage moving forward.

Question #28: Can the path utilize Commercial Street instead running along the frontage of the Kennebec Tavern and the apartments?



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**GP Response:** This is one of the initial options (shown in grey on the neighborhood meeting graphic) that we are looking into and will discuss with the City of Bath.

**Question #29:** Why wasn't the public contacted sooner on this project?

**GP Response:** The neighborhood meeting was essentially the start of the project. Aside from a few very high-level lines drawn on paper (neighborhood meeting graphic) everything that was discussed at the neighborhood meeting was meant to elicit conversation and allow the team to receive feedback from the public to better understand their wants and needs. Nothing presented at that meeting was meant to be anything more than a discussion point.

**City Response:** There was nothing to share for discussion previously.

**Question #30:** How will the path coincide with the City's climate resiliency plans?

**GP Response:** The City of Bath has sent along their previous studies regarding the city's flood vulnerability and climate change goals. These reports will be reviewed and incorporated into the final report that will be submitted to the city.

**Question #31:** Residents of the apartments are concerned with the use of large construction equipment in front of their building. How will property damage be mitigated through the construction process? How will construction affect their property use?

**GP Response:** See our response to question #24.

**Question #32:** How will the proposed path affect the apartments property value? Privacy? and personal use of their property?

**GP Response:** We do not expect that there will be any changes to the personal use of your property as the path would be proposed along the top of the riverbank and not up against the building. Any grass areas damaged during construction would be returned to grass and if a fence is installed, the apartment owners would have access to the path via gates in the fence. As mentioned previously, privacy concerns can be mitigated through fencing and proposed landscaping. This will help ensure the privacy of the apartment owners. Regarding the property values, we see the path as an amenity that can be used by the property owners, however, we will defer to the City of Bath for a more in-depth response.



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City Response: Desirable riverwalk paths in other communities have been found to increase value in adjacent properties as a desirable amenity to connect to. This project is too early in conceptual planning to have the City Assessor provide projections on potential property value. Increased value would be determined by market demand.

Question #33: Who will pay for the sidewalk easement regarding the legality of the path being on community member's properties? Will the City insure itself as well as property owners within the easement?

GP Response: We will defer to the City of Bath for a response to this question.

City Response: The City would need to acquire easements where necessary. Similar to a sidewalk, with easement rights, the City has limited liability for injuries that may occur on use.

Question #34: What is the maintenance plan for the path?

GP Response: We will defer to the City of Bath for a response to this question.

City Response: The City would be responsible for maintaining it. Sidewalk portions would be plowed.

Question #35: What are the conditions of use for the path? How will these conditions be known to the community?

GP Response: Our understanding is that the path will be public access and will have signage in easement areas signifying pedestrians to stay on path to avoid trespassing. We will defer to the City of Bath for a more in-depth response.

City Response: The Riverwalk will be treated like other public parks and amenities with established boundaries and permitted use times.

Question #36: How will the City prevent users of the path from leaving the pathway to walk or climb along the riverbank or Owner's property?

GP Response: As mentioned in previous responses, for sections of the project that could be located via easements adjacent to the river, we recommend having a fence installed



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on the back side of the path to mitigate pedestrians from potentially trespassing onto private property. The potential for locked gates for private residents' access to the path in areas of easements is up for discussion. As we proceed with the layout of the proposed path we will review the need for additional fencing.

Question #37: How will the City of Bath's police department be involved in enforcing the paths conditions of use?

GP Response: We will defer to the City of Bath for a response to this question.

City Response: Bath Police Department will treat the Riverwalk the same as any other public park or open space. Authority to enforce is defined in ordinance.

Question #38: Is there a plan to fix the drainage issues along Front Street, specific erosion related concerns were noted at 325 Front Street (see photo/email in Appendix C).

GP Response: It is definitely not out of the question that this project would help mitigate the drainage and erosion issues depicted by the public in this area. Once we are a little further along in the design of the concept plans, we will have a better understanding of what changes could be made to help improve the area.

Project Note:

1. The Bath Riverwalk Residences Condominium Association provided the City of Bath and the project team with a memorandum regarding their thoughts, concerns, and questions for the proposed Riverwalk Project. These notes and questions have been included in the questions above, however, the memorandum in its entirety can be seen in Appendix D.
2. The sign in sheet from Bath Riverwalk Extension Neighborhood Meeting that was held on August 21, 2024, is attached in Appendix E of this document.