

Comments by Bill Bishop to the
Des Moines City Council

RE: April 13, 2023 Council Meeting Agenda: New Business

Mr. Mayor, Council Members and City Manager:

Respectfully, Mr. Mayor and Manager: You have once again decided to tell us what we want, without collaborating with us to reach mutual goals. You have appointed Citizen Advisory Board Members, but you are not waiting to receive their input before moving forward with major capital projects. With presumably, one week's notice to the Citizens of Des Moines, you are proposing to borrow and spend about Fifteen Million taxpayer dollars with virtually no input from the Public and with no explanation of how this borrowed money will be repaid. Even worse, tonight's Agenda suggests that you expect the Council to vote for an expenditure of \$800,000 on a Consultant's contract for the Marina Steps that was only signed by the Consultant on April 5, 2023. Have all Council Members even had the time to review the supporting materials and ask their constituents whether this is a project worth spending \$6,000,000 or even \$9,000,000 on?

This is a potential financial disaster for the City of Des Moines, spending money on a project that generates no revenue and one that only very few people know anything about. The Marina Steps project was just announced for the first time, last September, and the only real public meeting discussing it, was the Study Session in late January.

At this time, the Council should reject the Mayor and Manager's attempt to hire an \$800,000 Consultant to design the Steps until the Citizens of Des Moines have at the very least an opportunity, **acting through the Citizens Advisory Board**, to tell the Council that this is a project worthy of such extravagant expense. The consultant, KPPF calls this an **"Iconic"** project that will cost \$6,000,000. Do we really want an "iconic" project or do we want something that benefits our City. On top of everything else, there seems to be confusion about the cost of the Marina Steps. The City Attorney's proposed new Ordinance # 23-22 says the Marina Steps is a \$9,000,000 project while KPPF's proposed consulting agreement calls it a \$6,000,000 project so it's clear that they really have no idea what this will all cost. How can they be ready to move forward when their numbers differ by \$3,000,000?

Following are my additional specific thoughts on tonight's Agenda items for New Business:

1. The City's proposed Consultant states that the budget for the Marina Steps and Public Place will be \$6,000,000 and 1,000,000, respectively. More likely, the cost will be even higher before things are done. The debt service on these bonds, with a AAA rating will cost over \$38,821 per month in principal and interest payments for 240 months at an interest rate of 3.0 % . Since the

Steps and Plaza will generate no income, how will the City meet this obligation? What is the City's debt limit and what are the consequences of defaulting on these payments?

2. The City has only had this consulting proposal from KPFF since April 5th. Why are we rushing here to pay an \$800,000 consulting agreement before the Council members have barely had one week to look at it? The Consultant specifically says it is not including anything in its project plan for the evaluation of **future higher water levels**. Given that we are experiencing increased global warming, why are we ignoring this? Doesn't the Marina need to raise height of its Seawall throughout?
3. The Mayor/Manager/City Attorney are proposing in a new Ordinance (#23-22) to approve the past 60 days" of expenses within its planned Bond issue for the Marina Steps and Plaza, etc. Other than the \$800,000 Consultant Contract, what else have they spent to date on these projects?
4. The current Marina Steps plan ignores the negative consequences to the Farmer's Market and it will do away with Dock Avenue. If the Farmer's Market moves South, won't that take up valuable space enjoyed by the marina tenants? The small Public Plaza that is planned will necessitate a substantially downsized Farmer's Market and maybe the loss of the beloved Food Trucks. Where does the Quarterdeck fit into this plan? Again, the loss of parking, etc. cannot be made up anywhere. And, the loss of Dock Avenue as an emergency access route to the North Parking Lot and to the Beach Park is critical. If the City's plan is realized, then there will be no means of emergency access to the North Marina in case there is any blockage on Cliff Drive which is a very narrow access road. Dock Avenue is also essential to provide emergency access to the Boat Storage Facility that is planned to replace the boat sheds.