

Garden of Surging Waves begins to grow

By CHELSEA GORROW

The Daily Astorian | Posted: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 10:34 am

The Garden of Surging Waves is moving forward once again, after a several month standstill that led to Tuesday night's decision to break the project into parts.

The garden, which honors the contributions of the Chinese people to the city of Astoria and its surrounding areas, will be constructed on the corner of 11th and Duane streets. That project will now be installed in four sequences, not to be confused with the four phases that make up all of Heritage Square, which the garden is only one part of.

The reason? Funding came up short and the bids came in high for the garden's full installation, City Manager Paul Benoit told the council at a goal-setting session and again at Tuesday's Astoria City Council meeting.

Estimated at \$1 million, two bids came in – from Robinson Construction Co. for \$1.29 million, and JP Contractors, Inc. with a bid for \$1.37 million.

The city only has \$973,604, which includes the \$200,000 gift from the late developer Art DeMuro that has not yet been received.

Bottom line: only the groundwork, foundations and art installation will take place in the garden that the council broke ground on last April.

The rest – which includes the center pavillion, pillars, benches and landscaping – will have to wait.

“Our community Development and Engineering Public Works staff have been working with Suenn Ho, the project's designer, and Robinson Construction, together with Jim Wilkins, tirelessly to do some value engineering,” Benoit said, “to bring that project scope within our budget.”

Ho, who was in the audience, said the city is in its final stretch of making the project happen. And although breaking the project up may be seen as a little discouraging, she voiced her support and the support of Mulvanny G2's Board Chairman Jerry Lee for the city's effort.

“I started working on this project in 2006 and it's been just a privilege,” Ho said. “Astoria has been like an extended family for me. This is a lot of hard work. And Jerry ... said to make sure his message can be shared with all of you tonight.

“He said, ‘A project like this, is very much a special landmark project, like your Astoria Column. It takes a lot of community effort, a lot of community support. ... For what you have achieved

today, for what seems like has been taking forever, it's a journey. It takes every little step and everybody moving forward. To actually be at the final lap of the Garden of Surging Waves, a long journey, is really impressive.'

"He wanted to congratulate all of you and we are just delighted to be brought along and part of this incredible journey. He's very proud of you and I am just feeling very fortunate to be a part of this incredible project, together with all of your effort."

The project was awarded to the low bidder, Robinson Construction, in the amount of \$798,498 for sequence one. That money comes from \$350,000 from the Promote Astoria Fund; \$267,255 in community donations and grants; and \$156,349 remaining from the Astor East Urban Renewal District loan that was left over after the city extended sidewalks and improved the underground retaining walls.

The other three sequences will come, Mayor Willis Van Dusen said, as the money becomes available.

The DeMuro commitment will be given out in increments, according to DeMuro's executor, the council's memo stated.

DeMuro, who died after a brief battle with cancer last year, had a history in Astoria as a visionary who transformed the former Plywood Mill into the Mill Pond Village, among other projects. He was 57.