Ogunquit Select Board Approves Footbridge Revitalization Project “Kitchen’s Gift” by Nathan Lynch sent to the Journal Tribune

OGUNQUIT — The Select Board voted to approve a $225,000 “Footbridge Beach Revitalization” project as a municipal bond, which included efforts to fill the pedestrian bridge at Footbridge Beach and renovate the bathrooms. In a separate meeting, the board also approved a $150,000 gift from resident Wayne Griffin to landscape a portion of Marginal Way near “Devil’s Kitchen,” contingent on negotiations between the town and Griffin to a plan.

The current landscaping plan for Marginal Way involves removing all the plant material and soil in an area near “Devil’s Kitchen” and landscaping the area with native plants—mainly a mixture of ferns, shrubs and bushes. Thomas Lynch, who designed the proposal, says his plan will eliminate the invasive species problem in the area, improve drainage and runoff, and fight coastal erosion.

The Marginal Way commission, in favor of approving the new plan, and the Select Board voted 4-1 to preliminarily accept the gift. Central to the concerns over the $150,000 gift was worries that Griffin’s wishes for the property would weigh heavily on the landscaping outcome. Griffin’s own property abuts the area he is offering to improve, and several members of the Marginal Way committee voiced their concerns that actions being done outside of town would make Griffin’s vision of the ocean. Several Austrian pines currently occupy the space that were planted several years ago, and plans to trim them were never carried out according to Town Manager Thomas Lynch. “He isn’t naive,” Select Board Chair Barbara Dailey said. “If you think [Griffin] wants a good view, let’s be clear, and the challenge for us is to weigh the economics, to weigh the parameters that he has offered, to weigh the valuation equation of $150,000 worth of landscape-improving.”

Three members of the Select Board supported the gift and were encouraged by the private effort to improve Marginal Way, which has long been under maintained by the town due to financial constraints. “This is the kind of thing we want to do,” Select Board Member David Barton said. “The ulterior motives of who are being suggested here simply don’t apply. I’m enthusiastic about this. I think it’s a great time to see what we do down there; what’ll grow.”

Select Board Chair Robert Winn Jr. cast the dissenting vote. The project, if it receives final approval, will be completed in 6 weeks. In a budget meeting held earlier today, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the “Footbridge Revitalization” Project as part of the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Town Manager Thomas Fortier said the town will be pursuing grants to supplement this project. This combined two separate efforts to fix the bridge and renovate the bathrooms in the area, and will go to voters later this year. “[The bridge] is a lynx that needs more than the one end of activity,” Barton said of Footbridge Beach.