

Council Seeks Sculpture for Downtown Plaza

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

After weeks of public comments shaming the aesthetics of the downtown area, the Kodiak City Council is now discussing one beautification option. During last night's joint city council and borough assembly work session, City Mayor Pat Branson brought up the notion of installing a sculpture in the St. Paul plaza area.

City Manager Aimee Kniaziowski said the raised platform that once held the wooden fishermen carving has been empty for a few years, and replacing the art exhibit will certainly be an easy way to spruce up the area.

"As everybody knows the old wooden sculpture that was in the plaza fell apart. The parks and rec crew were trying to disassemble it and take it to a protected area and try to restore it and it literally just dissolved as they were doing that. So it was removed, and there was a lot of interest in the community that something else takes its place," Kniaziowski said.

The replacement idea actually came forward two years ago, when local artist Mark Witteveen submitted a sculpture proposal to the city. Around the same time another artist from the mainland approached the city, with a concept that was similar to the previous wooden display.

Borough Mayor Jerome Selby said the old sculpture didn't cost the city any money, and was actually a community-driven beautification project.

"This originally came under the auspices of a service club. And quite frankly I think the city wouldn't have to foot the whole bill because I know at least one service club a couple years ago were willing to put some money into it. And I think if the other service clubs had the opportunity," Selby said. "But the fact is that the council, this is the council's property. You folks need to select a design and then folks are either going to buy into the design, or they're not going to buy into the design."

During the meeting, City Councilman Terry Haines came out in favor of supporting Witteveen's proposal.

"I think that we should favor Mark Witteveen's design because he is a local artist with lots of examples of his art around. We'd have a pretty good idea of what we'd be getting. And just the idea that he'd be building it out of steel, that surely is going to make it last a lot longer."

City Mayor Pat Branson said she'd rather put a call out to artists and see what other options the council can get before deciding on one just yet, but she didn't think the new display had to resemble the old one.

"Well I think maybe we should see who might be out there. I don't think we necessarily have to replace it, I don't feel, with what was there before. So I think if we go out and seek some local artists, see what they come up with and also approach Mark, local service groups, that would certainly be a good idea."

The plaza sculpture discussion will be a topic on the city council's next work session on June 11.