

Squaxin Family,

Over the last 12 months questions have come up regarding the status of our Boardwalk project. At the last Talking Circle, I promised to keep the community updated once an audit was complete, and a successful path forward to completion was decided upon. The information below outlines the main reasons this project has been considerably delayed:

To provide context, the Boardwalk was added to our TTIP (Tribal Transportation Improvement Plan), which combines tribal prioritized projects for TTIP funds, provided to the Tribe by the BIA. This addition was approved by the Council at the time, and the BIA accepted our addition to use Federal money on our Boardwalk. This is outlined in resolution 19-19 (attached).

1. December of 2019 the project was sent out for bids to the area, this was consistent with our RFP Contract process. The bid however, was sent without completed certified engineering plans on how the project should look. The Planning and Community Development Department received multiple bids on the project.
2. During the Scope of Work process, a concern was raised that there was influence leveraged to change this scope of the work. The request was to split the project into small pieces and allow various companies that bid a portion of the work. Instead of going with a bid by one company to do the entire project, contracts were written for each company that wished to do work on the Boardwalk.
3. Additionally, the Scope of Work within the contracts; should have provided a comprehensive and detailed outcome. This created an opportunity for multiple addendums and changes to the project. This along with the pandemic pushing material costs up, added to the total cost of this project.
4. Covid. We experience multiple delays related to the pandemic. The reservation was shut down for a portion of the project, and that extended the timeline of completion. We also experience, as did the rest of the country, a rise in cost of materials due to Covid.
5. Selection of experienced contractors. Federal money, and grants come with rather strict guidelines and deliverables. It was identified throughout this project, that there were companies who did not have technical abilities to complete a project with Federal requirements.

As with any large-scale project, many lessons are learned. Changes have been made within our Planning and Community Development department to ensure future projects will run efficiently and smoothly. The Tribe will no longer contract or delegate management of a project. The Department of Planning and Community Development will conduct daily inspections/log books of each project. RFQ (request for qualifications) will be properly vetted and required on all construction projects.

While some people referenced this project being “just grant money”; as Tribal members and Leaders; we are all charged with being good stewards of all our resources. Our financial resources belong to every Tribal member, so we will continue to operate with the mindset that we can give an account for every dollar spent. Our staff is working on finalizing documentation required to get the project moving again. You should see folks working to finish the Boardwalk after the Holidays.

Thank you all for your patience!