



October 26, 2011

The Hon. Elaine Pluta, Mayor
City of Holyoke
City Hall
Holyoke, MA 01040

Dear Elaine,

We wanted to touch base with you prior to your appearance at the arts forum this Sunday at the Wauregan. Following the MPO's announcement to move the Phase II of the Canalwalk project back a year to 2013 due to administrative delays in the project, the Friends of the Canalwalk, the canal district artists and Ward 1 property owners have expressed a sincere disappointment about the set back for Phase II of the Canalwalk. It is our hope to bring attention to this matter and to aid in the understanding of the process while ensuring expedient action at each future stage of the project. To that end we hope that you can use the forum on Sunday as an opportunity to share the positive steps that you and the Planning Department have been taking over the past few months to advocate for Phase II and if possible, what ways the city administration might be able to accelerate the process.

What we do know from MassDOT about the current stage of the project is that VHB prepared a revised project design schedule listing November 1st, 2011, as the date for submission of 25% of the roadway plans and the bridge sketch plans to MassDOT. It is our understanding that the City is reviewing the plans this month before they are submitted to MassDOT in November. Can you advise as to the current state of these plans as well as what can be done in the next few weeks and months to expedite future actions? We are hopeful in asking for an energized and persistent push by the city to have the project reach 25% approval stage of Phase II and for it to be restored to the 2012 TIP list, a possibility suggested by Mayor Bissonette at the MPO meeting in September. We believe any urgency expressed by you and your office is vitally important to swiftly advancing the course of the Canalwalk project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Nancy Sachs, Bruce Fowler, Kari Gatzke
Members,
Friends of the Canalwalk
Holyoke, MA 01040