

# Lynn ferry project breaks new ground

By Chris Stevens / The Daily Item | Posted: Thursday, October 13, 2011 12:00 am

LYNN - Lt. Gov. Timothy Murray didn't just hoist a shovel during the ground-breaking ceremony for the commuter ferry project on Wednesday. He took a genuine interest asking questions about the project and the massive waterfront development plan as a whole.

"I'm excited about this project," he told a crowd of about 30 city and state officials gathered at the end of Blossom Street extension.

Joining Murray was Sen. Thomas McGee, D-Lynn, Reps. Steven Walsh, D-Lynn, Robert Fennell, D-Lynn and Lori Ehrlich D-Marblehead, Mayor Judith Flanagan Kennedy and City Councilors Peter Capano, Brendan Crighton, Daniel Cahill and Paul Crowley.

The Board of the Lynn Economic Development & Industrial Corp., voted last month to award the contract for construction of a new dock and rebuilding the seawall at the location to Meninno Construction. Funded by the Seaport Council, of which Murray is chairman, the proposed work is Phase II of a four-phase project. The next phase includes dredging and phase four is the ferry itself.

Murray said when he first saw the waterfront in 2006 while on a tour with Walsh, "I didn't get it." He said he couldn't envision a ferry or even a redeveloped waterfront area.

"Then when I was campaigning for lieutenant governor I took the ferry in Hingham," he said. That was when Lynn's idea fell into place for him, he said.

Hingham, like Lynn, was a community with an unused waterfront, no major highways and in need of a boost. Kennedy said she also took the Hingham ferry and was surprised to find what was once a dismal boatyard is now flourishing with people and businesses.

"The idea is it would bring life back to the waterfront which is what we want to do," she said.

The state has funded the first two phases of the project and EDIC Executive Director James Cowdell along with Walsh said they're confident it will continue to fund the remaining work.

"The Lt. Governor hasn't said no yet," Walsh said. "I was quite certain when he funded Phase I and Phase II he would have to fund Phase III and IV or it wouldn't have been money well-spent to fund Phases I and II."

Murray shrugged off "the pressure to fully fund the project" and said he hoped the council would deliver. He also commended city officials for having a master plan for waterfront development.

"When you have a plan and a shared vision it's a lot easier for us at the state to get behind it," he said.

Cowdell said when he started with the EDIC in 2006 the state delegation came to him as a team and said the commuter ferry project was a priority.

“When we started in 2006 and 2007 a lot of people were skeptical,” he said. “Today they’re not so skeptical.”

Walsh said he understands some of the skepticism because it doesn’t look like much is happening with the waterfront. However, he said, cities that make investments in their infrastructure during poor economic times will be the communities ready to go when the economy finally turns around.

McGee, who has been a driving force behind the ferry project, called the ferry a key piece of the future of the waterfront and said the celebration was more than just a groundbreaking.

“It’s not just about today,” he said. “It’s another step in moving the project forward.”

“It’s a good day to have a groundbreaking,” Walsh said. “It will be a better day when we have a ribbon-cutting.”