

Report about Stoughton Ad Hoc Whitewater Park Committee held August 16, 2021

On August 16, 2021, the Stoughton Ad Hoc Whitewater Park Committee held their meeting via Zoom. There were 26 participants who attended including the Committee members, other Stoughton Government officials, and interested citizens. I attended on behalf of FOLKS. Daniele was unable to attend due to a schedule conflict.

Two items of particular interest were discussed:

1. The municipal dam DNR grant and dam removal project.
2. The hydrology study.

Municipal dam DNR grant and dam removal project

The DNR grant was previously disapproved because the partial dam removal and the Whitewater Park design were not a complete dam removal and did not qualify for the grant. The DNR grant program only approves grants for full dam removal. The Whitewater Park would still restrict the flow of water and was, therefore, considered a “partial dam” by the DNR and partial dam removal does not qualify.

Thus, the Committee had two options to consider: (1) proceed with full dam removal without the water feature and the accept the grant. However, if the Whitewater Park was subsequently constructed the DNR would require repayment of the grant funds given to the City, or (2) withdraw the DNR application for the dam removal grant and proceed with partial dam removal solely at the City of Stoughton expense. Then, separately submit plans and request approval by the DNR through a different approval process for the Whitewater Park. Then, the DNR would have to either approve or disapprove the Whitewater Park project at that time.

The Committee voted to approve the second option and submitted a recommendation to the Parks Committee (which was approved by the Parks Committee at its meeting on August 17, 2021). Subsequently, the Parks Committee sent its approval and recommendation to the full Stoughton City Council at its next meeting and that recommendation was approved by the City Council. In summary, the City of Stoughton withdrew its grant application for funding dam removal from the DNR, will partially remove the dam at its expense, and then will submit plans for approval for the Whitewater Park through a different DNR approval process.

Plans, engineering, and bids for the dam removal will proceed and the actual removal of the dam is scheduled to occur in 2022.

While the Ad Committee did not say that the Whitewater Park would be approved by the DNR through the review and approval process that was mentioned at the meeting, I suspect that they believe that they can get the Whitewater Park design approved after the partial dam removal. The Ad Hoc Committee plans to continue to develop Whitewater Park plans and obtain approval from the DNR.

Hydrology Study

It should be noted that FOLKS, along with interested citizens, strongly pushed for the City of Stoughton to do a complete hydrology study from the Whitewater Park site all the way to the LaFollette dam. This study would help to determine the impact on flow and water levels on the Yahara River upstream from

the Whitewater Park particularly in the Yahara Bay area of Pleasant Springs. This study would provide FOLKS and residents objective, engineering information to understand the impact on flow and water levels in the vicinity of Yahara Bay.

The hydrology study has been completed and was reviewed by Mason Lacy who is with Recreation Engineering and Planning (“REP” is the Colorado firm that is designing the Whitewater Park for Stoughton). Water survey work was done by a Madison engineering firm, Strand Associates, Inc. who has been working with Stoughton and REP on the Whitewater Park project. There is a video explaining the Hydrology study on the City of Stoughton website. It is worth watching and can be accessed through this link. <https://vimeo.com/454876656>

Survey of water levels were taken at these locations: Whitewater Park site, Stoughton Mill Pond, Main Street Bridge, widening between Railroad Bridge and County Road B Bridge, widening north of County Road B Bridge (adjacent to Yahara Bay), and immediately downstream from LaFollette Dam in November 2020, April 2021, and June 2021. Hydraulic factors that influence water flow and water levels that were modeled were: flow rates, aquatic plant growth, “roughness coefficient” (meaning is the water moving through a smooth surface such as concrete or through a “rougher” surface such as aquatic plants), and rainfall. The evaluation was done at three different flow rates: 650 cfs (high water flow conditions), 380 cfs (which is typical or average water flow conditions for the Yahara River based on actual historical data), and 150 cfs (low water flow conditions). Focusing on the Yahara Bay area, comparing the November (Fall) and April (Spring) water levels to those with the Whitewater Park constructed would range from -4 inches at high water flow conditions, -9.6 inches at typical water flow conditions, and -1.5 feet at low water flow conditions. Comparing water levels at Yahara Bay with the Whitewater Park constructed to June (Summer) water levels would range from 0 inches lower at high water flow conditions, -1.2 inches at typical water flow conditions, and -7.2 inches at low water flow conditions. The water levels were modeled both with the Whitewater Park constructed and with full dam removal only. The water levels are actually slightly lower with “full dam removal only” than they would be with the Whitewater Park constructed. A full table displaying this data and other data is available on the City of Stoughton website and can be accessed at this link. Pdf of these tables is attached to this report and are shown in the Stoughton video. <https://vimeo.com/454876656>

Report prepared by John Bottorff
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